THE IMPACT OF RELIGION ON CHRISTIAN YOUTH SEXUALITY

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study was to determine the extent of sexual awareness among the youth and the influence, if at all, the church has in the dissemination of the awareness.

Thus the objectives of the study were to explore knowledge church youth have on sexuality, their sexual activity, the impact the church has on their sexual behavior; behavior change whether positive or negative and their attitude on abstinence as regards sexually transmitted disease.

Sexual knowledge is derived from several main sources that include the home, that is the parents and significant others, schools, the peer group, internet sources and the Church Christian Community among others.

In issues of sexual expression it has been observed that gender expectations vary with the young men thinking that expression is alright as long as they avoid sexually transmitted diseases. Responsibility over consequences largely remain with the young girl as regards pregnancy, contraception and guilt. At the cognitive dimension, sexual expression for the male is taken as a casual encounter, and it is at this point that the Church influence rears her head.

The Christian Church teaching on sex condemns loss of virginity before marriage, all forms of illicit sex, and at the negative level exhorts all to flee immorality. At the positive level, all who claim allegiance to the cause of the Christian Church are called upon to strive for purity, to be faithful in marriage and exercise self-control. The Church youth grapple with the issue of safe sex. Insistence on abstinence leaves the choice of faithfulness to one's single partner and condom use to the married yet casual observation reveals sexual activity among their ranks.

Sexual morality has been an issue that is very personal yet with influences from the Judeo-Christian ethics as outlined by the Bible and our rich diverse culture. The Christian Church teachings basically emphasizes no sex before marriage, and sticking to one partner within marriage avoiding all other extra marital sexual relationships. Today's permissive society emphasizes choice while our cultures casually condone multiple sexual relationships especially for the male.

Further to this, continuing to deny existence of sexual activity among the Church youth would be detrimental in the long run and would serve as entrenchment of prevailing double standards within the Christian Community. The sexual activity and the attendant casual stance lead to absence of commitment and responsibility. It is rampant due to present lifestyles and prevalent more in the rural than urban areas. It is thus in order for the Christian Community to address her own community through church driven empowerment approaches, positive sexual awareness is a major path that the Christian Church can use to address the youth. It is the researchers hope that this work has uncovered sexual awareness levels and also explored how the information is used. A
Catholic, mainline and evangelical churches were selected within the peri-urban set-up of greater Nairobi. The researcher endeavored to undertake a method of systematic Random sampling in which every 3rd person in the select church youth groups was selected. The questionnaires were self-administered and included both open and close-ended questions.