CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research findings in relation to the study objectives and research questions. The discussion also relates the study findings to other parallel studies as well as cross-cultural analysis on adolescent sexual behaviour. The study discussion is patterned on the following major research themes:

1) The prevailing sexual behaviour of the Akamba adolescents vis-à-vis the traditional.
2) The attitudes Akamba adolescents of Machakos district and the community have about sexual behaviour.
3) Knowledge and practices about STDs/HIV/AIDS as well as contraceptives among Akamba adolescents.
4) The role of the parents and the family to adolescent sexual behaviour.
5) The function of the peers and the mass media to adolescent sexual behaviour.
6) The Akamba community and community leaders (church, school and civil society) role in adolescent sexual behaviour.
7) Machakos district socio-economic conditions and adolescent sexual behaviour.
8) Consequences of adolescent sexual behaviour among the Akamba adolescents of Machakos district.
9) Emergence of a new adolescent culture among Akamba people of Machakos district.

4.1 PREVAILING SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR AMONG AKAMBA ADOLESCENTS OF MACHAKOS DISTRICT

The study findings in this research have indicated that 51.2 percent of the Akamba adolescents (66.6% boys and 33.4% girls) in the age category 12-19 were sexually experienced at the time the study was carried out. This figure of sexual experimentation among the adolescents of Machakos district is more or less the same as the findings of other previous studies on adolescent sexuality among other cultures. Indeed, studies on adolescent sexuality in the United States, Canada, Latin America, India, China, sub-Saharan Africa and Europe demonstrate that over half of the adolescents experiment on sex before the age of 19 (BBC Radio 1, 2006; CDC, 2000; TOI, 6th January, 2007; Warren, et al., 1998).

For example, several surveys in Latin America found out that by age 19, more than 90 percent of males have had sexual intercourse compared to 45 – 60 percent of females (Wulf and Singh, 1990). In other developing countries namely the sub-Saharan Africa, Gage-Brandon and Meekers (1993) in their analysis of data from seven countries found out that over 50 percent of women aged 15-19 years were sexually active. The CDC (2005) states that 80 percent of men and 75 percent of women in the United States are sexually experienced before age 19. In China, the percentage of boys and girls involved in pre-marital sex was between 60 – 70 percent in 2004, while in India, 42 percent of girls and over 60% of males in the age 15-19 years have had sex before age 19.
DUREX, 2005). These findings can be extrapolated to other developing and developed societies except the Arab world and other Islamic societies, where according to IPPF (1994), data is minuscule on adolescent sexuality. Certainly, Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) so far undertaken in these countries interview only married women. Sex discussions are strictly outlawed, especially amongst or targeting the young people, women and the unmarried (IPPF, 1994).

Data has also been difficult to be availed from Islamic cultures simply because of the stringent rules and regulations, prohibiting reporting rape and abuse cases of women. In Pakistan for instance, the rule has for a long time been that for any rape case being reported, four male witnesses have to be availed (Murunga, 2006). To Murunga (2006), Pakistan has had arguably one of the most hostile justice systems for victims of rape and other offences against morality. The country's such law called Hudood Ordinances automatically inhibits one from reporting a rape case since it is difficult to get strictly four male witness unless they are accomplices to that act. According to Murunga (2006), under the Hudood Ordinances, any woman who claims to have been raped must produce the four witnesses and all must be male, and Muslims by faith. If the required number and composition of witnesses is not met, the woman must face the charge of fornication if unmarried or adultery when married, punishable by death. A captivating case demonstrating the difficulties placed in the female gender to report a sexual defilement case was captured in the TOI, 23rd November, 2006, when in Saudi Arabia, a teenager girl went to report to the Police that she had been gang raped by seven men. According to the report, she never imagined the judge would punish her and that she would be sentenced to more lashes than any one of her alleged rapists received. In this case, the girl
was sentenced to 90 (ninety) lashes for, “being alone with men, none of whom she was married to”. In a subsequent appeal to the Supreme Court in November, 2007, the sentence for the girl was made more severe. The lashes were increased to 200 and to serve six months in prison. Although the girl was later pardoned by the Saudi Arabian King due to international outcry, the case was a potent indicator of the predicament the female gender is subjected to on issues touching sexual rights within some cultures (Reuters, 18th December, 2007).

Similar to other cultures, Akamba adolescents of Machakos district were found to be initiating sex at very tender age. In this present study, boys initiated sex at 6 years while for girls it was 7 years, with 6.6 percent being sexually experienced before age 10. In a parallel study in Nairobi by CSA (1993), 4 percent of boys and girls engaged in sex before age 10. In a related study by Chege (1999), 6 percent of sexually active school girls had sex by the age of 10 in Kisumu district, Kenya, while another 36% had sex before the age 14. The scenario of young people initiating sex at a very tender age in Kenya was corroborated by Peter, a proprietor of a school that upholds high moral standards and says he was shocked to learn that some standard two pupils (6-8 years) in this school were experimenting on sexual relations (DN, June 21, 2006). The children seemed to know more than expected of their age, and sexual play had become their preoccupation, in and outside their school. Moreover, Waithaka (2006) observes that children have more exposure to sexual activities and today’s children seem to have an increased interest in undesirable sexual behaviour like kissing, “simple sex play” and exploration of each others’ bodies to satisfy their curiosity.
In an equivalent manner, a case of early childhood sex experimentation was narrated by a high school teacher in Machakos town in this research about a young boy of around 8 years living in the same estate (compound) who was known to be notorious with “raping” girls of his age or younger during child play times. The mother to the boy (single mother) had been told and heard about it but had brushed it aside arguing it as a fabricated and mere slander to malign and ruin her son. Consequently, most parents within that compound had warned as well as withdrawn their children (boys and girls) from playing with the said boy!

Masters, et al., (1988) reinforces above early childhood sex observation by pointing out that nursery school children (4-6 years) have vague and somewhat magical notions about sex. They are apt to confront many situations with sexual overtones. To elaborate and illustrate their assertions, Masters, et al., (1988) provides a practical example from their research, of a case in a nursery school in the U.S where two children named Billy and Peter, each four years old, have had to be told repeatedly that it was not appropriate to kiss each other while they were playing. In the same nursery school, Gerry used to amuse himself by sneaking up behind a girl and pulling up her skirt (“So I can see her underpants,” he explained with a lot of giggling (Masters, et al., 1988: 127). The authors further observe that at this age, children begin to form ideas about sex based on their observations of physical interactions between parents as well as “others”. For instance, seeing Mommy and Daddy hugging and kissing, and obviously enjoying it, is a pretty good advertisement for the pleasures of physical and emotional intimacy. On the other hand, seeing parents constantly fighting or hearing one tell the other “don’t touch
me" can have just the opposite effect on the child’s view of intimacy and sexual identity (Masters, et al., 1988).

A CDC study in the US in 2001, indicated that 6.6 percent of students initiated sexual intercourse before age 13, while in Britain, according to BBC radio 1 (2006), nearly a third of the adolescents (30%) lose their virginity before the age of consent, with 4 percent having lost virginity before 14 years. Evidence from a variety of other countries suggests that the age at which young people become sexually active may be falling (Fee and Yousef, 1993). Certainly, young men than women become sexually active at an early age in many cultures. In Uganda for example, almost 50 percent of young men and nearly 40 per cent of young women surveyed reported having had sex by age of fifteen years (Konde – Lule, et al., 1997). In Dares Salaam, Tanzania, 60 per cent of 14 year old boys and 35 percent of girls reported that they were sexually active (Fuglesang, 1997). In a study carried out in Brazilian schools, 36 percent of females reported having had intercourse by the age of 13 (Weiss, Whelan and Gupta, 1996). In other parts of the world such as some Asian countries and Middle East where there is sparse evidence about sexual activity among young people and it is widely assumed that sexual initiation takes place within the context of marriage, recent studies show that approximately one in four teenagers report to be sexually experienced (Jejeebhoy, 1998).

In some cities like Cairo, Egypt, it has in the past been reported that girls who are sexually experienced before marriage visit gynaecologists to be “stitched” to dupe their husbands of their purity while others, are provided with a pill to insert and use in their “first sex” with their husbands which when pressed produce blood like liquid (Associated Press, 3rd May, 2007). This process of restoring virginity through stitching is known as
Hymenoplasty and according to the report, it is increasingly popular among Muslim women in North Africa and those in diasporas in Europe. According to a Doctor in France, a Gynaecological surgeon, three Hymenoplasties are performed each week in his clinic, and most of his clients are between 18 and 45 years old, Muslims born both in France and North Africa. According to him, “Many of the patients are caught between two worlds” (Associated Press, 3rd May, 2007). They have had sex already but are expected to be virgins at marriage. This is a strong indicator of how young people are found in a dilemma to choose between the orthodoxy and the modern in some cultures - in other words, Culture Lag.

The reasons for boys initiating sex at early age in many cultures including Akamba adolescents can be attributed to the society they grow in. In most patriarchal cultures, boys are socialized to be adventurous and to explore, while according to Masters, et al. (1988), girls are often strongly cautioned against sexual play, especially with boys in most global cultures. Boys on the other hand, tend to get mixed messages from their parents; they may be warned or even punished for such activity, but there is a hint of resignation or even pride in the attitude that “boys will be boys”. One father described the sexual escapades of his seven year old son and his female classmate by saying, “Good for him, he is getting an early start.” (Masters, et al., 1988: 130).

It is important to note that in ordinary typical life, young men have tendency to experiment sex with women older than them. This was demonstrated in this research where adolescent boys indicated they have sex with prostitutes in main town centres of Machakos district. In a similar study in the United States (US), before and about 1950, a typical finding in sex surveys was that most young men were sexually active before
marriage while most women were not (Kinsey, Pemorey, & Martin, 1948; Kinsey, et al., 1953). This gender difference was possible because young men had sex with women who were sexually active (possibly who were socio-sexually unrestricted) or with prostitutes.

Additionally, this study unearthed information that adolescents in Machakos district engage in aberrant sexual behaviours. This is an area less researched in Kenya and it is thus difficult to relate these findings to other Kenyan cultures. But, research in some Western cultures namely Britain, Canada and USA indicate the experience of sexual perversions among the adolescents is quite pervasive (Baron and Burne, 2001; CDC, 2001 and The Kaiser Family Foundation Report, 2003; SIECUS, 2005).

In the same version, Mckenna (1996) asserts that male to male and female to female sex exists in majority of global cultures but the activities concerned are rarely understood as “homosexual” still less as “gay” or “lesbian”. More likely than not, they will not be widely talked about, or named only within local vernaculars often inaccessible to outsiders (Aggleton, Khan and Parker, 1998). It is also reported that in many countries of the world, a substantial number of young men have their first sexual experiences with other men, and for some, this may be the beginning of a longer lasting bisexual repertoire. For example, 50 percent of male university students interviewed in Sri Lanka reported that their first sexual experience had been with another man (Silva, et al., 1997). There are other well documented or media reported cases of bisexuality unions in countries as diverse as Canada, whose parliament upheld a law in 2005 allowing same sex marriages (TOI, 12th June 2006). Britain, with the emblematic example of the popular marriage of Rock Musician Sir Elton John to his male partner in 2005 among others
(TOI, 9th Dec. 2006), while in India (Khan, 1998), Brazil (Parker, 1996), and the South Africa (TOI, 16th Sep. 2007), Uganda (EAS, 15th October 2007), among other nations, report that cases of bisexual unions are quite prevalent — even among the young. Homosexuality unions in Kenya remain outlawed, but still exists discretely. Indeed, Kenyan Penal Code criminalises homosexual behaviour which it refers to as “carnal knowledge against the order of nature”. The punishment for homosexuality according to Kenyan Law is a jail sentence of between 5 to 14 years. Despite the stringent law on homosexuality, its existence in Kenya came to the limelight during the World Social Forum held in Nairobi in 2007 where an association viz Gay and Lesbians Coalition of Kenya, emerged agitating for the right to recognition, registration and freedom. Fascinatingly, majority of its bonafide members were young men and women in late adolescence (DN, 26th January 2007).

Most of the aberrant sexual experiences in this study among Akamba adolescents included incest, homosexuality, rape, oral sex, orgies (group sex) and prostitution. Reports of sexual abuse including forced sex and rape were in this study also reported to be abetted to the young people.

Homosexuality between boys was reported to happen during child play (in childhood) while other sporadic cases were said to occur in boarding schools but all go unnoticed in the Akamba culture. Oral sex was reported to occur, mostly in urban schools between urban boys and girls anxious about the consequences of penetrative sex, while orgies occur during games, drama festivals and music. This was further reinforced by reports of group sex after attending disco and when inebriated. This study corroborates findings by Rickel and Hendren (1993) who point out that deviant sexual behaviour
among the adolescents are prevalent but unreported by victims, actors and caretakers due to certain legal, socio-cultural, personal and biological inhibitions.

Homosexuality in the Kenyan schools had surfaced and reported in the press with the most daunting case of a 17 year old boy in a Nairobi secondary school who was sodomised by a group of boys in one night that he had to be hospitalised (DN, 16th May, 2006). The fellow students meted out the assault after drugging him. This experience of sodomy is further reinforced by statistics from several institutions as well as several case studies from Kenya. The Drum issue (23rd April, 2007) reports that statistics obtained from the Nairobi women and children’s hospital show that 74 boys aged between 9 and 14 years received medical treatment and psychological support at the hospital’s Gender Violence Recovery Centre in 2006 due to sodomy. Most victims had suffered physical injuries such as bruises in the anal region and other parts of the body, as well as STDs including HIV/AIDS. A self-confession by a retired school principal teacher in a Kenyan high school further confirms the intensity of the malady in boarding schools. The headteacher according to the Drum (23rd April, 2007) confesses that, notwithstanding denials, “I came across it in two schools where I worked before my retirement. I suspended two students who were sexually molesting others”. To him, the vice thrives because of the conspiracy of silence between teachers, parents and education officials. The malady is confounded further by the involvement of teachers in sexually molesting or sodomising their male pupils. A report by Cradle Kenya (an NGO) recently indicated that teachers make up 6% of those who defile pupils in Kenyan schools (Drum, 23rd April, 2007). A recent case in point was reported in the E.A. standard, (24th July, 2007)
when the Principal of a high school in Nakuru district, Kenya, was arraigned in court for sodomising one of his students.

Several other cases of sodomy to young people in Kenyan society have been highlighted in the Kenyan press, with a chronology of reported cases in 2006 and 2007:

**February, 2006:** A man in Chogoria, Meru district, Kenya, jailed for 28 years for sodomising two boys aged 13 years. (Drum, 23rd April, 2007)

**April, 2006:** A man is beaten to death by a mob after he was found sodomising a 13 year old school boy in a bush (Drum, 23rd April 2007)

**May, 2006:** A 17 year old boy is sexually brutalised by five men in Bungoma town, Kenya (Drum, 23rd April, 2007).

**July, 2006:** A man is charged in Kwale district court, Kenya, for sodomising a 10 years boy (Drum, 23rd April, 2007).

**May 2007:** A 13 year old boy undergoing treatment at the Nairobi Womens' hospital after a sodomy ordeal in Ngong forest, Nairobi, Kenya (DN, 8th May, 2007).

**June 2007:** A casual labourer in Kerugoya district, Kenya, jailed for 21 years for abducting and defiling a 13 year old boy (DN, 6th June 2007).

The above cases of sodomy and many others which go unreported due to embarrassment are poignant pointers to the extent of the malaise in the Kenyan society. Lesbianism was also equally reported to be taking root in Kenyan schools and society at large, but quite incognito. A classic case of lesbianism in Kenyan schools was well highlighted by the self confession of a 20 year old University of Nairobi law student.
during the World Social Forum held in Nairobi, 2007. The student blatantly indicated she realised she was a lesbian at age 10 and in standard three. She says, “I had a crush on a girl. I liked girls and not boys. I did not just sit and decide that I am a lesbian, some people think one just decides to be a lesbian. It is how we are born, either heterosexual or bisexual” (DN, 26\textsuperscript{th} January 2007). She said she had her first “girlfriend” when she was 16 years old and in form two. She now had a 28 year old girl friend and has had four relationships in total.

Related episodes of sodomy in schools were lightly mentioned by adolescent boys during the FGDs in this study though reported to happen under high secretive circumstances and thus rarely noticed. Indeed, most boys reported that sodomy as well as sexual molestation of boys had become a means of bullying, especially to the new comers. Sodomy was also reported to occur in boarding schools where boys share a bed as reported by a school principal in Kalama division, Machakos district. The school administrator owned up to having expelled two boys in his school for being involved in sodomy of young and new boy students. An HIV and AIDS educator with PATH Kenya (NGO), Obyobyerodyambo concurs with the above insights by pointing out that boys and girls boarding schools have been the hotbeds of gay behaviour for a while in Kenya albeit the issue has all along been pushed under the social carpet.

The above aberrant sexual behaviour experiences sufficed to indicate that deviant sexual behaviours were getting entrenched into the Akamba people’s way of life as well as other Kenyan cultures in total variance with traditional perspectives. According to Kimilu (1962), and Penwill (1951), the orthodox Akamba people abhorred all forms of sexual perversions including incest, prostitution, homosexuality, bestiality, among others.
Indeed, both authors contend that any form of these behaviours consequently would lead to ostracism and total alienation from participating in any form of social activity. As an illustration, Penwill (1951) observes that Akamba people regarded it unnatural to have coition with a woman from behind. If a man did this, even with his wife, it was a must to slaughter a goat for purification. By this act, he had lowered and levelled him/herself with the animals (Penwill, 1951: 76).

Moreover, in spite of the fact that the Akamba people sanctioned premarital sex (Kyalo 1990), it occurred within the ambit of strict societal rules, guidelines and regulations. This was unlike the modern periods. By implications then, Akamba adolescents have been caught in the global web of early and indiscriminate sexual experimentation. Certainly, early and indiscriminate adolescent sexual experimentation is becoming entrenched and permeates global cultures due to cultural interconnectivity, acculturation and Western cultural assimilation without counter policies to the emerging changes, and sooner or later will become part of what Ortner (1974) and Haffner (1999) referred to as a cultural universal.

4.2 SEXUAL ATTITUDES AMONG THE ADOLESCENTS AND AKAMBA COMMUNITY

This study sought to establish the adolescents as well as the Akamba community’s position and attitudes about adolescent sexual behaviour. A large proportion of adolescents (66 percent) disapproved of sex before marriage but this was not the case on the ground. On the other hand, more boys than girls approved of sex before marriage, comprising 64 % and 36 % respectively. The traditional Akamba culture condoned sex
before marriage, but the young peoples' sex activity, preferences and desires outside the society organized social institutions were highly inhibited. Sex before marriage was a socio-cultural affair. Sex occurred during the community social dances (Ndeti, 1972), and only among those initiated into the second circumcision and mature as well as ready for marriage. This view has changed over time and so has the way sex is perceived among the contemporary Akamba adolescents. Early and indiscriminate sexual relations are reported to be free and not much value is set on society control or perspective. Thus, attitudes on pre-marital sex and actual practices are more permissive than in traditional period.

In the endeavour to understand the sexual attitudes of the contemporary adolescents, it was important to put in perspective the sexual behaviour of the adult community around them. According to Coleman and Hendry (1990: 141), in the adult world today, extra-martial sex has become widely accepted and divorce and separation have become common place. Also, there is much greater tolerance of different types of sexual behaviours while homosexuality no longer needs to be invisible, with films, advertisements, and television bombarding the environment with sexual information. Further, as part and parcel of all this, widely available contraception has had the effect of making possible a distinction between sex and procreation. The authors contend that, these shifts in attitudes which are in some respects almost revolutionary and universal, cannot fail to have had an effect on young people. Children growing up in a society cannot be insulated from what is happening to those of their parents’ generation and environment around. While it may be regretted by some, it is of course inevitable that
such fundamental changes in environment and adult behaviour will affect those just beginning their sexual lives.

Baron and Burne (2001) argue that although nature of sexual attitude among adolescents vary from culture to culture, it is evident that sexual attitude among the youth in the United States, Western Europe, Australia and Canada, experienced a steady and consistent shift toward more permissive sexual expression earlier (sexual revolution of 1950’s and 60’s) than India, China and Africa. In China for instance, changes in sexual expression similar to the West did not occur until 1988 (Huang and Uba, 1992). The authors point out that earlier on, the nation’s response had been to ban all written, audio, and visual material describing sexual behaviour, to arrest those who produce it; and to execute those who sell it. In India, accelerated reforms and open society initiated in the 1990’s have also had an observed and concomitant shift in sexual behaviour and attitudes especially for the young people (BBC Radio 1, 2006). In Africa, shifts in sexual behaviour attitude among the youth can be traced to growth in urban centres and rural urban migration including entrenchment of Western formal education and values in the mid 20th century gaining momentum in the new millennium (21st century).

The Akamba community key informants (parents, teachers, church leaders and social workers) participating in the study berated and vehemently detested early adolescent sex experimentation, yet all the evidence pointed into the opposite direction in a typically brazen manner. Some of the key informants (parents, teachers, shopkeepers and drivers, etcetera) as reported by the adolescents were culprits and accomplices to adolescent debauchery and immoral behaviour. This is in total contrast to the traditional Akamba culture where the adult community was to be viewed as a symbol of authority,
direction and occupied a very revered position (Kimilu, 1962). Sex between the young
and the adults was an anathema and occurred only in socially sanctioned arrangements,
especially when a girl was to be married as a subsequent wife, while the sexual behaviour
of the adult community was beyond reproach. (Akong’a, 1988). This view is
supplemented by Coleman and Hendry (1990) who aver that research evidence available
from societies around the globe, indicate the contemporary adolescents are changing in
their attitude to sexual behaviour in ways which are similar to adults.

4.3 ADOLESCENT KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE ABOUT STDs/HIV/AIDS
AND CONTRACEPTIVES

Knowledge amongst the respondents about HIV/AIDS and the predominant mode
of transmission was almost universal, 97 percent. This study concurs with studies done in
other societies which demonstrate a near universal knowledge and awareness about
HIV/AIDS in the globe among the adolescents (Alexander and Hickner, 1997; CDC,
2001; KDHS, 2003; and Mulama, 2006). In spite of the near universal knowledge about
HIV/AIDS transmission and its debilitating effects, adolescents in many parts of the
globe engage in indiscriminate sexual activity (DUREX, 2005).

The knowledge about other STDs among the Akamba adolescents, apart from
Gonorrhoea 70.8 percent and Syphilis 70.4 percent, was abysmally low and obscure. This
study concurs with Leukefeld and Haverkos (1993) that STDs present a formidable
challenge to global society among the youth since a majority are ignorant of the many
STDs in existence. Although the number of actual cases of STD patients was difficult to
avail in Machakos district due to the anonymity and confidentiality in which medical
practitioners handled such cases, several medical doctors intimated that the incidence and prevalence of STDs specifically for the adolescents could not be underestimated. In an equivalent study by The Kaiser Family Foundation (2003) in USA, adolescents exhibited naivety, ignorance and total lack of knowledge about STDs. Indeed, this kind of scenario predisposes them to being classified amongst high risk category of population as pertains to STDs/ HIV/AIDS and they are also likely to miss out on access to prevention, treatment and care.

In relation to contraceptive use, the condom was reported as the most dominant contraceptive utilized by the adolescents in Machakos district. Among those who reported to be sexually experienced, almost half (52%) had used the condom with 48 percent absconding. This finding of low usage of the contraceptives by Akamba adolescents was in tandem with studies among adolescents in other societies (AGI, 1994; Elizabeth, et al., 1999; KDHS, 2003; Moore, et al., 1998). As reported by the adolescents in this study, the reasons for non-usage of condoms among the sexually experienced adolescents included embarrassment, reduction of pleasure, belief systems, cost, fear and timidity as well as ignorance and naivety. Moreover, condoms are perceived and equated with selling and advertising illegal sex. Most adolescents as well as key informants also acknowledged that culture of condom use had not taken root, especially in Christian dominated areas and rural set-ups of Machakos district. According to this study, although a majority of the Akamba adolescents were aware of the FP methods (73.4%), condom use during intercourse amongst them was very low (48 percent of sexually experienced had not used condom during intercourse) and so were other forms of contraceptives. A small number of adolescent girls near the urban centres of Machakos district knew about
the depopropellor and the Morning after pill (4.9 %) but the use of these family planning methods was quite insignificant during and after intercourse.

In a related study carried out by the Federation of Obstetrics and Gynaecological Societies of India (FOGSI) among 22,000 college going students in New Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Chennai, revealed that among sexually active girls, the first intercourse of some 58% was unplanned and hence unprotected. More than a third of the remaining 42% who had their first sexual encounter did not use contraceptives, exposing themselves to unwanted pregnancy and a range of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) (FOGSI, 2007). Similarly, CDC study (2000) in a study carried out in 1999, only 58% of sexually active high school students in the United States reported that they or their partners used a condom during their most recent sexual intercourse, and 16.2 % reported that they or their partners had used birth control pills before their most recent sexual intercourse.

A World Bank report (2005) about youth in Kenya indicated that contraceptive use among the adolescents was 39%, indicating that more than half of them do not use any method of family planning. This in essence inclines the adolescents to high level vulnerability to the contraction of STDs/HIV/AIDS, pregnancies and other indiscriminate sex complications.

The adolescent girl is in a more precarious condition in relation to STDs/HIV infection and the use of any form of contraception due to certain prevailing socio-cultural, physical and economic conditions. In this study, out of the total number of adolescents (15-19) who had visited voluntary Testing Centres (VCTs) in Machakos district, 2.2 percent and 3.8 percent of adolescent boys and girls respectively had tested
positive. In Kenya, KDHS (2003) points out that HIV prevalence in women ages 15-24 was nearly 9%, while for men of the same age bracket was under 5 percent. The same report indicates in the age category 20-24 years, HIV prevalence among women is over four times that of men in the same age group (9% and 2% respectively). In recent information released by National Aids Control Council (2007) in Kenya, girls in age between 15 and 24 years are at high risk of HIV infection compared to boys in their age category. AIDS prevalence in this age category according to NACC (2007) was 3.5% for males and 6.7% for females.

The above HIV infection disparity between boys and girls can be extrapolated to other developing countries in Asia, Africa and Southern and Central America where young girls share a number of experiences which render them particularly vulnerable to HIV infection. Access to sex education and information is often limited, levels of literacy are lower and due to poverty, girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation through the need to trade or forced into sex in order to survive (WHO, 1998). Additionally, young women are totally ignorant about sexual matters in most cultures and this is viewed as a sign of purity and innocence, while having “too much” knowledge about sex is a sign of “easy virtue” (Gupta, Weiss and Mane, 1996). The fact that most cultures emphasise on “innocence” and discourage women from discussing sex too openly with their partners, means that young women are unlikely to be able to communicate their need for safer sex with partners (Rivers and Aggleton, 1999). Balmer, et. al., (1997) emphasise that young women in many cultures including Kenya do not have control over their sexuality. Indeed, it is not something they can initiate or actively participate in. This assertion corroborates a review of research conducted in seven
countries including Nigeria, Egypt, Mexico and Philippines where Petchesky and Judd (1998) concluded that even where sexually active young women are aware of HIV/AIDS and measures to protect against infection, rarely do they have the power to ensure that condoms are used.

In a supplementary view, discrimination, marginalisation and violence of the female gender puts them at a disadvantageous position in the use of contraception during copulation, thus accelerating their risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. In Kenya and other violence-prone areas, sexual violence and molestation heightens the risk of HIV and other STDs. In Kenya for instance, during the post-election violence which erupted after the Presidential and Legislative elections in December 2007, women, children and girls as young as 8 years bore the brunt of rape, and hence aggravated STDs and HIV infection. According to the EAS, 30th January 2008, within a period of one month, more than 1200 women had been raped nationally, with about 1000 being infected with the HIV virus. Data emerging from the Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) as reported by the paper, indicated that over 95 percent of the women had been gang-raped with an average of three participants. Using the 1994 Rwanda Genocide Model, CSI observed that more than 90 percent of the dominant partners had HIV/AIDS, and since they were the ones who initiated the rape and all were spontaneous, implying that no protection was used, then the subsequent participants contracted the deadly virus (EAS, 30th January, 2008).

The situation was more worse and complex because a number of the raped women were also presumed to have had the HIV virus. Similarly, in the war-ravaged region of Northern Uganda, Africa, the Lord's Resistance Army rebels have invariably been accused of abducting women and sexually assaulting them over years. In the year 2006,
more than 10,000 women, including girls were abducted and used as cooks or wives of the militants fighting the Uganda Government, and in such circumstances, protection during sex is nil (UNICEF, 2007).

In this study, some of the factors adduced during FGDs and personal communication with adolescents and opinion leaders as to why girls are so vulnerable to HIV infection included the belief that sex with young girls was seen as safe haven from virus. The other factor explaining this disparity is attributed to the rape and sexual abuse (molestation) of young girls by adult members of the community as well as seduction and early marriage of girls by elderly men as well as poverty, ignorance and multiple sex partners by their male counterparts. Weakness of girls in using sex to prove love and innocence was also highly mentioned.

A related study in Zimbabwe by Makoni (2007) found out that the rape of young, virgin girls was quite common due to the myth that the blood of virgins cured AIDS. Zimbabwe in Africa has one of the highest HIV infections in the world with one in five adults having AIDS. Makoni (2007) observes that in some regions of the country, particularly near Mozambique border, the myth remains strong. Men either collect the blood after breaking girl’s hymens or after cutting their breasts-wounds that end up killing the victim-and use it themselves or sell it to men who have AIDS (Makoni, 2007).

Moreover, the biological anatomy of the female gender, especially the very young may predispose them to greater risk of HIV infection if they engage in early and indiscriminate sex compared to boys. Girls during sex may experience tear and ruptures in their private parts which consequently gives room to the HIV to enter the body. Lastly, gender relations appertaining to sexual relations in the society was a plausible
factor. Also, female condom is non available in the market, and even if available, there would certainly be certain socio-cultural and economic inhibitions to its acquisition by young girls. Moreover, just like in many other patrilineal societies, the female gender is at the receiving end on sex issues in Machakos district as well as in other Kenyan cultures.

4.4 PARENTS’ AND FAMILY MEMBERS’ ROLE IN ADOLESCENT SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

The behavioural characteristics of parents and family members and their processes (monitoring, guiding and supervision) are widely regarded as having particularly important influences on the sexual behaviour of the adolescents (Blum, 2002; Miller and Jorgensen, 1988; Njau, 1993; Rodgers, 1999). Indeed, parental and family members’ values, supervision, monitoring, communication and modelling are associated with the sexual behaviour of their children. The findings of this study portrayed very minimal interaction between parents/ family members and their children on sexuality matters. A paltry 18.2 percent of the adolescents participating in this study indicated to have received information on sexuality matters from parents as well as other family members. This was emblematic of the fact that contemporary Akamba parents and family members seemed to have abdicated on the role of guiding and enriching the young people with knowledge about sexuality and this predisposes them to risky sexual behaviour.

Further, Akamba parents according to the study were reported to be too busy in the money market to afford quality time to be with their children and supervise their activities. The siblings, aunts, uncles and grandparents were totally inaccessible due to
locational disparities, language as well as age gap incompatibilities and obsolescence. This was unlike the traditional Akamba periods when these categories of family members used to be available to supervise and instruct the youth on sexual matters. For instance, according to Kayongo-Male and Onyango (1984), grandparents played a very pivotal role as agents of socializing the young in a majority of traditional African cultures. They were instrumental in introducing young people to more sensitive topics such as husband-wife relationships and sexual behaviour, as well as the larger societal roles, values and traditions. They relied largely on folklore in socialization. After the age of ten or so, grandmothers were more closely involved with female grandchildren and grandfathers with male grandchildren.

The role of siblings in socializing each other on pertinent issues including sexuality matters was also reported in this study to be very minimal. This is unlike the traditional Akamba periods when older siblings were very heavily involved in the socialization process of their younger siblings. Elder siblings sometimes had authority equivalent to the authority of their parents over the young children (Kayongo-Male and Onyango, 1984). Further, the authors contend that the elder siblings were highly respected by their younger brothers and sisters. They were expected to sacrifice for the younger ones as if they were their own children. All that kind of expectation has dissipated over time and the role of siblings in socialization among the Akamba society has become very circumscribed just as for other categories of family members. This apparent vacuum may propel the Akamba adolescents to indulge in sexual experimentation in the face of ignorance and liberty. Moore, et al., (1986) observe that daughters of traditional parents who had communicated about sex were found to be less
likely to have had sex than daughters of more liberal parents or conservative parents who
had not communicated about sex. Additionally, lack of parental and family members
supervision on the young ones is cited as a key factor associated with early onset of
sexual activity (AGI, 1994; Kirby and Miller, 2002).

Compounded with the supervision and communication dilemma, it was observed
that when contemporary Akamba parents communicate on sexuality matters they use
euphemistic and metaphoric language, synonyms and analogies totally incomprehensible
to the modern adolescents. As reported by one adolescent, “our parents do not want to
face issues to do with sex head on”. This concurs with report by Kithaka (2006) about an
adolescent girl who narrated how one of her parents proceeded to paint the male gender
in a very grim picture. “She told us that a man is like a snake and when he raises his
head, we should run for cover lest he spits on us”. The girl who owned up to having
interacted with boys sexually was left wondering whether this parent was speculating
literally or figuratively, but was too afraid to ask. Another adolescent girl who was late
coming home from school one evening narrated having been confronted by the mother
scornfully in her mother tongue, “so you have come from being licked in the mouth?!”. The mother could not literally mention the word kissing or any other physical act! In a
related version, Nteere (2007) recounts of a fascinating observation which occurred in
Nairobi, Kenya, while standing outside a chemist: “Mummy, what are these?” a four year
old boy asked his mother, pointing at the condoms on display. Thoroughly embarrassed,
and probably not wanting to continue with the conversation, the young mother replied,
“those are insects. Don’t touch them because they will bite you.” The little boy’s hand
immediately dropped to his side and he stared at the “insects” curiously. The mother’s stern warning compelled the boy not to ask any further questions, and appeared scared!

The modern day reluctance to talk to young people about sexuality issues pragmatically and factually is reported to be widespread and in many different contexts. Research in countries as varied as Nigeria, the Philippines, Egypt and Mexico has shown that for fear of encouraging sexual activity, mothers withhold vital information about sexuality and reproduction form their daughters – imparting instead messages of danger, fear and shame (Petchesky and Judd, 1998: 305). It is evident that for young women, discussions about sex have often been limited to warnings about dangers and the importance of preserving their honour and that of the family, and this concurs with the situation among the contemporary Akamba of Machakos district. As reported in this research, Akamba parents, more so the mothers, just warn about sex and preach abstinence but do not offer alternatives.

In other circumstances, research among a variety of groups of young people in Costa Rica, Chile, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Cambodia, the Philippines and Papua New Guinea, reported that while young women may expect to receive some sex education within the family, albeit limited and focussed on the technicalities of reproduction and menstruation, young men report a virtual absence of parental information or guidance about the physiological changes associated with puberty or sex, and the responsibilities of a sexually active adult life. Information is almost solely acquired from the media and from peers and siblings, many of whom have themselves been similarly deprived of reliable adult guidance (Dowsett and Aggleton, 1997).
In the traditional Akamba culture, parents complimented the community pundits in guiding and socializing the young people on sexuality, including social responsibilities (Akong’a, 1988). Though use of songs, folklores and narratives was common in the traditional periods, the community ensured the young people comprehended the gist of the learning processes through role plays and being an active participant in the whole process of socialization. This is in total contrast to the modern Akamba parent who appears to lack the language to communicate on topical sexuality issues while the support of community has virtually dissipated due to geographical location and change of attitude in socialisation. Moreover, the modern child is no longer the asset of the Akamba community but the conjugal family. Attitudes related to upbringing and socialisation of children have totally changed and punishing another person’s child for wrong doing could lead to severe conflict and animosity between families. The “I” attitude appears to be the norm rather than “We” in socialization and by extension, this is what the children seem to subscribe to. Moreover, where some communication between the young and adult community occur, it was reported to be inconsistent, substandard (poor quality) and carried out by adults who seemingly appear not to know expectations of the young in socialization in the contemporary Akamba community.

During the fieldwork in Machakos district, one literally observed a fascinating emergence of a new culture between parents and their children, especially during the weekends. The weekend being the only available time to be with their children, the parents created outings with their young off-springs to places where alcoholic drinks, dancing and merry making were being perpetuated. Children ventured further to get into the dancing floors to imitate adult patrons and to synchronize into the art of gyration.
Parents respond by cheering, never mind that some of the songs they are dancing to are laden with suggestive lyrics, some glorifying sex, hard drinking and violence. Interestingly, the children would be dancing and singing along, oblivious to the fact that the lyrics are raunchy and obscene. This kind of behaviour would consequently make children to start assimilating adult behaviours and other hedonistic behavioural patterns at early age which may later translate into sleaze, including sexual liaisons. This observation concurs with Haffner (1999) whose findings indicated that the adolescents are not the problem, adults are, including bonafide parents. Adults do not model sexual health and behaviour well for the young people, and teenagers will behave similarly to adults when it comes to their sexuality.

Parallel observations concerning parents and family members in Machakos district were cited in relation to the sexual abuse of children especially girls under their care. This was confirmed by key informants as well as law enforcers. This finding was reinforced by the media reports in the Kenyan press, which occasionally is replete with reports of girl child sexual defilement by primary family members, some as young as 3 years (DN, 16, May, 2006; EAS, 14, Dec, 2006). Such headlines as “man arrested for impregnating daughter” (EAS, 21st December, 2006) and, “father defiles five year old daughter” (EAS, 30th December, 2006) are quite common. Amazingly, most of the sexual abuse cases of the young people by the family members indict the male relatives, with the bonafide fathers being major culprits. In a report by the UN (2007) carried out in Kenya, 75 percent of incest cases in Kenya’s urban areas are by the father, while uncles and other relatives account for 23 %. The report said 83% of abuse occurred in the child’s home, and the girl child bears the brunt of the social malady. The following cases have been
highlighted in the Kenyan press and they augment the findings of this research about incest and child abuse among Akamba people of Machakos district, Kenya:

**Case I:** ‘Father defiler, 60, gets life sentence’ (EAS, 19th December, 2007). This case involved a father who was sentenced to life imprisonment for defiling his daughter in Machakos town, Kenya. The Standard five pupil had told the court how her father, who worked as a night guard, came home at 8 PM, grabbed her (daughter) and carried her to his bed where he repeatedly defiled her before venturing to work. The girl, age 13 years, told the court that her father had defiled her on three other occasions since January, 2007. He had also warned her of dire consequences if she reported the matter to anyone.

**Case II:** ‘Girls HIV infection blamed on father’ (EAS, 14th September, 2006). In this case, a girl who was allegedly infected with HIV by her father is living at the Nyeri provincial general hospital, Kenya, for fear of punishment. The eight year old girl from Naromoru district, Kenya, refused to go home after she was discharged, saying her father who already had been arrested, had threatened her with death if she exposed her ordeal.

**Case III:** ‘70 year old man commits suicide to escape wrath of mob for incest’ (DN, 17th May, 2007). The report said that a 70 year old man committed suicide to escape the wrath of a mob that was baying for his blood for impregnating his granddaughter. That he had also fathered the mother of the child through an incestuous relationship with his own daughter, is to say the least, most bizarre.

**Case IV:** ‘Father rapes daughter, 9, burns her’ (EAS, 9th June, 2007). A school girl had been hospitalised after her father allegedly raped her. And in a move aimed at erasing evidence, the suspect burnt the standard two pupil all over her body-including her private parts-using a hot iron rod.
Case V: ‘Father denies raping his teenage daughter’ (Sunday Nation, 10th June, 2007). This case involves a man who had been charged in an Eldoret district court, Kenya, with raping his teenage daughter. According to the paper, the court heard that on 13th May 2007, the man raped his daughter, 17, at their home, and that he further had caused her grievous harm.

Case VI: ‘Unbelievable Act’ (EAS, 13th March, 2007). Officials of Naivasha Disadvantaged Support Group are pictured counselling a 13 year old girl who had allegedly been defiled and impregnated by her real father.

Case VII: “I saw father in bed with my sister” says woman (EAS, 30th January, 2007). In this particular case, a father at the centre of incest trial tried to bribe his daughter with Ksh. 500 after she caught him in bed with her elder sister, a court was told in Naivasha district, Kenya.

It is important to note that incest has been documented as a universal phenomenon that is entrenched in a majority of global cultures, but many victims and cultures hardly report of its existence. This is because incest has been a taboo to most global cultures and the perception of what is incest in one culture may not be viewed as incest in the other. Further, there are existing socio-cultural, familial and psychological impediments which may inhibit an incestuously abused person from reporting such a case. Moreover, the stigma and embarrassment in most cultures associated with incest may act as a deterrent to bring the issue in the public domain.

Several sociologists and anthropologists state that the universal prohibition on incest was very effective in the past (traditional) simply because sex between close
family members was viewed to jeopardise the existence of cultures. The effective prohibition of incest was linked with the functioning of society, while the abolition of incest was accomplished at the beginning of human cultures (Demause, 1991). Sigmund Freud proposed that incest taboo was necessary to act as a reaction against unconscious and unacceptable desires (Oedipus and Electra complexities) according to the Psychoanalytic theory (Freud, 1958). Leslie White further observes that without it (incest taboo), “Social evolution could have gone no further on the human level than among the anthropoids” (Demause, 1991). Other explanations offered for the renunciation of incest in most global cultures include the biological impairments attendant upon inbreeding. This view is predicated on the biological explanations that sex and conception between people of similar genes may lead to gene degeneration or genetic disorders which subsequently would result in the production of very weak human beings (with very weak immunity), albinism (as a result of mutation) as well as producing morons. This consequence has in the past been witnessed within the royal and aristocratic kingdoms in Egypt (Cleopatra) and Hawaiian royal fraternity, resorting to urgent need for exogamy in order to sustain the kingdoms (Ember, et al, 2002). Other factors according to Demause (1991) and Ember, et al. (2002), would include the utility of social alliances (Cooperation theory), the collapse of the family if sexual rivalry is allowed (Family-disruption theory) and even boredom with family members (Child familiarity theory).

Demause (1991) further identifies two types of incest: direct incest; that is, overt sexual activity between family members other than spouses; and indirect incest, the providing of children by their parents to others in order for them to be sexually molested. Demause avers that arranging for children to have sex with other household members or
neighbours is usually motivated by the incestuous wishes of the parent; and in any case, it is usually perceived by the child to be similar to direct incest. This study concurs with Dmause (1991) who demonstrates that contemporary incest and abuse among the young usually involves a guardian or parent, who, if not the direct perpetrator (as was mostly the case in Machakos district and Kenya by extension), covertly or indirectly brings about the incident with "others" in order to satisfy their own incestuous wishes.

A stupefying case of indirect incest was reported in the United States of America, in Cincinnati, of parents jailed for "Raping their kids" (TOI, 1st August, 2006). According to the report, the mother (26 years) was jailed to 40 years for molesting, at least, one of her five children and prompting the other four to have sex with each other. The lady and her husband, 32, had, sexually abused their four sons and one daughter, ages 1 to 6, in 2004. In March (2006), the husband received five life sentences on five rape charges and 96 additional years on 12 charges. The man (husband) had encountered an undercover secret service agent in March, 2006, in an internet chat room called "Baby and Pre-teen Sex". He had offered to rape his 3-year old daughter live on the internet if another person would do the same.

This study also unearthed information about cousin to cousin sexual liaisons and endogamous relations (clan based) among the contemporary Akamba adolescents, as well as sibling to sibling, especially early child play and by extension when in certain circumstances siblings shared a bed or bedroom. Incestuous sexual episodes were literally proscribed in traditional Akamba culture (Gehman, 1989; Kimilu, 1962). The range of physical contact between children and their parents was very well defined as well as sexual relations between family members. According to Kayongo-Male and Onyango
most African cultures forbid endogamous sexual relations as well as all forms of luscious relations especially amongst cognatic relatives.

Penwill (1951) points out that, among the Akamba people,

"If a man had intercourse with his sister or daughter or mother, he would in former times have been beaten or tortured by his clan. He would also be required to pay a goat and bull for purification ceremonies. In these traditional periods, intercourse with a sister, she could not be married until after purification; and if with a daughter, the man must leave his wife until purification had taken place. There was no legal penalty for the woman in these cases, save the reproach of the clan and social stigma" (Penwill 1951: 76-77).

It is worth noting that the Akamba family (Musyi) that traditionally formed a closely knit community has totally collapsed. By extension too, the clan system which for a long time provided codes and means of social control among its members (appertaining incest and sexual impropriety) are not as strong as they were in the traditional periods. As observed in this research, young people are no longer conscious or aware of the existence of the clan groups and their cultural proscriptions as well as prescriptions. Equally, marrying, romancing or cohabiting with a member of one’s clan, a traditional abhorrent practice is un-known in the contemporary Akamba youth.

Lastly, the entry of the house workers, helpers or maids in the modern family because of certain macro-economic changes in the society which require the parents to be wholesomely involved in the money market has seriously confounded the whole process.
of socialization—of the young ones in their family. Housemaids are a post-modern attribute among the Akamba people, very common with the educated, urban and employed (money market) parents. Their role has been to act as proxies in the absence of the parents in care taking and nurturance of the young ones. Through observation and personal communication, it was very clear that children of urban Akamba parents as well as the educated in rural areas spent more time with the housemaids than the parents, and may at other times view especially the mother as a disciplinarian. According to Kayongo-Male and Onyango (1984), the child may systematically start confiding his/her secrets to the house maid than the mother, eventually the mother getting fully alienated from the child’s social life. Further, most house workers have such a lower educational background, others are school dropouts especially due to poverty and early pregnancies, while their home background is quite different that she inadvertently presents an alternative moral and value system to that of the parents. Adolescent boys in Machakos district intimated that housemaids literally introduce them to pre-marital sex (mind you most house girls are at the age of the children they are meant to nurse), while young girls learn about the nitty-gritty of sex and contraceptives from the house girls. This nexus of house girl-children orientation is confirmed by Akonga (1988) and Kioli (1997) who observe that housemaids are key initiators, and influence the sex life of the young under their care while in turn, their employers especially men have been found out to be sex predators’ to the house helpers. Finally, Kayongo-Male and Onyango (1984) assert that parents or employers have less control over such servants in sense that the house helps are often strangers with no moral obligation to the parents. If they are poorly paid they may revenge themselves by taking a deeper hold on the children.
In order to illustrate the intensity of house-help/girl's influence into the sexual life of her employers, an episode was narrated of how a house-girl in Nairobi, Kenya, had an intimate sexual affair with the male household head (partiarch), and in turn had an illicit sexual interaction with his two male adolescents in the early 1990s. Tragically, in that circle of family passion, one of them happened to be HIV positive. Ultimately, the father and his two sons, the housemaid and their unsuspecting mother got infected with the HIV virus. The multiplier effect of this HIV infection may have been more potent assuming that all the aforementioned parties could also have had other exterior sexual relations. It is said that this whole family has over time been wiped out by HIV/AIDS complications (personal communication).

4.5 THE FUNCTION OF THE MASS MEDIA AND PEERS IN EXPLAINING ADOLESCENT SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

4.5.1 THE MASS MEDIA

The mass media (electronics and print) has been reported as predominant source of sexual behaviour information by the adolescents as well as key informants in this research. Studies indicate that modern mass media is beset with sexual contents and connotations targeting the youth, and this affects the sexual activity of young people and their beliefs about sex (FOCUSAS, 2005; Kabatesi, 1995; NCPTG, 2000; SIECUS, 2005). According to a study by FOCUSAS (2005), children are bombarded with sexual content and messages in the media in that;
• In 2003, 83 percent of the episodes of the top 20 shows among teen viewers contained some sexual content, including 20% with sexual intercourse.

• 43% of the secular music in 1999 contained sexual content—19% included direct descriptions of sexual intercourse.

• On average, music videos contain 93 sexual situations per hour, including even "hard core" scenes depicting behaviours such as intercourse, caressing and oral sex.

• Boys and girls who listen to lots of music with sexual tones were almost twice as likely to start sexual activities and with multiple partners within the following two years compared to those who listen to little or no sexually explicit music (FOCUSAS, 2005: 1-9).

The Akamba adolescents with access to mass media messages demonstrated a penchant for soap operas, music and movies in the television while a similar pattern was observed for cinema movies. A closer observation to the soap opera's or serial programmes running in the Kenya television networks revealed that a majority of their episodes and main themes are pegged on sex, drugs or violence. The most classic example was the 'Bold and Beautiful', apparently running in the Kenyan media (KBC) for the past almost 20 years, and happened to be the most popular. Incidentally, this Soap Opera rotates on romantic and incestuous affairs between family members whereby a leading lady character, Brooke Logan, is first married by the patriarch of the family (Eric forester). After some time they break off, then she gets married by his first son, (Ridge Forrester), whom they also break off, then, overtime she is seen in a ceremony wedding
Thorn, Ridge's younger Brother. The serial programme is outrageously incestuous and fascinatingly, it is rated as the most watched programme in Kenya as well as in other parts of the world. According to the Soap Opera Digest Magazine (2007), the Bold and Beautiful programme accounts for over 450 million daily viewers around the world and its influence on the sexual behaviours of the fanatics cannot be gainsaid. Moreover, the soap's small cast apart from leading to incestuous love triangles among family members and in-laws, it is morally wrong, in some cultures, especially traditional African cultures, where incest is abominable.

In relation to music, reggae and hip hop were amongst the most appealing to the contemporary Akamba adolescents. According to one key informant (secondary teacher) participating in this study, whether its hip-hop, reggae, rap, pop or rock, much of popular music aimed at teens contains sexual overtones. Its influence on their behaviour appears to depend on how the sex is portrayed. Some songs depict men as "sex driven studs", women as "sex objects" and with explicit references to sex acts, they are more likely to trigger early and irresponsible sexual behaviour than those where sexual references are more veiled and relationships appear more committed. Further, exposure to sexually degrading music gives them a specific message about sex. Boys learn that they should be relentless in their pursuit of women and girls learn to view themselves as sex givers (Kabatesi; 1995).

A case in point which exemplified the sexist view in modern music was in the year 2004 when two famous American Pop Musicians Justin Timberlake and Janet Jackson engaged in an incident presently popularly dubbed the "Nipplegate". In this incident, Timberlake pulled down Janet Jackson's top to flash her breast at the 2004
music concert and the incident has topped a poll of the 25 Biggest Celebrity Scandals since 1982 (Soap Opera Digest Magazine, 2007). According to the magazine, the incident was an indicator to how Hollywood was “Polluting Kids Minds”. There were over 90 million people believed to have watched this episode, many of them children and adolescents and thus, the incident became a flash point for family-value activists and campaigners to indict popular music and Hollywood to the uncharacteristic sexual behaviour in the modern times. Indeed, it is clear that the modern young people (both urban and rural) base their identities on musicians and movie celebrities, thus, what they see, hear and conceptualise, will ultimately be ingrained and consequently, put into practice.

Moreover, a closer observation to the marketing of goods and services in the Kenyan market, especially goods of aesthetics, telecommunication, clothes, vehicles and even food stuffs, the aspect of “sex” has to feature somewhere, even if very subtle. Indeed, television advertisements of most goods and services can only be described as indecent, vulgar and sexually suggestive. This is symbolically expedited through presenting the very gorgeous girls and boys adjacent to the products, skimpily and scantily dressed with a raunchy or racy pose. The mass media marketing strategy is targeting the youth who happen to be the majority and main consumers. Apparently, a sales executive with a leading alcoholic firm, Kenya, in a personal communication (pc) pointed out that sex overtones have to be ejected into marketing and advertisements for it captures consumers’ moods, emotions and values, which trigger purchasing and consumption capacity.
Oyuga Pala, a popular Kenyan satirist succinctly avers that, “Sex sells”, and indeed, it is an advertising Mantra (Pala, 2007). Further more, the notion of using luscious advertisements is quite a global malady. In India, July 2007, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting had to ban two underwear advertisements, felt to be inappropriate. One of the adverts was showing a woman washing a man’s underwear at a ghat and progressively getting ‘turned on’. Her washing actions were turning more suggestive as she pounded the underwear. In the other, a washer woman calls at an apartment to pick up laundry and a man wearing a towel answers the door. As his towel drops, leaving him only in his underwear, she eyes him flirtatiously! (TOI, July 27, 2007:6)

Njaramba (2005), an editor with Noel Creative Media (Kenya) encapsulates the mass media issues by stating,

"From the sitting room to the entertainment spots, messages are posted which scream Sex! Sex! and more Sex! Scantily dressed men and women are all over the television screens in the form of advertisements, music programmes and soap opera, stocking the exuberance of young boys and girls. The lyrics are not only better, “manyake all sizes” “Leo Niko Kwa Keja”, “nataka kukushika more”, are among the messages coming to our teenagers. Even if such music is banned in the house, the “matatu” your kid uses to and from school is loudly playing such music, music that you would be mortified to the bone listening to. The FM stations and a hoard of magazines have not been left behind in this grand conspiracy. They appear to be in a deadly competition on who presents the most luscious and sexually appealing cabaret. The more revealing the pictures, the hotter they are. And the messages “its your body, your life and..."
Modern youth dancing styles are equally obscene and sexually cathartic. An observation in the night clubs and discotheques frequented by adolescents and college students in Machakos urban centres vindicated above statement in the sense that dancing styles are quite suggestive and bumper to bumper hip hop style. Indeed, as observed by Mr. Muthiani (an educationist) in Machakos town, “boys and girls get their thrill out of a new version of dirty dancing, which is quite titillating, with heavy gyrations, in a purely sexual portrayal way.” This was common for both the sexes.

This study found out that over 50 percent of the sexually experienced adolescents participating in this study adored soap operas, pornographic movies, listened to hip-hop and reggae music and admired magazines articles classified under family and sex life experiences. Another fundamental observation was that all the four (4) students who reported in the study to have access to internet services were apparently sexually experienced.

This information confirms what Mitchell (1971) pointed out that apart from encouraging sexual experimentation, watching, imagining or reading about sexual activity is itself sexually arousing. The most worrying aspect is that the abundant sexual media messages reach the young ones before puberty and this partly confirms the pre-adolescent sexual involvement findings by this study. This study further concurs with Coleman and Hendry (1990) who argued that pre-adolescent sex occurs as result of the highly suggestive stimuli presented to young people, usually through the medium of
television but also in films, literature, internet and pop music. Sex in this context is usually portrayed with a materialistic emphasis and is often associated with theme of immediate gratification. It is the contention of this research that young people are thus almost bullied into sexual activity by the social environment (awash with sexuality explicit messages) long before they are mature or have reached puberty proper.

In relation to the traditional Akamba culture, both print and electronic media were bereft due to technological obscurity. The culture of consumerism perpetuated by Western media started finding its root after the Second World War but became more pronounced between 1960 and today with the unabated spread of capitalism and materialism. Before contact with colonialists in the 20th century, the Akamba people lived a simple life without the television, radio, internet and all other forms of modern telecommunication. In a nutshell then, the traditional Akamba society was devoid of mass media influences to their social life.

According to Ndeti (1972), the Akamba people instead had nocturnal dances “Mbathí sya anake”, translated to mean song and dance for the youth. Young men and women participated under the elderly guidance and Kimilu (1962) points out that there was no blatant exposure of bodies or nudity during the process of dancing. This ensured decency in dancing, which is in total contrast to the modern cloth pattern in dancing.

Lastly, Machakos town is systematically emerging as a town of night clubs. As observed, girls and boys in their teenage or in early twenties prowl in packs of two to four in these nightclubs, casting meaningful glances at any passing young men and women. In Ngungani club, Boma club, Kyama Inn, Ikuuni Hotel, Kisambalau Bar, among others, young women and men dance for hours, sing to their music lyrics with some appearing in
very exposing and skimpy dresses. Sexual scenes are quite explicit (in dance, posture, clothing and gesture) and indeed, this view demonstrates how young people in Machakos town are exponentially getting exposed to the post-modern culture of seeking pleasure. It is noteworthy that most revellers to the Machakos nightclubs especially weekend nights are college, and by extension, secondary school students from within and without Machakos town. An intriguing episode occurred in May 2006, when over 20 school going adolescent boys were roughed up by the police in a Machakos town bar (DN, 8th May, 2006). Some were reported to be heavily inebriated.

4.5.2 THE PEERS AND ADOLESCENT SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

Studies undertaken in other societies indicate that the adolescents have a great deal of influence over each other (Billy and Udry, 1985; Njau, 1993; Miller and Moore 1990; SIECUS, 2005; Silva, et al., 1998; Padilla-Walker, 2007). Indeed, the role played by the peers in the transmission of knowledge, attitudes and practices in relation to intimate aspects of life including love and sex is quite significant. In a study by SIECUS (2005):

- A much higher percentage of sexually active adolescents believed their peers as well to be sexually active.

- Adolescents who believe many or all of their peer group to be sexually active are more than twenty (20) times as likely to have their first coital experience than those who believe that none of their friends are sexually active (SIECUS, 2005: 5).
Allport (1969) points out that adolescents who have friends who strongly encourage sex experimentation or dwell more on the “sex talk” than other issues are the ones more apt to provide justification for their aggressive sexual activity and vice versa. Further, a number of retrospective studies indicate that the more frequently and the earlier an adolescent is in an intimate love relationship with another or date, the earlier it is to feel or get obliged to indulge in sexual activity (Bearman and Bruckner, 1999; SIECUS, 2005).

This study concurs with above mentioned study findings since 71.2% of the sexually experienced Akamba adolescents indicated their main source of information on sexual behaviour was from their peers. There is evidence from elsewhere in Africa to suggest that peers have become more important sources of knowledge, advice and support. In Malawi, for example, 60 percent of girls interviewed reported having learned about menstruation from friends not from their grandmothers or advisors as traditionally occurred (Helitzer-Allen, 1994). To demonstrate the intensity of peer influence on the behaviour of one another during adolescence, a true case study was narrated by an adolescent boy about how his friend found himself in a severe STD medical predicament due to misadvice from a peer.

According to the story, a boy in one of the boarding schools in Machakos district found that he had been infected with an STD during one of the holidays. He discovered this while in school after holiday and the only thing that came to his mind first was to inform his closest friend (classmate) and seek his advice. Fascinatingly, the friend is said to have taken it as a simple matter, subsequently, advising this infected boy to buy paraffin that evening and, pour some drops to the affected area (urethra) with the belief
that it will heal. The loyal friend religiously did as he was told without giving it a second thought. That evening, he bought a bottle of paraffin from the nearby shops, locked himself in the dormitory when others had gone for evening preps, and poured drops of this corrosive substance to his urethra as earlier advised. It turned out that, it degenerated into a lethal wound, some parts of his genitalia had been burned and severed by the corrosive substance and the boy could not walk the third day. The school management consequently came to know about it, but it was too late since the boy’s reproductive system, including critical ducts had been severed. This act put the future reproductive health of the boy in jeopardy!!

It is important to note that the aforementioned case of misadvise is emblematic of the kind of lay information as well as ignorance the young people have about sexuality matters. It also indicates the loyalty and trust the young people bear on each other on matters to do with sexuality.

Moreover, 66.2% of adolescents in this study reported that they knew their friends indulged in sexual activity. The study also revealed that a large proportion of the adolescents, 40.4% centred their discussions on matters classified under likely to lead to irresponsible sexual behaviour. In addition, 35.5% of the boys and 29.5% of adolescent girls in the study had intimate relations (heterosexual relations) and over half of them were sexually experienced. The study thus confirms that the urgency with which an adolescent is likely to indulge in coital relations is to a considerable degree of his/her peer group association, heterosexual relationship and orientation. Further, the study concurs with Erikson (1971) that adolescents are likely to behave at the behest of each
other and more so, in their endeavour to establish an identity, conform to the authority and attention of their peer group.

Miller, et al., (1993) assert that the earlier the dating experience begins for an adolescent, the more likely he or she is to become involved in one or more steady and committed relationships which increase their likelihood of sexual experiences. The typical relationship progression is to date and subsequently develop a sexual relationship. This assertion corroborates the findings in Machakos district which found out that early heterosexual relations predispose adolescents to early sexual experimentation. It was evident in this study that 80.2 percent of girls with boyfriends and 91 percent of boys with girlfriends had experimented on sex. Sex in such a circumstance occurs either voluntarily or through date rape (acquaintance rape). In a similar study in the United States, among girls whose first date took place at the age 14 or younger, Thornton (1990) found out that two thirds of them had gone steady before age 16, and the girls who had begun to date between the age of 16 and 18, however, one third had not gone steady. Acquaintance rape or date rape, was also confirmed to be an increasing problem in studies done in the United States among high school and college campus students (Christopher and Kisler, 2004). Similarly, acquaintance rape was reported to be quite common among adolescent boys and girls in Machokas district. It is mostly perpetuated by the boys especially when girls accompany or visit their cubes, in the bush or classroom.

The traditional Akamba society had its own institutionalized way of socializing the youth especially on matters to do with heterosexual and peer relations. All the young people were introduced to similar informal education and according to Kimilu (1962), the youth were exposed to a common code of ethics, values and beliefs from which they
would derive their self-control and respect for each other in their experiences as adapted members of the society. The peers formed part of the community agents who provided guidance and counselling to each other and this ensured smooth transition. Kenyatta (1962) observes that the teaching of social obligation amongst the traditional African cultures to “riika” or age group bound them together. Further, men and women circumcised at the same time stood in the very closest relationship to each other. They were like siblings and must not do any wrong to each other, otherwise it would become a serious magico-religious offence. The peers “riika” was thus a powerful instrument for securing conformity in the traditional societies according to Kenyatta (1962). The traditional Akamba youth peers buttressed the community efforts in helping each other adjust to life properly. They were thus well informed in sexuality issues as well as in other social responsibility concerns. There was no misadvice or naivety as appertained to sexuality matters. This places them in total contrast to the “riika” (age mates) of today whom this study indicate are ill-informed, are endowed with lay knowledge and misadvise each other on sexuality issues.

4.6 THE AKAMBA COMMUNITY AND ROLE OF COMMUNITY LEADERS IN ADOLESCENT SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR.

4.6.1 ROLE OF AKAMBA COMMUNITY

The findings of this study were quite revealing in many respects on the role of the community around the adolescents and its leaders in terms of accounting for adolescent sexual behaviour. The social and cultural context under which an adolescent is placed
determines his or her eventual behaviour (Njau, 1993; Smolicz, 2004). The dichotomy between traditional (rural) and modernity (urban) placement of the young ones explains variations in the sexual behaviour manifestations. According to Munywoki (2000), adolescents brought up in a rural setup are likely to be inhibited by cultural norms to delay sex indulgence compared to those in an urban ambience. Cultural norms in a rural environment are stringent to certain sexual behaviours, subservience to authority is the norm while proximity and observation of young ones' activities and their behaviours is a bit elaborate and enhanced in a rural setup. This is unlike an urban (modern) environment where according to Smolicz (2004), there is breakdown of traditional value systems governing interaction; life is quite impersonal and encapsulated with considerable cultural stagnation and distortion. Life becomes permissive and may eventually lead to an anomic situation. Subsequently, inhibitions to certain forms of sexual behaviour indulgences are quite obsolete.

The above sentiments echo this study to some degree in the sense that Akamba adolescents in urban areas or areas closer to urban life in Machakos district reported to indulge in coital relations at an earlier age compared to the rural Akamba adolescents. A fascinating observation in the study was that Akamba adolescents in rural areas begin sex relatively at a later age but demonstrated a greater degree or pattern of indulgence in later life of adolescence than the urban based adolescents. This study further concurs with a similar study in Kenya by Njau (1993), who reported that adolescents in Kiambu district (urban and cosmopolitan) started coital relations preferably at an early age than their counterparts in Narok district (rural and homogeneous).
Other supplementary explanations have been adduced to this regional disparity. Across cities and towns, girls and boys are reaching puberty faster than before. For instance, the age of attaining sexual maturity for girls in urban centres has dropped to below 11 years from the global average of thirteen years (AGI, 1994; Rees, 1993). This will imply that girls may experiment on sex earlier than before. In Nairobi, Kenya, for instance, according to Youri (1994), a girl delivered at age ten years and three months implying she must have conceived at age 9.5 years and most likely engaged in sexual intercourse even earlier. Similarly, in Bomet district, Kenya, a 10 year old standard three pupil dropped out of school due to pregnancy in 2005 (DN, November, 2nd 2005). Other factors, explaining this drop in sexual maturity could be better nutrition, change in hormonal patterns, new food habits, genetic factors, environmental changes and upbringing. Furthermore, it has been documented that the stress of family breakdowns and conflicts could be causing children to reach puberty earlier (Bellis, 2006). The author believes that prolonged stress may speed up puberty by altering the balance of growth hormones and other chemicals in the body, and one of the causes could be the trauma of watching parents spilt. In his article in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, Bellis (2006) says "stress is a puberty accelerator with familial disruptions, including father absenteeism, being one of the most effective stressors and levels of divorce, as well as single parent families which apparently have rapidly escalated in many cultures".

The impact of the adult community to the sex life of the adolescents has also been documented in a number of retrospective studies (Dusek, 1991; Haffner, 1999; Laumann, 1996). The history of adolescent sexuality has largely been a history of rape or sexual
molestation by the adult community, forced childhood marriage, manipulation for sex or simply inappropriate touching (Males, 1996). The younger the age of the first sexual intercourse, the more likely it is coercive or manipulated, and has severe future implications into the sex life of the adolescent. Further, women and men who recall childhood genital contact with adults are nearly three times as likely to report having had their first sexual intercourse before age 15 compared to those who did not have such an experience (Laumann, 1996). A UN annual report (2006) indicates that one in every four women aged between twelve and twenty four in Kenya lose their virginity through force with many predators being the male adult community. In a similar study, almost one in four girl children in Kenya aged thirteen years report having been sexually propositioned, mostly by an adult (Johnston, 2002). In an equivalent report compiled by Gender Violence and Recovery Centre, it is estimated that more than 60 females are raped daily in Kenya, with the youngest rape survivor being Five (5) months while the oldest 86 years (GVRC, 2007). Media reports are evidence enough into the magnitude of the sexual malaise to the young, especially girls in Kenya. Girls are sexually molested as young as 3 years with the peak being 8 to 16 years, while, 16,482 rape cases were reported in Kenya in 2005 (Odhiambo, 2006). Males (1996) observes that sixty percent of more of all teen births in the globe are fathered by an adult male and nearly all STDs and HIV/AIDS among teens – male and female – are contracted from adult males and females.

The phenomenon of childhood and adolescence sexual abuse is reported to be common in both developed and developing countries. A UN report (2007) says 150 million girls and 73 million boys on the globe experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence in 2002, mostly by adults. Further, according to AGI
(1994), seventy four percent (74%) of young women in America who had intercourse before age 14, and 60 percent of young women who had sex before 15 reported having had sex involuntarily (coerced or raped). This corroborates study findings by Health Policy Initiative in Kenya (2007) which reported that a third of adolescent girls' first sexual experience in Kenya is coerced. In a parallel manner, nearly 200,000 rapes are reported each year in the United States, with adults as main perpetrators (Santrock, 2005).

In India, the media is invariably awash with reports and court cases of elderly (adults) defiling minors (TOI, 28th July, 2007; TOI, 6th August, 2007). Statistics released from Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) (2007) in New Delhi, indicate 54.6% boys and 22.5% girls have faced severe forms of abuse namely rape, sodomy and touching, fondling and being forced to exhibit private parts and photographed in nude. In a supplementary observation, the National Crime Records Bureau (2007) indicates that every hour that ticks in India inflicts more brutality on women, with two rapes or kidnappings, four molestations and seven incidents of cruelty to women including young girls by relatives or general community. The report further observes that every hour at least 18 women including young girls in the country (India) were victimised or sexually abused in 2006, and more disturbingly, most cases were not reported while the number of abuses is swiftly increasing (NCRB, 2007). In a related manner, although many cases go unreported in Kenya as well as other sub-Saharan Africa, the KDHS (2003) report that 30% of adolescents aged 15-19 years have either experienced physical or sexual abuse, with one in every four girls and one in every ten boys being sexually abused in Kenya. The following rape and child molestation cases by adult community suffice to explain the gravity of the situation in Kenya:
Case I: ‘Man gets seven years for rape of minor’ (DN, 14th February, 2006). In this case a man was jailed for seven years by a Kenyan court for defiling a seven year old girl.

Case II: ‘Girl, 6, in gang rape ordeal’ (DN, 27th March, 2007). In this case, an outing by a family ended on a sad note after a six-year-old daughter was defiled by a gang and dumped near a road.

Case III: ‘Varsity student raped and killed near campus’ (Sunday Nation, 17th June, 2007). In this case, a third year student at the University of Nairobi was raped, killed and the body dumped near the Campus.

Case IV: ‘Watchman, 55, in court over rape of pupils’ (DN, 3rd May, 2007). This case involved a night watchman accused of raping three primary school girls in Kirinyanga district, Kenya, and all girls were aged between seven and nine years.

Case V: ‘Girl 11, defiled, abandoned in town’ (Citizen, 30th April, 2007). This episode involved an 11 year old orphaned girl, defiled overnight and dumped by the road side in Vihiga district, Kenya.

Case VI: ‘Two cases, first case, a child rapist gets 20 years Jail term in Bungoma district, Kenya, while in the second case, a man is jailed for 32 years for raping a girl, 12 years in Laikipia, Kenya and infecting her with an STD’ (DN, 5th July, 2007).

These aforementioned cases and many more which may pass unreported are quite appalling and demonstrate a socio-pathic society. It is a strong indicator of breakdown in standards governing morality in modern society and total travesty to the expected integrity and dignity of African culture. Interestingly, inspite of modernity and cultural
change, another form of child abuse is continuously being reported among several Kenya
ethic groups in the form of child marriage. The phenomenon of child marriage or
betrothal has dissipated within the Akamba culture as reported during this research, but it
is being practised amongst other cultural groups in Kenya and outside. In a classic case, a
standard three pupil was married off to a 45 year old man in West Pokot district, Kenya.
The man had paid a bride-price of 14 cows to the father to marry the 12 year old girl
(DN, 10th November, 2006). Intriguingly, the paper reported that about 10 elderly men
whisked her to the groom who was waiting at a “manyatta” or a Pokot traditional hut.
Similarly, more than 300 pupils from a girls’ school in Kapenguria district, Kenya, had
staged a demonstration (dharna) protesting against the early marriage of five (5) girls
from their school who had been married off by their parents (DN, 10th November, 2006).
Early marriage is also reported among the Somali people of Republic of Somaliland and
among those from Garrisa, Kenya, where, a program officer with UNICEF avers, “In one
community, I was told that huts for newly weds are situated 200 meters from the main
house because the groom’s parents did not want to hear underage (already married) girls
screams at night when her husband had sex with her. This is torture. I know even the
men here would not enjoy sex in such circumstances” (DN, 9th May, 2007:7). Further, in
other parts of Africa, for instance parts of Zambia, girls marry at the age of 10 years and
it is common to find a girl aged 13 years having a baby aged 3 years (Akong’a, 1988: 11).

Child marriage has also been reported in some parts of South Asia (India, Nepal
and Bangladesh). In India for instance, in the Gujjar community, state of Rajasthan, girls
are married off also as young as 10 years (Sunday Express, 30th September, 2007).
According to the report, mass child weddings still flourish despite the ban. Most of these
underage weddings are fixed by parents and are quite rampant in Southern and Western Rajasthan on Akshaya Tritya Day, considered auspicious since no Mahurats (ceremonies) are required. A parallel trend of child-wives has been documented to exist in Ranga Reddy district, Andhra Pradesh State, India. A recent study by MV Foundation, an NGO working to curb child labour in the state, indicated that more and more minor girls were married off by their parents (TOI, 23rd November, 2007). In this study, the NGO found that 8 out of 10 girls are married off before they attain the age of 18, with some as young as 13 years. Additionally, a study by the New Delhi based Centre for Social Research (CSR) (2008), more than 77% of caste and community groups in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, 41% in state of Rajasthan and 10% in state of Uttar Pradesh have been found to still indulge in child marriages. It found that customs and traditions – not poverty – being the main reason for the continued perpetration of the trend. Notwithstanding absence of child betrothal among Akamba people, sexual interaction between adolescent boys and girls and adult community in Machakos district was quite explicit in this study. Over eight percent of adolescent boys and girls reported that their first sexual experience was as a result of force (rape), inducement or manipulation, while 17.1 percent adolescent boys and girls had indicated to have had sex with elderly people, prostitutes, house helps (maids) and also by people they could not identify. The main predators as enumerated by adolescents and key informants in Machakos district were relatives, shopkeepers, neighbours, anonymous male rapists, while other sexual predators were those under whom the adolescents were under their care namely teachers, drivers and family friends. Force, rape and manipulated sex by the adult community could be one of the culpable reasons to the early sex indulgence by adolescent boys and girls, reported
to be at 6.6 percent before age ten years in Machakos district (Kenya) by the time of this study. Adolescents in Machakos district also reported that many children both at home and school were suffering sexual abuse in the hands of their adult caretakers in silence. The factors adduced for being silent included most sexual abuse being non-violent, especially in the initiation of the sexual act, thus child’s ignorance about it. There is also feeling of shame and guilt and lack of courage to expose abusers while others may not know sexual abuse is wrong. In other circumstances, abused adolescents are discouraged or induced with favours not to expose sexual abuse by their own relatives. Furthermore, most young Akamba adolescents do not know the exact Akamba word for rape thus just keep quiet. Moreover, some parents connive with the abusers and get paid or “compensated” to keep quiet or just withdraw a case.

The traditional Akamba custom virulently frowned upon rape and paedophilia. According to Penwill (1951), such an act as rape would have certainly led to fighting between the families or clans concerned, and probably with several deaths. If the act had aroused the indignation of the community, the culprit would be executed by “king’ole” (public gathering convened to effect capital punishment on a habitual criminal). If a man had intercourse with a child not yet past puberty, customary penalty was cleansing and fine payment through goats (Penwill, 1951: 74-75). In a supplementary view, Gehman (1989:51) points out that rape was even considered to be a more serious crime in the traditional Akamba culture for it was believed that if somebody’s daughter was raped, all the evils of the dead relatives would follow her. As a result of this belief, the punishment for a rapist in Akamba culture was execution by public executioners, “Kingole”.

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4.6.2 ROLE OF THE SCHOOL, CHURCH AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Although comprehensive studies have not been undertaken in Kenya on how the school and teachers engenders adolescent sexual behaviour, data available indicates that both have a stake in accounting to adolescent sexual behaviour. For instance, the school is supposed to be the purveyor of reproductive knowledge and health including socio-cultural and morality knowledge as subject matters in biology, social ethics and religious studies, but according to Nyamongo (1995), although sexuality and morality issues are covered in the syllabus, teachers are shy teaching the subject. Some teachers just mention only well known points about the subject superficially, discourage students not to have sex but do not cover well the intricacies of sexuality. Consequently, the adolescent is left incapacitated in terms of knowledge on sexuality matters. Teachers who participated in the FGDs during research confirmed that the time allocated for a class session (40 minutes) could not allow them to cover sexuality matters in depth. In addition, due to sensitivity and the taboo associated with talk of sex in modern African cultures, teachers found themselves totally inhibited or in awkward situations to discuss sex in class, some of whom are friends' children, relative or their own.

Paradoxically, as young people stay in schools longer, delay in securing a career and also delay marriage, the more they are likely to engage in pre-marital sex (UN, 1989; WHO, 1989 a). Indeed, as the age at marriage increases, the age of sexual debut remains the same. This means that there is a longer window where young people are not in a stable relationship or marriage, thus increasing the possible exposure to sexual risks. It is also presumed that prolonged schooling period increases sexual risk behaviours due to spontaneous relations as well as multiple and casual sexual partners. Moreover, according
to UN annual report (2006), inspite of the values of education in society, schools are not necessarily safe havens for girls as teachers and older boys compel or manipulate them into sexual intercourse.

School going Akamba adolescents in Machakos district ascertained that teacher-cum-student intimate affairs were quite prevalent but subtle. Moreover, girls were reported to be in a position where they are subdued by teacher’s position (fear and favours) into sex while others were known to have consensual relationships, with both as interested parties. Additionally, mixed schools in Machakos district were reported to provide a forum and opportunity for establishing and running heterosexual relations amongst adolescents themselves as well as their mentors. Despite the existing lacuna of research information about teachers/students affairs, data is abound in Kenyan press as well as from personal communication with several key stakeholders in education that teacher-cum-student affairs are quite rampant, though discreet, while others are predicated on coercion, manipulation or favours, like the popular “Sex-for-Marks lecturers or teachers”, affairs (EAS, 11th June, 2007). The extent of teacher-student sex or love relationships have succinctly been captured by the mass media in the globe, in spite the existing paucity of such data in academic research.

Case I: ‘US teacher charged with student sex, surrenders’ (TOI, 17th November, 2006). In this particular case, a 29 year-old lady teacher at a Denver-area high school had turned herself to the authorities on a charge of having a sexual encounter with her 17-year-old student.

Case II: ‘2 teachers in China face death sentence for prostitution’ (Xinhua News Agency, 19th December, 2007). In this case, a court in Southern China sentenced a couple to death
for forcing primary and high school children into prostitution. Both teachers were reported to have forced 23 girls, including 14 underage, into prostitution between March and June, 2006.

**Case III:** ‘Gujarat Girl, India, alleges rape by six teachers for six months’ (TOI, 3rd February, 2008). This case occurred in a town of north Gujarat state, India, where a first year student of a primary teacher’s training college accused six of her teachers of repeatedly gang-raping her over six months.

**Case IV:** ‘UK Deputy head-teacher jailed for an affair with a male student’ (DN, 27th June, 2007). This case involved a male deputy head teacher in the UK who had been jailed for a year for having an affair with a male student. The pupil was 15 years old. The boy intimated that their affair had started when he was 13 years old.

**Case V:** ‘Four Kenyan teachers interdicted for gross misconduct’ (EAS, 6th July, 2007). Four secondary school teachers from Taita Taveta district, Kenya, interdicted for impregnating secondary school girls.

**Case VI:** ‘Rape: 13 pupils give testimonies’ (DN, 21st March, 2007). Thirteen pupils said to have been defiled by their teachers in Nyandarua district, Kenya, appeared before Teachers Service Commission (TSC) tribunal to testify.

**Case VII:** ‘Head teacher to face court over sex claim’ (DN, 19th February, 2007). A head teacher accused of having a sexual relationship with a pupil resulting in pregnancy was to be charged in Koibatek district, Kenya.

**Case VIII:** ‘Teachers caught sneaking pupils into lodging’ (EAS, 17th July, 2007). Angry parents of a primary school in Bungoma district, Kenya, nabbed two teachers who had allegedly taken their teenage pupils to a lodge in Webuye town.
The above cases and many more not documented are embodiment of the gravity of the matter in the global society. The irony of the sex scandals between teachers and their students is that ideally, teachers are meant to be the role models of these young ones, to guide and counsel them for a more productive future life. Indeed, such relations and illicit sex episodes between teachers and their students ultimately defy such trust and confidentiality which is supposed to exist naturally, based on the position the teacher occupies in the society.

Moreover, extra curricular activities in schools are key events in Kenyan school calendar, but have in many times been marred by indiscipline and unbecoming behaviour. First and foremost, the way most are executed; that is, timing, places of holding them as well as attires involved and body postures are quite wanting and promote sexual immorality among the adolescents. Information gathered from FGDs as well as personal observations of these events portrayed the sexualization of extra-curricular activities especially athletics, ballgames, music and drama festivals. Indeed, the attires worn during these school fetes are quite scanty, exposing the nudity of the participants. It is worse that most national competitions as well as district and provincial events are held during weekends or holidays when the participants and non-participants will attend the fetes in home clothes. It is in such occasions when boys and girls meet their boyfriends/girlfriends, while others engage in indecent behaviours like drinking alcohol, smoking, taking other drugs and substances and sex. Likewise, songs and drama episodes were reported to encourage indecent body movements as well as utilizing suggestive languages and gyrations – which ultimately may trigger inappropriate behaviour among the youth. Indiscipline during such festivals is also associated with
teachers and other adults caught or sighted buying beers and preying on school girls (personal communication).

On the other hand, the Church and its leaders also play a significant role in influencing adolescent sexual behaviour. SIECUS (2005) observes that adolescent sexuality and religious participation have reciprocal influences. Studies generally have shown that adolescents who value religion and who frequently attend religious services have less permissive attitudes toward pre-marital sex and are less experienced sexually. The principal notion is that religion, especially zealous religious convictions reinforces asceticism amongst followers. It has also been shown that adolescents who have permissive attitudes towards pre-marital sex tend to have reduced attendance at religious services (Thornton and Camburn, 1989). Religious observance and proclamation however, does not provide an absolute barrier to adolescent sexual activity. A 1987 survey of 1,438 teenage members of eight “born again” Christian denominations in the United States showed that by the age 18, 43 percent had sexual intercourse and 65 percent had participated in some form of sex play (intercourse or the fondling of breast and genitals) (AGI, 1988).

Over 95 percent of the Akamba adolescents reported to belong to the Christian faith. In spite of the fact that the Christian religion deplores fornication and pre-marital sex, adolescents in Machakos district indicated a propensity towards sex indulgence before marriage. Indeed, over 90 percent of the sexually experienced adolescents in Machakos district belonged to the Christian faith. This confirmed the sentiment that proclamation and observance into a religion and its teachings may not translate into actual behaviour.
Further, the Christian faith was reported to play a significant role in admonishing on sexual morality as per the teachings of the Bible but does not provide in-depth analysis to sexuality issues. There is an emphasis on moral teaching rather than the scientific. This study concurred with Balmer (2001) who pointed out that Christian religion dictates much by giving youth abstract ideas, suggestions and rules in matters touching on sexuality without providing an alternative during this critical transformation stage.

The major Christian organizations in Kenya have consistently been averse to the introduction of sex education to schools. But according to IPPF (1994), it has been proven beyond doubt that when sex education is introduced to the young people from lower classes they develop awareness about their sexuality, and subsequently devise strategies for responsible sex life. Indeed, such early sex education programmes have been found to be successful in empowering the young in making choices and decisions about their sexual life. According to Santrock (2005), the success of introduction of sexuality education in schools in early ages, as witnessed in Sweden, Switzerland, Canada and France among other Western nations cannot be gainsaid. Certainly, sex education helps delay starting sexual activity while those sexually experienced become conscious of safety in their sex episodes. This study found that due to lack of sex education, Machakos Akamba adolescents portrayed deficiencies in their knowledge about the various types of sexually transmitted diseases, contraceptives as well as responsible relationships. Knowledge inadequacy on sexuality matters made the adolescents susceptible to sexual manipulation, indiscriminate sexual indulgence and consequently, exposed them to consequences of irresponsible sex. This sexuality
knowledge malaise amongst the adolescents was compounded by the fact that the Christian church too, especially the Catholic church fervently oppose the distribution and use of contraceptives including condoms across all generations. The church asserts that contraceptives would be against the Biblical teachings, and would foster immoral and hedonistic life styles and behaviour, and thus contribute to spread of HIV/AIDS. The same conviction to opposition to sex education as well as use of contraceptives is propagated by the Islamic faith in Kenya, and beyond. But according to UNAIDS (2006), consistent and appropriate use especially of condoms led to lower levels and decline of STDs/HIV/AIDS infections amongst certain global societies, Uganda in Africa being a typical example in the 1990’s.

In the endeavour to understand the sexual behaviour of the adolescents, it was also important to put the morals or sexual standards of the clergy or laymen of the church in perspective. This is because, just like teachers, the clergy occupies a prime position in determining the overall behaviour and moral development of the young people. Their behaviour can ultimately have influence into the behaviours of the young people either positively or negatively. In Machakos district, the moral standards of some clergy men were reported to be wanting. Through personal observation and communication, it emerged that some clergy men run illicit relations with members of their flock, some very young to be their children. This micro-observation of the questionable moral standards of some clergy among the Akamba people of Machokas district was reinforced by media reports from Kenya and elsewhere about the amorous tendencies of the church leaders.

For instance, from the United States of America, it was reported how lawyers for more than 500 people who said they were sexually abused by Roman Catholic clergy
members had settled their lawsuits against the Diocese of Los Angeles for 660 million dollars (Associated Press, 16th July, 2007). This settlement was approved in July 2007 and according to the story, it was by far the largest payout made by any single diocese since the clergy sexual abuse scandals first became public in Boston, USA. In a parallel report the Catholic Diocese of San Diego in the United States paid 198.1 million dollars to settle claims of sexual abuse by Clergy (TOI, 9th September, 2007). The agreement capped more than four years of negotiations in State and Federal Courts. In Kenya, similar allegations involving the sexual behaviour impropriety of the Catholic clergy have as well been adduced. A classic example was when a Government Minister in the 9th Kenyan parliament (Government) confessed to have been assisting Catholic Nuns to procure abortions (EAS, 30th June, 2007). The Catholic Nuns and Priests by virtue of their calling are supposed to practise celibacy, thus, this confession by the Minister, as well as reports of Catholic priests ailing or succumbing to complications arising from HIV/AIDS are fervent indicators of moral degradation in the church. More cases of the clergy and immorality have been espoused in Kenyan press and elsewhere:

Case I: ‘Catholic Bishop testifies about ailing priest’ (DN, 29th June, 2007). In this case, a Catholic Bishop revealed that one of his priests was dying of AIDS related complications in Kakamega diocese, Kenya.

Case II: ‘Anglican priest charged with rape of form 2 girls’ (DN, 26th June, 2007). This case involved an Anglican church priest charged with rape in Kerugoya, district, Kenya.
Case III: ‘Parents and pupils call for clergyman’s arrest’ (Saturday Nation, 19th May, 2007). Parents and pupils marched in protest against a church leader claimed to have defiled a girl at Kuresoi, Kericho district, Kenya.

Case IV: ‘In Zimbabwe, Catholic Archbishop resigns over adultery’ (DN, 28th August, 2007). In this case, the Archbishop in charge of Zimbabwe’s Roman Catholic church tendered his resignation letter to the Pope over a case filed in a Zimbabwean court. He was being charged for running a sexual affair with somebody’s wife. Pictures of the clergyman and the woman in a compromising situation had been availed in court as evidence.

Case V: ‘Indian temple priest alleges Sodomy’ (TOI, 3rd August, 2007). In this case, a 20 year old priest of a temple in Chandni Chowk, New Delhi, alleged that he had been sodomised by one of his colleagues. The victim had been living on the temple premises.

Falling moral standards of the clergy as evidenced by emerging reports in the media and also through casual observation of their behavioural tendencies will inevitably have a negative implication to the sexual behaviour of the young people. Mind you, just like other opinion key leaders, they act as role models and their behaviour will ultimately impact on young.

Civil societies, social workers and independent counsellors’ role in providing educational outreach programmes to schools in Machakos district was highly appreciated across all the divisions featuring in this study. The information gathered indicated that external speakers on pertinent youth matters including sexuality were popular among the adolescents for their sincerity and expediency. They seemed to have filled the void
created by the silence of parents, teachers and the society at large. The only handicap noted, and especially after discussion with several principals of schools was the existence of some organizations, civic bodies and counsellors without expertise in child or adolescence admonishing. As noted in Machakos district, some civic organizations (NGO's) flush with foreign funds, conduct outreach programs in schools on sexuality, drugs, inter alia, but the facilitators not qualified as counsellors. One principal intimated to me that some of these facilitators who are almost the same age of adolescents or young adults end up giving the impression that sex is just that – cool. In one educational session in his school, the facilitator from a local NGO emphasized on use of condom without offering other alternatives to the adolescents on how to deal with sexual urge. The principal and his teachers remained aghast throughout the lecture session!

4.7 SOCIO - ECONOMIC FACTORS

Poverty as a socio-economic condition has been documented as a key factor predisposing adolescents to initiate sexual activity earlier, or simply to indulge in indiscriminate sexual behaviour (Furstenberg, et al., 1987; Njau, 1993). Most of the adolescents in Machakos district come from poor economic backgrounds (Machakos district has 66 percent poverty rate), and this was ascertained as a key force predisposing them to enter consensual sexual relations or fall prey to economic inducements for sexual reciprocation. This was further reinforced and ascertained from FGDs with the adolescents as well as reports from the questionnaires.

Indeed, research indicates that economic disadvantage significantly affects young people's sexual behaviour negatively. The German Foundation for World Population
(DSW) (2007) points out that not only do young people exchange sex for money, goods or favour due to poverty but also engage in wide range of risky behaviours. In addition to the fact that being from a poorer household increases the likelihood of exchanging sex, DSW (2007) observes that it also:

- Raises a young woman’s / man’s chances of experiencing non-consensual sex.
- Increases the likelihood of having multiple sex partners (both young men and women)
- Lowers the chances of secondary abstinence.
- Decreases the likelihood of contraceptive use (condom) during the last sexual intercourse, and
- Lowers the average age at first sexual experience for boys and girls.

Furthermore, impoverished young people especially young women are the most disadvantaged when it comes to discussing sensitive topics such as condom use with their sexual partners (DSW, 2007). Machakos district which is lowly endowed economically, adolescents demonstrated an inclination to being wooed or hooked into sexual intercourse through favours especially transport lifts, shopping and outings. Interestingly, adolescents agreed that “nothing is for free”, such that, any favour doled out has to be paid back in kind, through sex.

Such pattern of sexual exploitation due to poverty is equally reported in other cultures. In South Africa, young people living in the street reported having exchanged sex for money, goods and protection, and several indicated that they had been raped (Swart-Kruger and Richer, 1997). Street children in Jakarta, Indonesia, reported that
being forced to have sex was one of the greatest problems that they faced continuously (Black and Farrington, 1997). In Brazil, where it was estimated that 7 million young people lived on the streets, between 1.5 to 7.5% of those tested for HIV were infected (Filgueiras, 1993). This was a significant indicator of sexual exchange, due to poverty, unprotected sexual activity, rape and coercion as well as high prevalence of injecting drug use on the streets which heightens young peoples' vulnerability to HIV infection (Filgueiras, 1993).

The issue of "Sugar Daddy" as well as "Sugar Mummy" relationships did arise in Machakos district. Cases were reported of elderly moneyed men making technical visits in schools or picking and dropping, especially girls on the pretext of being "uncles", while sugar mummy and sugar boy relations exist, but remotely. Interestingly as narrated during FGDs and personal communication with adolescents, most of the elderly moneyed men befriending adolescent girls are well known friends to their parents or close relatives. Similar situation has been reported in Tanzania where young girls report having older men or "mishefas" (those who provide) as sexual partners (Fuglesang, 1997)

4.8 OTHER EXTERIOR FACTORS

A couple of other factors have been adduced to account for the sexual behaviour of the Akamba adolescents of Machakos district, Kenya. Machakos district is poorly endowed in terms of social facilities. For instance, most games playing fields are institutionally owned thus adolescents when not in school, not allowed to participate in any form of games. The society has not been well developed in terms of technological facilities, playing fields for other games as well as other forms of social clubs which
would otherwise make the adolescents busy. This leaves the adolescents preferably free and idle. Owing to the fact that this transition phase (adolescence) is associated with a lot of energy due to hormonal growth, failure to find outlets to vent off this inbuilt energy, adolescents are likely to expend it into sexual activity. Hajcak and Garwood (1988) point out that adolescents may have sex to alleviate a sense of loneliness and idleness.

Drugs and drug abuse amongst the adolescents of Machakos district demonstrated a strong nexus to sexual behaviour. Apparently, all the adolescents who reported to partake to cigarettes, alcohol, cocaine and "Miraa" or "Ghat" were sexually experienced by the time of this study. This study agrees with AGI (1994) who posit that in the early teenage years, those who frequently smoke, drink and abuse drugs are more likely than others to have sex. Further, for both adolescent men and women, there is a strong association between alcohol use and having multiple sexual partners. Indeed, cases of school going adolescents being involved in drug taking and abuse were reported to be rampant in Machakos district. Moreover, adolescents reported that orgies or group sex (sharing sex partner) occurs mostly when they are inebriated. Several cases had even been reported in the press of adolescents arrested consuming alcohol in urban restaurants. This finding is further corroborated by the National Agency for the Campaign Against Drug Abuse (NACADA) whose study in 2007 established that 27.7% of students in Kenyan learning institutions and 77.1% of non student youths were on long term abuse of alcohol. Overall, the proportion of non-student adolescents reported to be on bhang, “miraa” or “ghat” and inhalants was 34.9%, 55.1% and 22.5%, respectively (NACADA, 2007). In Nairobi, Westland, Kenya, an incident was captured in the television of high school students (boys and girls) found drunk in a bar (KTN, 25th may, 2007). This
Curiosity was stated as a culpable factor in the lower adolescence (12-15) to experiment on sexual intercourse. Just the desire to “feel” was reported to be quite tantalizing for the lower aged adolescents in this study. Further, the condition of ignorance and lay knowledge about sexuality could not be overemphasized. The fact that some adolescents were quite naive about sexuality matters meant that they could easily be manipulated to sex by those in the “know how”. Sex was also reported to boost one’s macho image and the conquering ego amongst boys. During FGDs, it was reported how boys who have had sex or have a variety of girlfriends boast to the others. Having had sex was perceived as an aspect of “maturity” for both boys and girls. Moreover, to prove love to each other (boy and girl) and also to “others”, sex had to be consummated. This was reported by most adolescents in Machakos district who participated in the study.

Crucial segments of people amongst the Akamba people of Machakos district who were also reported by adolescents as potent in influencing their sexual behaviours were the policemen and security agents. First and foremost, some policemen within Machakos district were reported to have sexual relations with school going adolescents. This was reported during FGDs as well as information gathered from questionnaires. Although in Machakos district there were no forthcoming cases of involvement of policemen in heinous sexual activities like rape and sexual abuse of the adolescents, it emerged that police officers and law enforcing administrators connive with sex abusers or rapists to conceal or let free those accused of sexual molestation. There were several
cases in point, a classic one being of an incestuous father, known to defile his girls in Machakos, Central division, but whenever arrested he eventually gets set free. It was also alleged that the wife to the man had died because of physical abuse and violence from the said brutal character. His daughters had by the time of this research been taken in by maternal relatives for safety reasons.

Several cases of the police as well as law enforcers being accomplices or culprits in sexual abuse of the young people have been reported across global cultures. Several cases as highlighted in numerous studies include UNICEF report (2007) on sexual abuse of young and underage girls some as young as 11 years by Peace Keeping Soldiers in Cote D’ Ivoire, Burundi (including Burundi soldiers), Darfur in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In Northern Uganda, Amnesty International (2007) reports that the Lord’s Resistance Army rebels are notorious with raiding schools and abducting girls, forcing them to become “wives” of rebel commanders, while boys are forced to fight. Further, details of sexual abuse of young women emerge from Iraq and Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba, perpetrated by American Soldiers. A significant case at hand involved an American soldier found guilty by a military Jury for rape and murder in the slaying of a 14-year-old Iraq girl and her family (TOI, 5th August, 2007). In Kenya, several episodes have also been reported where the police and other law enforcers have been implicated in rape and sexual abuse of the young people:

Case I: “I became pregnant in police custody,” says girl 15 years (DN, 27th April, 07). This case was captured in BuruBuru police station, Nairobi, where a 15 year old girl
accused of manslaughter had blamed a senior policeman for making her pregnant while she was in custody.

Case II: ‘Dodgy council of elders’ (EAS, 2nd March, 07). This case involved a senior police officer attached to Nyamira district, Kenya, who had been forced to pay Ksh. 300,000 as compensation for impregnating a standard six pupil.

Case III: ‘Uproar over police officer who raped pupil’ (DN, 16th February, 07). Teachers and parents protested against policemen who defiled a 14 year old pupil in Mt. Elgon district, Kenya, to be prosecuted.

Case IV: ‘Chief released after denying rape charges’ (DN, 30th May, 07). This case involved a chief in Kuria district, Kenya, charged with defiling a minor.

Case V: ‘Chief sacked after rape of high school student’ (DN, 16th May, 2007). This was a case of a Nandi South district chief who raped a secondary school student. He was sacked for this felony.

Case VI: ‘Women call for arrest of rape officer’ (DN, 2nd November, 2007). In this case, a group of women and human rights activists stormed a Taita Taveta district police station demanding that an officer who had allegedly defiled an 11 year old girl be arrested. The said victim was being treated at a hospital in the district.

Lastly, other community leaders in the limelight in connection with adolescent sexuality and who cannot fail to be mentioned on adolescent issues include the politicians and political class in Kenya. As observed, their silence, apathy and disinterest on adolescent sexual behaviour in Kenya arouses concern. Indeed, politicians in Kenya appear to concentrate more on political survival and personal enrichment at the expense of critical national issues, including adolescent sexuality crisis. The Youth Policy Bill and
other crucial sexuality Bills have been pending in parliament since politicians demonstrate indifference in discussing them and passing into law. Indeed, youth issues are not viewed as a priority while pending sexuality bills (Affiliation Act 1967 and Family Protection Bill 2000) directly affect the Law makers, thus would better not dispense them.

4.9 CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR AMONG AKAMBA ADOLESCENTS OF MACHAKOS DISTRICT

Reports from previous studies indicate that early adolescent sexual involvement is associated with STDs/HIV/AIDS infection, unwanted pregnancies, abortion, school dropouts, surreptitious marriages, poor academic performance, inter alia (Akong’a, 1988; CDC, 2005; KDHS, 2003; Njau, 1993). These consequences are further associated with a myriad of other offshoot negative implications to the adolescents which could be categorized into physical (health), economic, social, emotional and psychological.

Indeed, Akamba adolescents of Machakos district were not devoid of the above consequences due to their involvement in early and indiscriminate sexual activity. This study confirmed that the above mentioned maladies were quite rampant and possibly ad infinitum in the district. Clinical observations from Machakos Provincial general hospital, private medical practitioners, teachers, parents and adolescents themselves affirmed a multiplication of problems amongst the adolescents and the society at large due to early and indiscriminate sexual indulgence. Although it was difficult to come up with actual statistical figures about the maladies accompanying indiscriminate sex in the district
(owing to poor record keeping) cases of teenage pregnancies and school dropouts, and early and unplanned, immature marriages were quite rampant.

This finding about school drop out and early marriages as a result of early pregnancies among Akamba adolescents of Machakos district is augmented by the World Bank report (2007). The report points out that more than 54 percent of girls in sub-Saharan Africa do not complete primary school, and that the transition rate to secondary school for those who complete is very low. This will lead to only 79 females out of every 100 males in secondary school and universities according to the World Bank report, achieving universal education by 2015. Kenya has a drop out rate of 13000 – 17000 teenagers every year due to pregnancy (CSA, 2000), while 20 percent of adolescents begin child bearing before 17 years, 30% by age 18, and 50% by age 19 years (CBS, 2002). These research findings are reinforced by a study done by the CSA/UNICEF (2003) which found out that 10% of both girls and boys reported to have either been pregnant or had impregnated a girl. Of these, 13% had experienced the first pregnancy or impregnated a girl by the age of 14. Additionally, every day in Kenya, 390 babies are born to teenage girls; that is more than 142,000 every year. The multiplier effect of this high level dropout to the society has been accelerated dependency rate, unplanned marriages, prostitution and hence, poverty.

In the global arena, the United States continues to have the highest rates of adolescent pregnancies and child bearing in the world (AGI, 2003a and CDC, 2001a). In the US, over one million teen pregnancies occur every year and indeed, has been described as an epidemic in the past by Hayes (1987) and Jorgensen (1993). United States adolescent pregnancy rates are similar to those of Russia and several other former
east European countries such as Bulgaria, nearly twice those of Canada and UK and at least four times the rates in France, Sweden, Germany and Japan (Santrock, 2005). Reasons why U.S. adolescent pregnancies are higher than any country have been based on cross-cultural studies (AGI, 2002), and are as follows:

*Childbearing not regarded as adult activity*: European countries, as well as Canada give a strong consensus that childbearing belongs to adulthood when young people have completed their education, are employed, and are living independently from their parents in stable relationships. In the United States, this belief is not strong and varies across groups and areas of the country.

*No clear messages about sexual behaviour*: Compared to Europe, American adults are less accepting of adolescents having sex. In France and Sweden, for example, adolescent sexual expression is viewed as normal and positive but there are widespread expectations that sex will take place within a committed relationship. Indeed, United States adolescents tend to have more sporadic and short-lived sexual relationships than their counterparts in European countries. The expectation that adolescents who are having sex will take precautions to protect themselves and their partners from pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections is also stronger in Europe than in the United States. In keeping with this view, schools in Great Britain, France, Sweden, and most of Canada have sex education programs that provide more comprehensive information about prevention than U.S. schools. In addition, these countries use the media more often in Government-sponsored campaigns of promoting responsible sexual behaviour. The United States is reported as the only country with formal policies directing state and federal funds toward educational programs that have as their sole purpose the promotion
of abstinence. More than one-third (35 percent) of all local U.S. school districts that have policies on sex education require that abstinence be taught as the only appropriate option for unmarried individuals, and that contraception either be presented as ineffective in preventing pregnancy or not be covered at all.

*Less access to family planning services:* In countries with a more accepting attitude toward adolescent sexual relationships, adolescents have easier access not only to information and contraception, but also to reproductive health services. For instance, in Canada, France, Great Britain, and Sweden, contraceptive services are integrated into other types of primary health care and are available free or at a low cost for adolescents. Generally, adolescents in these countries know where to obtain such services and are confident that they will receive competent, confidential, non-judgemental care. In the United States, where attitudes about adolescent sexual relationships are more conflicted, adolescents have a more difficult time obtaining contraceptive services. Many do not have health insurance and cannot get contraceptives as part of their basic health care (AGI, 2002).

The situation in the United States where sex education mostly dwells on abstinence, adult community has not fully accepted early adolescent sex involvement, and contraceptives are difficult to access for the young people, is a total replica to the situation in Machakos district, and Kenya as a whole. As a result, Kenya is equally experiencing high level adolescent pregnancies in same way as United States.

The intensity and propensity of school girl pregnancies and dropout in Machakos district is further buttressed by reports captured in Kenyan press from other Kenyan districts:-
Case I: ‘Two primary school pupils gave birth during exams’ (DN, 10th November, 2006). In these two cases, first one, the teenager girl gave birth while sitting her last paper in 2006 Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) in a primary school, Kericho district. The candidate developed labour pains as she wrote the paper forcing supervisors to delay the exam by more than 20 minutes. In the second case, the Kenya Certificate of primary education school girl candidate (2006 National exam) gave birth while sitting the science paper. The 17 year old girl had to do the rest of the examination at the Kencho district Hospital, Kenya.

Case II: ‘Pregnancy of 18 school girls to be probed’ (EAS, 2nd August, 2006). In this case, the Keiyo district commissioner (D.C) had ordered education officials to investigate how 18 girls in four primary schools had become pregnant. There were claims that three of the primary pupils and a secondary school girl in one location were forced into sex by their parents who were planning to marry them off.

Case III: ‘Police holding boy, 16, over pregnant of a minor’ (Sunday Nation, 8th April, 2007). In this case, Hola district, Kenya, a 16 year old boy had been arrested for making his standard four girlfriend pregnant. The 13 year old girl’s father said he was angry that his efforts to educate his daughter had been thwarted, and he wanted the boy to be punished severely.

Case IV: ‘Ngilu (Health Minister) shocked by poverty and underage pregnancies’ (EAS, January 9th, 2007). In this case, the Health Minister, Kenya, had come face to face with the realities of grim poverty that was fuelling teenage pregnancies. This was at Kilifi district, Kenya, where she met a group of young mothers, among them a 15 year old mother of two. The young mother had given birth to her first born, four years, at the age
of 11 while in lower primary school. The girl said she was first raped by a person known to her. A few years later, she said, a boy promised to marry her but took off after impregnating her. Another young mother had been married to an 18 year old man, who was her class mate at a Kilifi primary school.

The agonising aspect about adolescent pregnancies and drop out is that the girls may not get another chance to continue with education, and those who do manage face hostility and alienation for being “mothers” among babies. Further more, the Kenyan society has very few institutions (informal and formal) which accommodate such victims, while the existing ones like the village polytechnics have virtually become moribund. Indeed, such victims are condemned to obscurity and eminent vicious cycle of poverty in a majority of Kenyan cultures.

Abortion and early maternal deaths were reported in Machakos district but actual figures were also missing owing to the secretive and obscure nature in which abortion occurred. Abortion still remains proscribed in Kenya unless it is occurring under certain accepted medical circumstances. This finding in Machakos district is further reinforced by a report by the Ministry of Health Kenya (2000) that estimated about 316,500 abortions occur in the country annually, and an estimated 20,893 women in Kenya are hospitalised with abortion related complications every year. The report further suggests that about one percent of the women admitted to Kenyan public hospitals die from abortion related complications. This report is in addition augmented by the WHO (2007) which estimated that unsafe abortions kill about 70,000 women annually around the world. In Africa for instance, where medical services are still rudimentary, 4.2 million unsafe abortions are performed each year and many of those suffer mortality, or serious
injuries and permanent disabilities. The traumatic observation according to the World
Health Organisation is that nearly 60 percent of women who have abortions in Africa are
under the age of 25. In Kenya, the incidence of unsafe abortions and related
consequences is high among adolescents and according to Rogo, et al. (1999), the high
rate of cases among this group is out of proportion to their numbers in the total
population. A study of a rural community is Suba district, Nyanza province, Kenya,
found that 80% of all unsafe abortion cases occur among women below 20 years of age
leading to high mortality and morbidity rates within the age group (Rogo, et al., 2003).
According to Pregnancy Crisis Ministries in Kenya (an organisation that works with
pregnant adolescents) girls as young as 15 years have been procuring abortions from both
professional and back street commercial abortionists (Crisis Pregnancy Ministries, 2004).

The aforementioned reports are in agreement with the findings among the
Akamba adolescents of Machakos district in that several medical practitioners as well as
key opinion leaders estimated that over 75 percent of unsafe abortions occur among
school and college going adolescent girls as well as young adults. Most abortions occur
during school holidays, with the peak period in April of every year. A personal account
by a male parent in Machakos town who had lost his daughter as she was attempting to
procure an abortion, illustrates the extent of the malady. According to this parent, the
daughter, 17 years old had consumed a combination of herbal concoction to terminate her
pregnancy. She had mixed “Kiluma” Alore Vera, with “Muvangi” a local weed, JIK (a
fabric bleach) and Malaria tablets. The combination indeed turned toxic thus, she ended
up by poisoning herself in the desire to “flash” a pregnancy, and consequently died. This
was one case among many as confirmed later since cases of dead mothers, abandoned
babies, dead foetuses thrown in rivers or blocking sewages were common features in major towns, villages and training colleges in Machakos district. It was also narrated how girls through back street doctors use knitting needles or sharp implements, drink strong black tea or undiluted juices, take overdose of malarquine (a malaria medication) to terminate pregnancies. It later turns out to be fatal or interfere with their long term reproductive as well as general health.

Illegal abortions also appear to be common in other parts of the world, especially India, Nepal and China where female foeticide is quite prevalent due to male child preference (TOI, 16th July, 2007). In India for instance, Government functionaries have had to sound the alarm of plummeting sex ratio in the country caused by female infanticides and female foeticide, deliberately carried out by the victims and medical doctors. According to one report, 10 million female foetuses may have been aborted in India over the past 20 years (EAS, 18th June, 07). The Delhi Minister for Education in 2007, pointed out that, “People kill the female foetuses because they fear that they may have to spend huge amounts on dowry”, while the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare along with Centre for Social Research in New Delhi launched an initiative in August, 2007, to combat female foeticide (TOI, 16th July, 2007). It is reported that in 2001 census, the sex ratio in India stood at 927 girls per 1000 boys. The following media headlines have exemplified the intensity of the malaise in some parts of India: “25 foetuses found in Haryana” (TOI, 27th July, 2007), “Centre seeks report on Orissa foeticides”, (TOI, 25th July, 2007); “Body parts of 30 newborns recovered in Bhubaneswar” (TOI, 24th July, 2007). The physical, economic and social cost of this practice is quite immense.
On the other hand, STDs/HIV infection were reported to be common among school going adolescents in all divisions while the number of orphaned children due to HIV/AIDS cases was reported in every division of Machakos district. HIV/AIDS remains a virulent threat not only to the Akamba people of Machakos district but the Kenyan society at large. HIV/AIDS infects and affects the most productive age category; that is, 15-49 years. The cost of maintaining and sustaining the infected and affected in Machakos district as well as other parts of Kenya is quite astronomical. The sub-Saharan Africa is home to 24.7 million people living with HIV/AIDS, with Kenya having over 2.2 million HIV virus carriers, while a majority do not know their status (WHO, 2007). According to CSA (2004), 90% of young women and 93% of men in age 15 –19 have never tested for HIV in Kenya. This predisposes them to an accelerated risky position of infecting or being infected with the virus by others. In Machakos district, a paltry 4 percent of adolescents (15-19) had presented themselves for HIV testing in the year 2005 (Ministry of Health Report, 2005). Several factors have been adduced for the low visitations to VCT centres for HIV testing by adolescents including lack of information, perception of low risk of infection (principle of invincibility), lack of privacy and confidentiality, and stringent laws that require parental consent for testing (CSA, 2004).

One of the agonising consequences of HIV/AIDS in Machakos district just as in other parts of the world where AIDS is prevalent and management poor is the phenomenon of orphaned children, some of whom are also infected with the HIV virus. Globally, more than 13 million children under 15 years of age have lost one or both parents to AIDS; 11 million of them are from sub-Saharan Africa (KDHS, 2003 and Population Council, 1996). Kenya has over 650,000 children orphaned due to HIV/AIDS.
constituting, 11% of all the children in Kenya (UNICEF, 2003). As noted in Machakos district, most orphaned children faced neglect, shame and rejection, malnutrition, left school to take care of young siblings or simply get abused sexually, and enter labour market relatively early. Moreover, the danger of violence and early sex involvement among those who are orphaned by HIV/AIDS is high, while many face heightened sense of haplessness and hopelessness. Three case studies identified in Machakos district suffice to illustrate the situation in Kenya:

**Case I:** Case of three orphaned children in Kathiani division, Machakos district. The parents died of HIV/AIDS complications and children left in hands of a grandmother, too old to fend for the children. The first born (boy) in standard seven had to relinquish his learning status to do menial jobs in the village to feed his young sister, in standard five and a last born, 2 years-old boy who was apparently HIV positive. During the time of this research, the young boy was accompanying the sister to school who would come out of class occasionally to “Mother” the young boy. As narrated by the Principal of the school, they had allowed the girl to come with her young brother to school for they understood the situation. The school had also taken the responsibility of feeding the small boy (lunch time only). The sister (standard five) would occasionally miss school when the boy fell sick or when going to pick anti-retroviral drugs for him. Her performance in school had drastically dropped while, the elder brother who had dropped out of school was toiling day and night to sustain this family.

**Case II:** Case in Central Division, Machakos district. The boy was fully orphaned when in form three (17 years), happened to be the only child. The father, who apparently had survived for a while after demise of his wife, had built his home some distance from his
parents. When he passed away, the boy was left alone, though with some little investment. Fascinatingly, the only persons who would have taken the boy into their custody (grandfather and a step grandmother) worked a conspiracy to grab the wealth their son had left behind by isolating the beneficiary (boy). Sensing eminent threat and hostility, the boy had gone to find refuge in the home of the maternal relatives, while his education had started being affected.

**Case III:** Case of a 14 year old girl in Machakos town, the first born of five children. They were orphaned when she was 12 years and had to leave school to be the breadwinner. She went to work in a relative’s home as a housemaid while the other siblings remained in the village with their grandmother. She would send money home to the grandmother to purchase basics for the other siblings, albeit the pay was quite meagre and erratic. The matriarch (female head of the household) had started physically abusing her while a young male relative to the lady started abusing her sexually. She decided to run away, and only safe haven was the streets of Machakos town. Then 14 years by the time of this research, the girl narrated how she had slept on the pavements, had been sexually abused, but had now graduated into prostitution, at least to survive and feed her young siblings back home in a rural Machakos village. Apparently, she had aborted once and had already been treated for an STD.

The above case-studies epitomize the horrendous and unfamiliar conditions which children get subjected to when both parents pass out due to AIDS complications. It is also quite symptomatic of the desperate and wanting socio-economic condition of their society and nation as a whole. While a majority of orphaned children may end up in deplorable conditions, the multiplier effects of such conditions as well as long term
effects could be very disastrous not only to the lives of these orphaned children but, the nation at large.

In a supplementary view, one major degenerative effect of high level adolescent pregnancies, school drop out, orphaned cases and hence poverty in Machakos district as well as other societies has been prostitution and commercial sex by the young people, mostly girls. In the major urban centres of Machakos district, over 75% of the noted prostitutes were young women between ages 15-25. Prostitution is a global phenomenon, but it assumes a different dimension when even minors get involved. In Kenya, a new kind of prostitution has emerged in the form of child sex tourism or child sex trade. Although child sex trade can be categorised under the global malady of paedophile, they differ in that while paedophile is driven by a person's lascivious desire or attraction to gratify themselves sexually with children, child sex trade is pre-determined by poverty or basically, desire to peddle sex using children to satisfy basic needs. In the sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia where poverty levels are very high, child sex trade has opened room for paedophilia and more so, since existing socio-economic and legal structures may aggravate the situation (UN, 2006). Indeed, much of child sex trade in the poor nations is perpetrated by foreign tourists especially from Europe who according to UN (2006), are barred and constrained by relatively strict laws in their home countries and tougher territorial laws within the European Union.

In Kenya for instance, UN (2006) points out that there are over 30,000 child sex workers although it is difficult to come with exact figures since child prostitution cases remain least reported. According to the report, sexual exploitation of children in Kenya has reached very high levels with up to 30% of young girls in some districts especially
Kenyan coast engaging in sex trade, which is mostly tourism related. Forty five (45%) of girls in the survey reported to have begun selling sex for cash, goods or favours at tender age of 12 or below, while in other regions of Kenya including Machakos district, one child in 10 is involved in sex work and is initiated before reaching puberty (UN, 2006).

Of the men who engage in sex for cash with children in Kenya as per the report, 38% were Kenyans while Italians comprised 18%, Germans 14%, Swiss 12% while the rest was shared out between tourists from other parts of the world. Two momentous cases of child sex trade as reported in the press illustrate the situation in Kenya:

In the first case, April 2005, an American national (50 years) and a convicted paedophile was jailed for 25 years by an Oregon Court in the US for producing films on child pornography in Kenya. The American had filmed himself having sex with a 10-year-old minor, daughter of a Kenyan woman, whom he had married earlier (DN, 8th March 2006). In the second case, reported in DN, 3rd May, 2006, a mother used to force her daughters to have sex with men for cash. The two girls, aged 8 and 10 years had escaped from their Thika district home in Kenya and told the Nation of their harrowing experiences at the hands of drunken men who were also their mother’s clients, all this to eke out a living!!

These cases and many others indicate failure on the part of the society and law enforcers to provide protection to children, and to deal appropriately with child sex promoters. Although sexual exploitation of children in Kenya is a criminal offence under Kenya’s Penal Code, there is extremely high level of involvement, silence and a more or less acceptance of children getting involved in commercial sex. After all, it is the adults who constitute the clientele. It is also important to note that involvement into sexual
intercourse of underage girls and mature men may result to severe physical, social and emotional complications. Indeed, their bodies are not well developed to endure sex with mature men thus, may terribly lead to ruptures and tear, which consequently has severe multiplier effects on their future life. Chances of such children becoming abusers of others in the future as well as falling into hard drugs and being infected with STDs/HIV are quite phenomenal. Studies further indicate that young people who have been sexually abused tend to exhibit abnormal sexual tendencies early, have more sexual partners than other adolescents, have a disproportionate number of teenage mothers, while STDs/HIV/AIDS sufferers have been victims of sexual abuse, some by very close family members and guardians (Luster and Small, 1997; Males, 1996). In Machakos district, the rape and sexual molestation of young girls was equally reported. A Machakos district surgeon recounted that the hospital was at that time carrying out over 10 (ten) re-correction surgery procedures for Obstetric Fistula on women as young as 15 years – a programme sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). According to the doctor, Fistula is mainly caused by sexual abuse, rape, unsafe abortion, surgical trauma and cancer of the cervix, radiotherapy as well as female circumcision. The severe manifestation of Fistula Obstetric is when urine and faeces pass through the birth canal uncontrollably.

Lastly, the economic, psychological, physical and social costs of all indiscriminate sex indulgences among adolescents were felt across Machakos district, and were quite high in number.
4.9.1 THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW ADOLESCENT CULTURE AMONG THE AKAMBA PEOPLE OF MACHAKOS DISTRICT

It is quite evident from the study that the contemporary Akamba adolescents manifest a cultural orientation totally diametrical to the traditional Akamba adolescents. Their cultural manifestation is also equally distinct from the adult generation while the young (5-10 years) demonstrate a culture consciousness patterned towards the adolescence cultural preferences. The modern distinct Akamba adolescent culture is a total replica of the Western cultural lifestyle and in tune with an observed global adolescent culture (universal and pervasive). Indeed, an adolescent in Machakos town, New Delhi and New York demonstrate characteristically similar cultural orientation—especially in clothing, mannerisms and cultural preferences. Differences may be noted subtly in the material aspects of culture (technology, games, aesthetics, etc.) but in the non-material component, there is a lot of commonality which essentially defines the conventionality or globalisation of adolescent culture.

Culture is a people's way of life which is expressed materially (technology, goods of aesthetics, artefacts, food, etc), and non-materially (behaviour, habits, rituals and customs, language and other life capabilities). On the other hand, in Western culture, which has become very pervasive in the contemporary Akamba society, is in the form of technology, industry, law, politics, lifestyle, diet, language, religion and values ideally identified with Western nations (North American Continent and Western Europe). It is imperative to note that the modern Akamba adolescent has been gradually acculturated towards the Western lifestyle, and this distinctiveness is aided by a popular youth culture
diffused through the mass media, goods (clothes, technology, food) as well as modern formal education, and religion (Christianity which paradoxically is synonymous to Westernisation).

The degree of influence of Western culture to the Akamba adolescents varies from region to region with urban adolescents being more susceptible to adopting Western cultural values more compared to rural adolescents, though the latter also appears to catch up with their urban counterparts, gradually. The rural areas are touted to have some expression of community consciousness and adherence to customary practices, but the rural adolescents in Machakos district just like in many parts of Kenya, appear to ape their urban counterparts, and they are conscious to change in line with the urban model. Mind you, the rural and urban adolescents meet in boarding schools and market centres, the urban adolescents visit rural homes with their parents during holidays and appear to appeal to their counterparts in their lifestyles. Likewise, rural adolescents watch Western movies in the plethora of commercial video shows in Machakos market centres. Also, rural adolescents visit relatives in urban centres, while the desire to appear “Western” is fervently the norm among contemporary Akamba adolescents.

In a nutshell then, the contemporary Akamba adolescents have an expressive cultural lifestyle, Western-oriented, which distinguishes them as a socially defined age set. Indeed, they have the trappings of the Western culture which is identified in music and dance, clothes and hairstyles, language, body posture and aesthetics as well as food preferences and sexual behaviour. There is also noted distinctiveness in modern games and leisure.
Popular Western music (hip-hop, rap, rock and reggae) which also ostensibly appear to have been copied by local upcoming Kenyan musicians seem to appeal most to the modern Akamba adolescents. The modern music equally appeals to their wishes, values, fantasies and attitudes for it deals with love and sex, violence, freedom and hedonism. Moreover, most music boosts male chauvinism and ironically, such music appears popular among Akamba adolescent girls. It is in a myriad of words and lyrics in these songs which depict the males as "sex studs" and the female as "sex objects" – and this is also typified in the dancing styles. Many wonder why in most songs and dance styles in the mass media and movies, the man is well clothed while the woman is semi-nude!! Such music and dance are not devoid among Akamba adolescents, in and out of school-and their influence towards sexual behaviour quite immense.

When it comes to clothing, hairstyle and associations, the contemporary Akamba adolescents identifies with Western celebrities as they are depicted in music, dance, movies and magazines. A closer observation of the adolescents’ attires, body postures and hairstyles during holidays and sundays, suffice. There is a craze toward sagged trousers/pants, which is more throttle in urban centres than rural, some so low enough to show underwear or bare buttocks! This behaviour is common for boys and girls, with boys more oriented than girls. The pants sagging behaviour has its origin in the United States in the 1990’s. It is a fashion started in the US prisons and spread through the US cities and among young pop musicians. In Kenyan urban centres, including Machakos, it is gaining root. Girls will appear in very tight trousers and skimpy skirts as well as "see through" tops. This is common in both rural and urban centres. Additionally, there is total preference for Western games at expense of traditional pastimes. For instance in
Machakos district urban centres, the craze and fixation for European football is quite overt with little concern for local football tournaments. No wonder, an adolescent in Machakos town can account for five to ten European football players and clubs but demonstrate total ignorance to any local Kenyan football player or club. All traditional adolescent Akamba games namely hunting, riddles, hide and seek, swimming and many others have paved way to rugby, basketball, football, dancing and other commercial recreational facilities. Equally, modern Akamba adolescents identify with a distinctive slang “Sheng” language totally incomprehensible to the adult community. It cannot be gainsaid that the trappings of Western lifestyles and identification requires resources and more so, money. This has made modern Akamba adolescents resort to deceit, and blackmail to get money from their unsuspecting or generous parents or guardians, to be able to sustain that lifestyle. Others subject themselves to peddling drugs, prostitution and petty crime, simply to be in tune with these socio-cultural dynamics.

Due to adoption of Western lifestyles by the Akamba adolescents, there is strong evidence of a steady and consistent shift toward more permissive sexual expression. The Western culture now quite embedded to Akamba culture tends to highlight sexual gratification, individual freedom and freedom of choice with regards to one’s friends and love partners. Consequently, trial marriages, eloping, rape, aberrant sexual liaisons, prostitution and early and indiscriminate sexual liaisons are quite rampant among the contemporary Akamba adolescents. Indeed, the community has undergone a sexual revolution similar to the one experienced in the United States in the 1960s. In a version similar to the “flower children” of the sexual revolution in the US of 1960s, the Akamba community of Machakos district is witnessing high level of repercussions associated with
irresponsible sexual liaisons. As observed in this research, a surprisingly large proportion of sexually active adolescents and young adults fail to use contraceptives or use them inconsistently. As a result, the community is experiencing early, unintended and unwise pregnancies, school drop out, STDs/HIV/AIDS among the youth. The contemporary young people engage in risky sexual behaviours and other delinquencies likely to have a negative impact on the Akamba civilization.

Coupled with undertaking risky sexual life behaviours, modern Akamba adolescents exhibit a “don’t care” attitude while lack of parental and community control fuels dangerous trends. As reported during the research, most opinion leaders including parents felt that adolescents make decisions quite mechanically, with some decisions having severe ramifications not only to the adolescents but the society. For instance, the decision by adolescent girls to “disappear” with a purported lover, without informing parents for a long time then reappear without remorse or anxiety are common. Cases of girls involved in this sexuality trend, especially during school holidays or when they finish standard eight or form four are quite rampant amongst contemporary Akamba adolescents of Machakos district. This emerging sexuality behaviour is ensconced in high level ignorance, invincibility and invulnerability. Moreover, respect for the elderly and subservience to clan and community norms, a common phenomenon in traditional Akamba culture has dissipated with modernity, while external family systems in controlling sexual relations and discipline have also become evanescent.

The contemporary Akamba adolescent is as well largely oriented toward one another with relatively little orientation towards adults. In traditional Akamba culture, young people were more in contact with the adult community. They learned their roles
and responsibilities through working along side parents or adults for much of the day (boys with their fathers and grandfathers and uncles while girls with mothers, aunts or grandmothers). More importantly, adolescents knew they were judged and assessed as adapted members of the Akamba community for whom they would be in the future. In this way, adolescence was not the self contained stage that it has become today, and a great many adolescents have infrequent contacts with adults outside the household except for a few authority figures like teachers, and church leaders. Involvement with adult neighbours and kin is quite obsolete or superficial. To cite Schiegel (2000), modern adolescents are out of sight and out of mind much of the time. This leaves them at the mercy of fellow peers who blatantly misadvise and influence each other towards mischief and conformity to the unusual.

Peer pressure and orientation among Akamba adolescents is quite intense. Indeed, the unity portrayed among adolescents mesmerizes many, simply because it defies cultural, religious, familial as well as class definitions. Sharing and exchanging items and ideas is the norm. Incidentally, if not with peers, the adolescent consciously withdraws to solitude and away from social activities. Actually, one parent of an adolescent boy in Machakos district during this research intimated how his son spent a whole day alone lying in his bed, listening to music or watching movies. Larson (1990) posited two reasons for this kind of adolescent solitude behaviour. First, is the need for adolescents to take breaks from new and difficult task of impression management, which is a developmental task that emerges in adolescence. Adolescents, much more than younger children are conscious of the effect they have on those around them. Adolescents report feeling much less self-conscious, and much more like their true
selves when they are alone. The second reason, drawn from Erikson (1968) is the desire for solitude to question and develop personal identity. This implies that there is a need for private reflection. That implication, however, is called into question because most music is listened to in solitude. By self-report, adolescents use music to pass time, to relieve boredom, tension and loneliness (Christenson and Roberts, 1990), or as a stimulus to imagination (Schlegel, 2000).

The adolescence period among the Akamba people has been elongated due to the entry of formal education and preparation for a career. Consequently, many adolescents are not making serious preparations for marriage. They thus take recourse into what one adolescent boy during FGDs referred to, “high school husbands and wives”, implying romantic and sexual partners for attachments they know will be temporal. Heterosexual relationships based on “Hollywood romance” are quite public and overt, unlike the traditional periods. Kayongo-Male and Onyango (1984) point out that, romantic relations in traditional African culture were never open or overt in nature. The situation in the present is quite antithetical.

Kenya in the same way as other developing nations is undergoing social, political, economic and cultural changes. All these changes are occurring concurrently and coupled with poverty, unemployment, conflicts and limited opportunities in decision making, contribute to frustration, an identity crisis, dilemma and confusion. Consequently, adolescents find themselves going astray and sleazy.

All in all, the new Akamba adolescent culture can be technically classified into both Sub-culture and Counter-culture. It is a sub-culture in that it coexists with the main Akamba way of life, accepted and adapting as a distinct culture. Cultural orientations
like peer associations, trial marriages, single parenthood, modern boarding schooling, watching movies, modern music and dance, "sheng or slang" language are getting co-opted and accepted into the overall Akamba culture. Other cultural patterns can be said to be counter culture for they run contrary to the ultimate Akamba cultural expectations. Such cultural expressions among the adolescents are perceived as revolting and rebelling against the Akamba family, community norms and values surrounding the society. Behaviours like adolescence delinquency, drunkenness and radicalism (hooliganism) at home and school are some of the noted behaviours. Reports of students involving in school arson resulting in fatalism have surfaced. For instance, in Kyanguli secondary school, Machakos district (26th March, 2001), 68 boys died in an arson attack instigated by fellow schoolmates. In a similar case, 25 girls died in St. Kizito girls school in Meru district, Kenya, in the 1990's as they scampered and trampled on each other running away from mass rape by their nearby high school counterparts (St. Kizito boys). Similarly, in the recent times there has been a manifold of high school riots in Kenya, including Machakos district, instigated by the school adolescents. The causes in the conceptualisation of many are quite frivolous and trivial, like being barred from weekend school outings and failure to have school bus. There are even bizarre cases like a recent episode in Maralal district, Kenya, where more than 450 students were sent home after they rioted and destroyed property worth more than Ksh.10 million after school authorities confiscated mobile phones, radios and civilian clothes (DN, 4th October, 2007). This is quite emblematic of total defiance to authority and order by the adolescents in pursuit of their individual freedom and happiness.
Finally, adolescent counter culture or rebelliousness finds expression in the form of Bohemianism. Concept Bohemianism is derived from a region in West Czechoslovakia known as Bohemia which is inhabited by persons whose behaviour is characterized by total disregard for conventional rules (Pandey, 1984). Bohemianism is thus a behaviour real or pretended, where one either artistically or intellectually lives and acts with disregard for conventional rules of behaviour. Such characters are as well not missing within Akamba adolescent culture. In the recent times, behaviours have emerged of young people who totally disregard authority and conventionality, keep long and unkempt hairs, some never bathe nor take showers, while others especially boys have earrings in both ears or one, quite uncommon in traditional Akamba culture. Traditional Akamba men and women pierced their ears and wore slings, but these had been sanctioned by the Akamba traditions unlike today where young people put on rings in their ears, nose, chest and stomach, aping Western celebrities and do not understand the symbolic meaning of such behaviour. In addition, some behaviours namely indiscriminate sexual encounters and attendant consequences, rape, alcoholism and drug abuse among adolescents, aberrant sexual behaviours, inter alia, can be classified to as counter cultures within the Akamba culture.