



Is it the pain or joy of boyish-ness?

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Introduction

- a. Moi University, the Institute for Gender Equity, Research & Development set out to achieve 3 objectives 2007-2012.
- b. To increase research and outreach activities on gender issues at MU-K and in the region.**
- c. Context of the study – 2007/2012 plan

Methodology

1. Call for Essay Writing Competition:
 - a). 2009 theme- **Plight of the Boy Child**
-Posters distributed to various primary and secondary schools
Rural and urban
 - b). Mode of administering the essays
 - c). Total essays received in 2009 – **1500**

2. Processing and analysis

Revelations

1. Our concern- 600 essays mainly from rural schools

From same region whose stories touch on sexual practices that involve use of domestic animals for sexual practice and gratification

2. Un-answerable questions were triggered by some of the stories that primary and secondary school children told

See the following quotes :

Findings

▶ Respondent 790

When this man went to look after animals ... slept with animals such as goats, sheep and a very small cow. And he did very many things with the animals. He forced the animals to sleep with him.

(Male, Std. 8)

Respondent 868

Other problems facing boys in my community is bestiality. When these boys are left to look after the animals, they take the animals to be their wives

(female, Std. 8)

Respondent 762

Another problem that is facing the boys is that some of our girls don't like having boy friends, so some of our boys just end up engaging in sexual abuse called bestiality (*Female, Std. 8*).

What is the message from children?

1. Dismissive approach:

- ▶ We could dismiss the stories -- ***boyishness?***

2. Or Accept as truthful accounts by children who seem to have freedom to write.

a). Why weren't they afraid of the teachers reading their compositions?

What is the message..... ?

b). Could it have been teacher directed?
Why would a teacher direct pupils to write on bestiality?

3). **Accept the stories** as a window through which we can begin to understand a community

▶ *Is it the pain and joy of boyish-ness?*


Lingering questions

1. Is it the joy or pain of boyish-ness?
2. Do parents know that some of their pre-teens and teenage boys desire sex and when some watch domestic animals having sex get turned on?

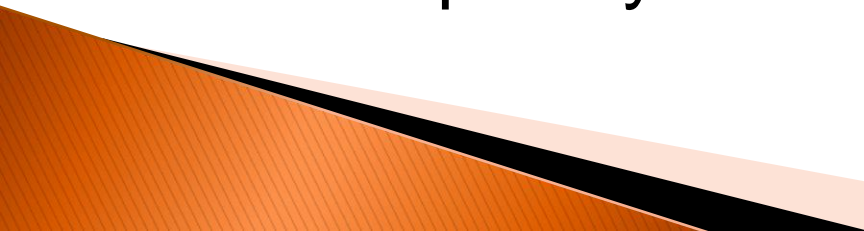
Lingering questions

3. Abstinence works for the chosen few.
What about the rest of our sons?
4. What sexual practices should we be encouraging for our sons?
5. Whose role is it to encourage healthy sexual practices?

Implications for research & counseling

1. The issues under discussion touch on health and well-being of children, individuals and society at large.
 2. Health is defined as not just the absence of disease – but a state of physical, mental and social well-being which includes a spiritual dimension (WHO)
 3. **Revealed:** a sexual practice among children in a certain place/locality
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Implications for research & counseling

1. We are talking about one region/area
 2. There could be many more regions where the practice is common
 3. We need to find out
 4. The findings reveal that what was seen as a delinquency or taboo is getting normalized
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Changing definition of sexuality

“Sexuality is a social construction of a biological drive. An individual's sexuality is defined by **whom** one has sex with, **in what ways, why, under what circumstances, and with what outcomes**. It's more than sexual behavior; it's a multidimensional and dynamic concept. **Explicit and implicit rules imposed by society, as defined by one's gender, age, economic status, ethnicity and other factors, influence an individual's sexuality**” (Gupta, 2000: 2)

Recommendations

1. The aim of this presentation is to sensitize the audience on the need to explore their neighbourhoods, families and social networks and to consequently seek for ways of offering counselling services to the children and also parents who may be victims and/or perpetrators of the practice.
2. There is also need to explore ways of deterring the behaviour in our families and neighbourhoods.
3. IGERDs way forward.....

Acknowledgement

1. Schools that participated in the essay writing competition
2. MU development partners –**Flemish Interuniversity Council**
3. IGERD Board

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

