

The Influence of Parenting on Adolescent Girls’ Cross-generational Sex Motivation and Potential Risks: The Case of Kinondoni District, Tanzania

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of parenting on the relationship between emotional cross-generational sex motivation and potential risks among adolescent girls in Tanzanian secondary schools. It explores how parenting styles and practices impact emotional cross-generational sex motivation, and help manage the associated risks. A mixed-methods approach was used, combining in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. A sample of 385 adolescent girls was selected through cluster random sampling. Quantitative data was collected via interviewer-administered questionnaires, and analysed using SPSS; while qualitative data was processed with NVivo 12. The findings revealed that parenting practices play a significant role in moderating emotional cross-generational sex motivation and reducing the associated risks. Parental involvement is essential in preventing risky sexual behaviours. Thus, it is recommended that community-based parenting education programmes be implemented to train parents in authoritative strategies; emphasizing communication, risk awareness, and supportive monitoring. Integrating cross-generational sex (CGS) risk education into the school curricula, fostering strong parent-teacher partnerships, and engaging local leaders and NGOs to challenge socio-cultural norms that normalize age-disparate relationships: all these are essential in addressing the problem. Likewise policy efforts should prioritize parental support within adolescent health and education frameworks so as to leverage Tanzania’s existing child protection systems.

Keywords: *parenting, cross generation sex, emotion, risk, adolescent girls*

1. Introduction

1.1 Sexual Relationships between Adolescent Girls and Older Males

Sexual relationships between adolescent girls and older male partners are a growing concern in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) due to their strong link to increased HIV infection risks (Bajunirwe et al., 2020). Intergenerational sex is particularly prevalent among young women and older men, contributing to higher HIV infection rates among young women compared to their male peers. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for a significant share of global HIV infections, with six countries—South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, and Tanzania—making up half of the 15–19 year-olds living with HIV worldwide

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(Karim & Baxter, 2019). Women bear the highest burden, comprising 60% of those infected in the region. Adolescents – particularly young women and key populations – remain disproportionately affected. In countries such as Ethiopia, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, the HIV infection ratio among 15–19 year-olds is estimated to be 6:1, with girls being significantly more affected than boys (Schaefer et al., 2017). Cross-generational sex (CGS) is a major contributor to the HIV epidemic, as older male partners are more likely to be HIV-positive. Unfortunately, research indicates that condom use and discussions about HIV prevention are uncommon in these relationships, further increasing the vulnerability of adolescent girls (Langat et al., 2020).

In Tanzania, HIV infection rates among females aged 15–19 have been estimated to be up to nine times higher than those among males; with this being largely driven by the high prevalence of cross-generational sexual relationships (Daka & Ergiba, 2020). Research on CGS has primarily focused on the motivation of adolescent girls, particularly emotional motivation, which has been linked to risks such as STI/HIV transmission, unintended pregnancies, violence, and abuse (Upton, 2020).

The critical – and yet under-explored – aspect of CGS is intersectionality: the interaction of multiple social factors that shape relationship dynamics. According to Dwyer-Lindgren (2019), intersectionality considers how aspects such as parenting, religion, ethnicity, race, class, and sexual orientation intersect with gender to influence a woman's experiences. The lack of intersectional analysis in CGS research has led to inconsistent findings, and the persistence of these relationships, despite abolitionist campaigns in Tanzania, such as *Fataki* and *Niache Nisome*. In response, community-based campaigns have intensified efforts to combat CGS, and raise awareness of its associated risks. Additionally, the rising number of adolescents living with HIV in Tanzania underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions. Addressing CGS through an intersectional lens, strengthening community-based initiatives, and enhancing HIV prevention strategies: these are crucial steps in protecting vulnerable adolescent populations (Howard-Merrill et al., 2022).

Albert Bandura's social learning theory (SLT) emphasizes that behaviour is shaped through observation and modelling; highlighting parents' role in influencing adolescent behaviour (Lykens et al., 2019). Parenting styles also moderate peer influence through communication, emotion, and social support (Goodwin et al., 2019). Moreover, the social exchange theory (SET) suggests that individuals engage in relationships based on a cost-benefit analysis (Treviño & Tilly, 2015). In this context, parental emotional and material support can reduce the perceived dangers of cross-generational sex (Ndugga et al., 2023). However, existing research has overlooked the moderating role of parenting in adolescent girls' emotional motivation for such relationships and the associated risks, particularly HIV/AIDS. This study applies the SLT and SET to bridge this gap, and hence enhance intervention strategies.

1.2 The Role of Parental Monitoring on CGS Relationship

Parental monitoring plays a key role in reducing adolescent girls' engagement in cross-generational sexual relationships, as increased supervision lowers the risk; while limited oversight increases it (Yirmiya et al., 2021). Ndugga et al. (2023) found that open parent-adolescent communication about sexual and reproductive health in Uganda reduced the likelihood of such relationships, whereas poor communication or negative parental attitudes increased the risk. Similarly, Kusheta et al. (2019) reported that higher parental involvement—through monitoring, communication, and support—was linked to lower rates of risky sexual behaviours among adolescents in Ethiopia. These studies underscore the critical role of parental engagement in mitigating risks associated with cross-generational relationships.

1.3 The Influence of Parental Characteristics on CGS Relationships

Empirical studies indicate that various factors influence CGS among adolescents, particularly by shaping parental skills, attitudes, and perceptions regarding monitoring (Almakadma & Ramisetty-Mikler, 2015). Asare (2023) found that adolescents from single parent households were more likely to experience early sexual debut, highlighting the role of household structure in risky behaviours. Parent-child communication, which is influenced by parental education levels, also plays a critical role in reducing risky sexual behaviours (Wudineh et al., 2021). Zhukova (2020) observed that low parental education on sex education in Ghana contributed to poor guidance, making adolescent girls vulnerable to misinformation and cross-generational relationships. Hence, understanding the moderating effects of parenting on CGS motivations and risks is crucial for developing effective protective strategies for adolescent girls. Therefore, the aim of the study is to investigate how parenting, as a suggested factor, moderates the relationship between emotional motivations for CGS and the potential risks associated with it. Theoretical and empirical reviews support the logical assumption that the impact of the relationship between CGS motivations and its potential risks becomes significant when moderated by parenting.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study adopted a pragmatist research philosophy, which supports the integration of both quantitative and qualitative methods. Pragmatism emphasizes practical inquiry and facilitates a balanced approach that combines elements of objectivism and interpretivism. This enables a comprehensive understanding of observed phenomena, and the identification of causal relationships (Saunders et al., 2016). A survey strategy was employed, aligning with both deductive and exploratory research objectives. This strategy enabled the collection of quantitative data, which was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to derive meaningful insights (Saunders et al., 2016).

2.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Kinondoni District, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, as shown in Figure 1. According to the Controller and Auditor General's Annual Report (2021/2022), 4,652 female students under 19 dropped out of school due to early pregnancies, often involving men aged at least 10 years older. This highlights the prevalence of CGS relationships in the district and their consequences, including school dropouts and HIV risks.

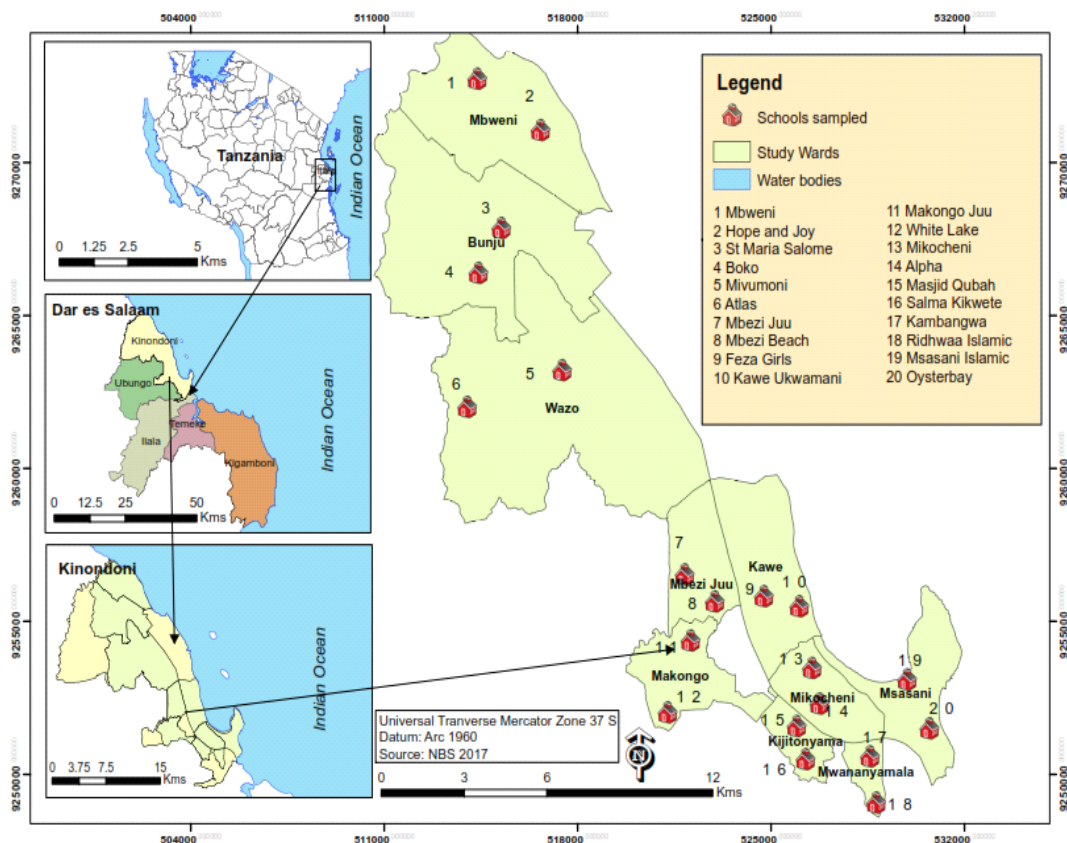


Figure 1: Map of Kinondoni District Wards and Schools

Source: NBS (2017)

2.3 Sample Design and Data Collection Methods

This study used probability sampling techniques. Cluster sampling was employed to select public secondary schools, while systematic sampling was applied to select adolescent girls (respondents) in the sampled schools in Kinondoni District Council. The respective list of adolescent girl pupils from the schools was provided by the respective heads of the schools. The study sample size was calculated using

the Cochran formula, which is normally used to determine sample size from a large population. The Cochran formula of sample size is:

$$n = \frac{z^2(1-p)}{e^2}$$

Where, n = sample size; z^2 = the abscissa of the normal curve that cuts off an area α at the tails; p = the estimated proportion of an attribute that is present in a population; and e = the desired level of precision.

Therefore, the sample size was $3.8416 \times 0.5 \times 0.5 / 0.0025 = 385$.

To consider the provision of any poor response since respondents were responding to the questionnaires on a voluntary basis, the sample size was increased to 500.

2.3.1 Survey

The survey approach was used, and 385 female adolescents between the ages of 13 and 19 were given copies of the questionnaire to fill. The questionnaire included both closed- and open-ended questions to make it simple for respondents to indicate their views on the moderating elements of the CGS incentives and the potential hazards.

2.3.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

The study conducted FGDs to get the opinions of adolescents on CGS relationships. This facilitated a clear understanding of the moderating factors on CGS motivations and potential risks. According to Flick (2022), the number of FGD participants should range from 4 to 12. Therefore, a total of eight (8) adolescent girls from Forms 1–IV formed a single FGD to have the opinion of adolescents from different levels. A total of 10 FGDs were conducted, one from each school. The FGDs lasted not more than an hour, with the researcher being the moderator. A tape recorder was used to capture the discussions, and to allow easy reference of what was discussed during data analysis and report writing.

2.3.3 In-depth Interviews with Key Informants

In-depth interviews with ten discipline masters/mistresses enabled to acquire qualitative data as well. These individuals were interviewed because they had knowledge that was pertinent to CGS relationships in the disciplining of teenage girls. Also, these persons were responsible for overseeing student behaviours.

2.4 Data Analysis

The quantitative data was analysed through the SPSS software. The study applied both descriptive and inferential statistics to analyse the data, aiming at addressing the study objectives and testing the hypotheses. In the multivariate statistical model, the structural equation model (SEM) was used. This is because

the SEM allows to conduct and combine statistical procedures, such as multiple regression, and factor analysis. The qualitative data was analysed through the NVivo 12 due to its usefulness for qualitative and mixed-methods research. Specifically, it is used when analysing unstructured texts, audio, video, and image data, including—but not limited to—interviews, FGDs, surveys, social media data, and journal articles (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Hence, the application of the NVivo 12 software was intended to help with the analysis and organization of non-numerical or unstructured data.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The study results in Table 1 show that the majority (54%) of the respondents were in the age group 16–18, followed by the age group 13–14 (43.6%).

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Per cent
Age of Respondent	13–15	168	43.6
	16–18	208	54.0
	19–20	9	2.4
	Total	385	100.0
Class level of a respondent	Form I	99	25.7
	Form II	101	26.2
	Form III	100	26.0
	Form IV	85	22.1
	Total	385	100.0
Persons living with the respondent	Single Parent	83	21.6
	Both Parents	263	68.3
	Others	39	10.1
	Total	385	100.0

Source: Author's survey (2021)

The study also found that more than half (68.3%) of the respondents were living with both parents, indicating the existence of a potential parental support, which is important in moderating adolescent girls' sexual behaviour; including being involved in CGS relationships (Yang & Jiang, 2023; Dittus, 2023). Table 1 also depicts the class level of respondents, and the status of who was staying with the respondents (i.e., adolescent girls).

3.2 Moderating Effects of Parenting in the Relationship between Motivations for Cross-Generational Sex and Its Potential Risks

A multiple regression analysis on the moderating effects of parenting in the relationship between emotional motivations for cross-generational sex and its potential risks was conducted, and the results are shown in Table 2. These results indicate that emotional motivation has a strong and significant negative effect on

risk factors (coefficient = -3.657, $p < 0.01$); suggesting that as emotional motivation increases, risk factors decrease substantially. Social motivation shows a weak positive association with risk factors (coefficient = 0.861, $p = 0.065$), while economic motivation does not significantly impact risk factors (coefficient = -0.415, $p = 0.689$). Parenting significantly predicts reduced risk factors (coefficient = -3.307, $p < 0.05$), highlighting its protective role. The interaction between emotional motivation and parenting is positive and significant (coefficient = 0.162, $p < 0.01$), indicating that effective parenting can further moderate the impact of emotional motivation on risk factors; thereon reducing them even more.

Table 2: Multiple Linear Regression Results of Parenting and Motivations on Risk Factors

Variables	Coefficients	S.E	P-value
Emotional	-3.657***	1.132	0.001
Social	0.861*	0.464	0.065
Economic	-0.415	1.035	0.689
Parenting	-3.307**	1.780	0.064
Emotion & Parenting	0.162***	0.046	0.000
Social & Parenting	-0.028	0.019	0.137
Economic & Parenting	0.016	0.044	0.720
Constant	99.539**	42.429	0.019
Diagnostic			
F-test	9.749		0.000
Bayesian Criterion	2378.953		
Akaike Criterion (AIC)	2347.327		

Source: Survey (2021)

These results indicate that emotional motivation and parenting are significant predictors of risk factors. Emotional motivation has a strong negative effect, suggesting it reduces risk; while effective parenting also contributes to reducing risk factors. The interaction between emotional motivation and parenting further reinforces the fact that parenting can help moderate the effect of emotional motivations on risk factors. However, social and economic motivations and their interactions with parenting do not significantly impact risk factors in this model. This implies that parents can influence their daughters' emotional motivations and their willingness to engage in risky behaviours, such as sexual activity with older men, through their parenting style and communication. By providing emotional support, guidance, and education, parents can help their daughters develop healthy self-esteem and self-worth; thereon decreasing the likelihood of engaging in risky behaviours. Parents can also set expectations and boundaries—such as curfews and rules around dating—and provide a safe and supportive environment for their daughters to grow and thrive.

Ultimately, parents have an important role to play in preventing their daughters from engaging in risky sexual behaviours and promoting positive

sexual health outcomes. These findings are in agreement with Taylor-Seehafer and Rew (2000), who found that parenting practices play a crucial role in the development of adolescent risk behaviours, and that this relationship is complex and multifaceted. However, the study suggests that parents can play a protective role in preventing adolescent risk behaviours by monitoring their children's behaviour, providing emotional support and consistent discipline, and engaging in positive communication with their children.

To gain a deeper understanding of the moderating effects of parenting in the relationship between emotional motivations for CGS and its potential risks, FGDs were conducted with adolescent girls from various secondary schools in Kinondoni District, along with in-depth interviews with discipline masters/mistresses. This qualitative approach enabled an open exploration of participants' perspectives, motivations, and the impact of external influences; such as family dynamics and peer pressure. The insights gained highlighted how parenting practices can moderate emotional motivations behind CGS relationships; thereby influencing adolescent girls' decisions and their susceptibility to the risks associated with these relationships. The study used FGDs to gather participants' information and insights regarding whether parenting moderates girls' decision to get involved in CGS relationships. During one of the FGD, a participant said:

"My parents often tell me to take care of myself. Whenever I recall their advice, I am very careful." (FGD, Adolescent Girl No. 16, 5 February 2021).

This suggests that the adolescent girl (No. 16) values and follows the advice of her parents. When her parents remind her to take care of herself, she takes their advice seriously; and becomes more cautious and vigilant about her actions and behaviours. This shows that the girl has a positive relationship with her parents, and trusts and respects their guidance. The statement also implies that parental advice and support can be influential in shaping the behaviour and decision-making of adolescents. These findings are consistent with those of Zhang et al. (2023) and Usonwu et al. (2021): both of which support the notion that parental advice and support have a significant influence on the behaviours and decision-making of adolescents. The study suggests that parents who provide emotional support and encouragement also contribute to fostering academic motivation and aspirations in their children.

Furthermore, Shengyao et al. (2024) assert that parents who support and encourage their children's academic pursuits help cultivate motivation and aspirations that contribute to their success. These scholars collectively support the idea that parental involvement, guidance, and emotional support have a positive impact on both protecting adolescents from risky behaviours, and fostering their academic motivations and aspirations. Also, these studies consistently indicate that parents can effectively shape their adolescent's attitudes, values, and behaviours by offering guidance, fostering open communication, setting clear

expectations, and monitoring their actions,. These findings collectively emphasize the crucial role parents play in the development and well-being of their adolescent children. In a similar vein, another adolescent girl commented thus:

"My parents track me a lot, and always give me advice against getting involved in romantic affairs at my young age. They tell me that if I get involved in such affairs, I won't be able to fulfil my dreams. That is why I'm trying to study so hard. Their advice helps me a lot not to be fooled easily by sugar daddies because it is very true that they chase after us." (FGD, Adolescent Girl No.15, 8 February 2021)

From the narrations given by respondents No. 15 and 16, it can be argued that adolescent girls are aware of the risks involved in romantic affairs at a young age, particularly with older men (sugar daddies) who may have predatory intentions. As stated by respondent No. 15, her parents provide her with guidance and support to avoid such relationships, and to focus on her studies to achieve her goals and dreams. Moreover, both girls recognize the importance of their parents' advice in helping them to stay focused, and not be swayed by older men. This suggests that parental involvement and guidance can be a protective factor in preventing adolescent girls from falling victim of CGS relationships.

Despite some parents' efforts to advise their daughters not to engage in CGS relationships at a young age, some adolescent girls felt that their parents/guardians were not good role models because they (parents) were also involved in such relationships. During one FGD, a participant asked the following rhetorical questions:

"What can my father tell to me now? One day I went home with my friend, I mean a girlfriend. My father got attracted to her, and after a while I found out that this same girl was going out with my father. My heart sank; I was hurt a lot. I stopped inviting friends to our house. If I decide to have my own old male partner, what will my father tell me now?" (FGD, Adolescent Girl, 18 years, 11 February 2021)

This quotation is a narration by an 18 years-old girl who wonders what her father might say if she were to engage in a similar relationship with an older man: one resembling her father's past involvement with a young girl, a friend of hers. Her question reveals a deep internal conflict as she grapples with her own desires while facing the likely disapproval of her father, who once engaged in the very type of CGS relationship he would now condemn. The statement illustrates the emotional turmoil young people may experience when they receive conflicting messages from parents or role models regarding relationships and sexuality. According to Coleman (2022) and Mollborn (2017), such conflicting messages can lead to confusion and distress among adolescents.

While these studies differ in how strongly they emphasize the need for consistent and clear communication from parents and role models, they agree that contradictory messages and deeds can negatively affect young people's understanding of CGS relationships and sex.

Another participant in the current study had the following experience to share regarding the question of parenting, emotional motivations and the potential risks of CGS relationships:

"I stay with my aunt who has romantic relationship with many men, and one of them is very old; he may be old enough to be her father or even her grandfather. How can she advise me against having affairs with sugar daddies?" (FGD, Adolescent Girl of 17 years, 15 February 2021).

This adolescent girl, who is 17 years old, seems to disapprove of the way her aunt is behaving; and she does not see if she can get any useful advice from such an aunt.

Another study participant, aged 15 years, shared the following experience concerning parenting, emotional motivations, and the potential risks of CGS:

"As you know, madam, no parent likes to see their child fail; hence, every good parent or guardian will love to see their daughter or son succeed in the classroom, and even in life. That's why they always give us advice against the adverse effects of being romantically involved with sugar daddies. Madam, you know what? Our boyfriends have childish minds. Old male partners have their own usefulness, madam, if they call you baby, you feel it; not the same as these boyfriends we study with, and we are age mates. Hahahahaha! (FGD, Adolescent Girl No. 15, 16 April 2021)

The speaker in the preceding quotation acknowledges the unique satisfaction she experiences with an older male partner; the kind of satisfaction she feels that is lacking in relationships with age-mate boyfriends. She emphasizes the emotional satisfaction she gains, particularly noting how happy she feels when an older man affectionately calls her 'baby'. This is how some adolescent girls get more drawn into romantic relationships with older men than with peers.

This observation aligns with the findings by Wamoyi et al. (2017), who reported that young women lacking emotional support—such as orphans, or those living in emotionally neglectful households—are more likely to seek older partners. This tendency becomes especially pronounced when young women feel unsupported by their parents; and see few alternatives for emotional connection or guidance. Older partners, in such cases, are perceived as providers of both emotional fulfilment and life direction. These findings underscore the importance of consistent parental emotional support in discouraging adolescent girls from engaging in relationships with significantly older men, often referred to as 'sugar daddies'.

Another participant further elaborated on the reasons why some girls are attracted to relationships with older men, some of whom are even older than their own parents:

"We do not only experience a sense of well-being when they call us 'baby'; these older men (fataki) also compassionately listen to us, and provide us valuable advice. Unlike young people, whose minds are still childish, these older men offer guidance that contributes to our positive feelings." (FGD, Adolescent Girl No. 17, 12 April, 2021).

In the above quotation, a 17 year-old adolescent girl – who is involved in a relationship with an older man (referred to as '*fataki*', a Kiswahili word for 'explosive') – highlights two significant aspects of the relationship: emotional well-being, and active listening and valuable advice. The girl feels a sense of well-being and happiness when an older man addresses her using affectionate terms like 'baby'. This suggests that the emotional connection they share plays a role in her positive feelings. As for active listening and valuable advice, the older man seems to be attentive and actively listens to the girl when she communicates. Additionally, he provides her with valuable advice, which she perceives as mature and beneficial. This aspect of the relationship indicates a level of support and guidance that she finds valuable. Furthermore, the girl makes a comparison between the older man and young people, suggesting that she views older men as more emotionally mature and capable of offering better guidance than her peers, whom she considers to be still 'childish'.

According to De Jonge et al. (2022), adolescents who lack emotional support from parents or caregivers are more likely to seek validation and attention from older individuals. Similarly, Camara et al. (2017) argue that adolescents who do not receive adequate emotional care are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, as they may turn to older individuals to fulfil their unmet emotional needs. In line with these perspectives, Ajayi and Okeke (2019) highlight the vital role of parents and caregivers in recognizing and responding to the emotional needs of adolescents. They stress that consistent support and guidance are essential in helping young people navigate the challenges of adolescence in a safe and healthy manner.

To get more insights about how parenting is emotionally motivational, and its effect on the issue of CGS relationships, discipline masters/mistresses from various schools gave their contributions during the in-depth interviews. Discipline Master No. 5 made the following comment:

"While the majority of parents fulfil their responsibilities by providing financial support and basic necessities to their daughters, very few actually offer guidance on sexual matters at the young age. Many parents ignore to discuss the potential consequences of engaging with sugar daddies or older partners." (In-depth Interview, Discipline Master No. 5, 16 February 2021).

As the above discipline master indicates, parents seem to admit that they have failed to have open discussions about sexual matters with their daughters from a young age. Although many parents do provide financial support and fulfil basic needs, like providing food, they often ignore the important task of advising their daughters about the potential risks and consequences associated with getting involved with sugar daddies. This lack of guidance and communication leaves young girls uninformed about the potential dangers and negative outcomes that can arise from engaging in such relationships. Without proper guidance, young girls may not be aware of the risks they could face in engaging CGS relationships, including exploitation, manipulation, or other harmful situations.

In contrast to the aforementioned studies, Mcharo et al. (2021) found inconsistent results regarding the contribution of parental emotional support to adolescents during the puberty stage. This stage is characterized by increased interest in romantic and sexual relationships, along with a desire for greater independence. Many adolescents engage in arguments with their parents as they strive for autonomy. During this stage, adolescents often resist parental monitoring; and find as annoying, such questions as: 'Where were you?', 'Who were you with?', or 'What did you study?'. In this stage, adolescents view themselves as adults capable of taking care of themselves. Therefore, the study found that parental emotional support may have limited influence on adolescents during this transitional period.

Another discipline master had the following to say:

"A few parents make an effort to talk to their daughters about sexual issues and the effects of getting involved in sexual matters with older partners." (In-depth Interview, Discipline Master No. 7, 19 February 2021).

As the discipline master No. 7 indicates, only a small number of parents make an effort to talk to their daughters about CGS and its effects. Most parents do not do so due to a variety of factors; such as taboo, lack of knowledge or awareness, or discomfort in discussing such topics with their daughters.

Another discipline master made the following observation:

"The issue of sex education is not discussed at all at home. So, even if a daughter decides to enter into a sexual relationship with sugar daddies, parents are not aware of it; and even when they know, they do not care at all." (In-depth Interview, Discipline Master No. 8, 20 April 2021).

The discipline master No. 8 reveals that sex education has never been a topic of discussion in most households, something that is mostly caused by the lack of awareness among parents. This lack of awareness or concern on the part of parents could put their young women at risk of harm or negative consequences associated with engaging in sexual relationships with older men.

Discipline masters 5, 8, and 7 highlight the importance of parents taking an active role in discussing sexual issues with their daughters, and educating them about the potential risks and consequences associated with engaging in sexual relationships with older partners. This could include providing information about safe sex practices, setting boundaries, and building self-esteem and self-respect; as well as addressing the social and economic factors that can lead to the vulnerability of young women to exploitative relationships. The discipline master No. 10 had this to narrate:

"During the Corona holiday, here at our school, four students came back to school pregnant. This clearly shows that the issue of sex education and its effects has been left to teachers in schools. Parents are busy looking for money." (In-depth Interview, Discipline Master No. 10, 12 April 2021).

The preceding narration, from discipline master No. 10, shows that when schools were closed due to the Coronavirus pandemic, four female students became pregnant and returned to school with pregnancies. The teacher believes that this highlights the importance of sex education; and complains that the responsibility of teaching this subject has been left solely to teachers, while parents are preoccupied with financial commitments.

Moreover, discipline master No. 4 had the following opinion:

"Parents or guardians contribute a lot to how adolescent girls get involved in CGS because you find that a grown-up individual is engaged with an adolescent girl young enough to be his daughter, or even his granddaughter. In the same way, you find that the mother also has her own lover who may be the same age as her father or her grandfather. Seeing this, their daughter might think that CGS is common regardless of its effects." (In-depth Interview, Discipline Master No. 4, Monday Morning, 12 April 2021).

The opinion of discipline master No. 4 implies that parents/guardians may also contribute to the prevalence of CGS among adolescent girls. This is because the parents themselves practice CGS; and as a result, their daughters are most likely to consider CGS as something normal. The two narrations from discipline masters No. 10 and No. 4 emphasize the need for parents and guardians to give priority to the well-being of their children over any cultural practices that might be tempting parents to engage in improper conducts. Both statements ultimately underscore the importance of educating and protecting young people—both in school and at home—to ensure that their physical and emotional well-beings are secure.

With so much blame being thrown at parents for not remodelling their daughters, the conversation conducted in an in-depth interview with discipline master No. 13 shows that the girls are the ones to blame because they are disobedient to their parents, and some do not know the purpose of attending school. Discipline master No. 10 said:

"Girls who lack self-understanding may be more prone to involving in CGS relationships. However, a girl who is clear about her purpose for attending school, and what she aims to achieve, is less likely to engage in romantic relationships with sugar daddies; who may be the same age as, or even older than, their fathers." (In-depth Interview, Discipline Master No. 10, 24 February 2021).

The teacher suggests that if girls understand themselves and their purpose of attending school, they are less likely to get involved in irresponsible relationships. Therefore, the responsibility for preventing this does not only fall on parents, but also on the girls themselves who should take ownership of their bodies and education; and be aware of the potential consequences of their actions. This argument is supported by Agbeve et al. (2022) who, contrary to previous and the current study, found that parents have limited influence in preventing their daughters from engaging in sexual relationships with adults during the period of puberty. This is because this period is marked by intense emotions that significantly shape the behaviour of both male and female adolescents. During

this period, adolescents tend to isolate themselves and prefer spending time with friends rather than being closely monitored by parents. They become more independent, and may disregard parental guidance. In this context, personal feelings guide their decision-making, and they often exhibit a sense of self-assurance, making it challenging for parents to exert control over their choices.

In addition, the findings from in-depth interviews that only a few parents talk to their daughters about matters of sex, align with those of van der Gaag et al. (2024), indicating that the responsibility of educating children about sex has largely been entrusted to teachers. This lack of comprehensive sex education from parents has contributed to young girls becoming involved in sexual practices without adequate guidance. The study suggests that there is no significant relationship between parental emotional motivations and passive risk-taking behaviour. Due to busy schedules and the pursuit of financial responsibilities, many parents are unable to find sufficient time to talk with their adolescent girls. Consequently, young individuals often turn to their peers for support, which has resulted into early engagement in sexual practices.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study demonstrates that parenting styles play a pivotal role in moderating emotional CGS motivation and associated risks among Tanzanian adolescent girls. Authoritative parenting—marked by open communication, consistent monitoring, and emotional support—significantly reduces emotional CGS motivations; and lowers risks such as exploitation, sexually transmitted infections, and educational disruption. In contrast, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles, characterized by rigidity or lack of boundaries, are linked to increased vulnerability of their daughters to CGS-driven risks. Parental involvement, especially through proactive dialogue and supervision, emerges as a crucial protective factor against exposing their girls to exploitative relationships.

Therefore, the study recommends that community-based parenting education programmes be implemented to train parents in authoritative strategies; by emphasizing communication, risk awareness, and supportive monitoring. Integrating CGS risk education into the school curricula, fostering strong parent-teacher partnerships, and engaging local leaders and NGOs to challenge socio-cultural norms that normalize age-disparate relationships: all these are also essential. Policy efforts should prioritize parental support within adolescent health and education frameworks, hence leveraging Tanzania's existing child protection systems. Further research should explore the long-term impacts of parenting styles on CGS outcomes across diverse socio-economic contexts, and assess the effectiveness of digital tools in enhancing parental monitoring and communication. By prioritizing parental empowerment and systemic collaboration, stakeholders can help disrupt cycles of exploitation; and hence create safer environments for adolescent girls.

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