

**ADDRESSING REASONS FOR “SPONSOR” PHENOMENON IN THE CATHOLIC  
SPONSORED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF NAKURU**

**<sup>1\*</sup>Rachel Chepkemoi, <sup>2</sup>Prof Mary Getui, & <sup>3</sup>Rev. Fr. Dr. Chrispine Ouma Nyandiwa**

**Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya**

**Email of corresponding author: [rachelchepke@gmail.com](mailto:rachelchepke@gmail.com)**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Purpose of Study:** This study was undertaken to examine the reasons for the presence of “sponsor” phenomenon among secondary school girls.

**Statement of the Problem:** In recent times, all the prohibitions that aided the maintenance of sexual moral uprightness and disciplined society have been neglected and abandoned due to the influence of modernity. Decline in Christian values and parental authority, influence of science and technology, media influence, materialism, poverty, and the deterioration of discipline in Catholic sponsored secondary schools were identified as the major causes of sexual moral decay in the said schools in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru. This calls for moral reorientation anchored on Christian ethical principles. This paper maintains that, the presence of “sponsor” phenomenon among the high school girls and the reasons for it, need to be addressed by the church authority through application of Christian moral principles by use of new approaches.

**Methodology:** Mixed method was used to carry out the study, the population targeted were secondary school girls in Church sponsored secondary schools in Catholic Diocese of Nakuru. The sample of the study consisted of girls in high school, teachers, parents and clergy and nuns serving in ten Church sponsored schools. The subjects were sampled through simple random sampling and convenient sampling technique, the data were collected and statistically analyzed.

**Results:** The findings were that, sexual immorality is a deviation from divine moral guide, caused by negative peer group influence and pornographic films and literatures which affect the individual negatively resulting in teenage pregnancies, dropping out of school and sexually transmitted diseases.

**Conclusion:** Sexual immorality can be controlled through improved counseling, adherence to scriptural teachings and adequate/systematic moral education in schools.

**Recommendation:** The study recommended that Students should by all means decide on individual’s basis not to continue with sexual immorality in response to what the Church teaches, sex education should be considered aspect of the school’s academic activities. Churches and

religious bodies should intensify their teaching apply new approaches against sexual immorality in school and in society at large.

**Keywords:** *“sponsor” phenomenon, causes/reasons, church teachings, sexual immorality*

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## INTRODUCTION

“Sponsor” phenomenon is a term which has been used lately for sugar daddy practice. The term “sponsor” or “sugar daddy” is widely known although the society seldom talks about it or even questions it. The “sponsor” phenomenon refers to the situation where older men and women use money, material items and other favors to lure teenagers into often sexual relationships. The “sponsor” factor is also known as “Sugar dating” with names like, ‘Sponsorship’ (in Kenya), ‘Mentorship’ (in Nigeria) and ‘Blessings’ (in South Africa). Willard (2013) explains that the origin of the term “sugar daddy” which is somewhat obscure has its origin in 1908, “Adolph Spreckels, heir to the Spreckels’ sugar fortune, married a woman 24 years his junior and she called her husband Adolph her “Sugar Daddy.” The term according to Willard (2013) was not as well known, “its origin is listed as occurring in the period 1915-20, although the first recorded use was 1926”. By then Willard adds it had become a form of colloquial speech a “term for a man who offers money or gifts to a younger woman for companionship or intimacy”. The colloquial use of the term “sugar daddy” currently remains in use although it keeps changing names. Just like the term the practice of “sugar daddies” “Sponsors” continues to exist and now involving very young students in secondary school. This paper sought to find out the reasons as to why the girls would readily accept such relationships irrespective of being taught against its consequences by the school and the Church, which are often a trap on their future lives prosperity.

The study found out a number of reasons that contribute to the existence of “Sponsors” phenomenon in schools. These include age, social media and the internet, materiality, peer pressure and opportunities, male-female power differential, unguided beliefs and insufficient legal address. It is a term used for an older man who offers money or gifts to a younger woman for companionship or even intimacy.

### Age

Age plays an important role in moral reasoning. Kohlberg (1995) proposed that morality and age are related and further contended that age is related to specific stages of moral reasoning. He went on to say that most adolescents and adults function in level two, the conventional level, which consists of two stages (stages three and four). Stage three is characterized by the child behaving in such a way so as to be accepted and avoid rejection. Kohlberg emphasized that, in stage four, rules are followed because they are an important source of identity and are viewed as essential for maintaining law and social order. As an individual grows older, the individual will progress and change ways of thinking and reasoning (Branch, 2000).

During this transitional period, the young girl is amazed by the transformations that lead to the appearance of his secondary sexual characteristics and is buoyed up by a very strong sentiment of autonomy, independence and invulnerability. Suddenly, she tries to take personal decisions without the permission of parents, elders and others. Unfortunately, due to immaturity, which is a characteristic of their age, adolescents easily engage in adventurous sexual activities, which are risky for their health. Another reason for sugar dating was found to be drama-free, casual, mutually beneficial and different from conventional romantic relationships. It provides a discrete, short- or

long-term arrangement for individuals who attempt to avoid the stigma associated with commercial sex workers. A key characteristic was that, both sugar babies and “sponsors” described techniques to mentally and emotionally distance themselves from being associated with the sex industry hence they find it easy to practice.

### **Peer Pressure and Opportunities**

Adolescents’ peer group provides (or does not provide) opportunities for meeting potential sexual partners and engaging in sexual activity (van de Bongardt, Reitz, Sandfort & Dekovic, 2014). According to their study, having a larger network of friends or a network that includes a higher proportion of older or opposite sex friends, may be linked to sexual activities. Poverty and financial backgrounds of the young girls in such relationships is highly compromised by their peers. According to Luke and Kurtz (2006), the teenagers get into sponsor relationships to exchange sexual relations for money or other materials so as to be like their peers that is to remain in school, feel superior among their peers or enjoy that which they cannot afford if they were not in such a relationship. The extent to which a teenager is financially dependent determines the likelihood of such a teenager getting into transactional sexual relationships (Machel, 2001). While in some instances the young girls may consent to the sexual relationships because of the presents and money received, such relationships are not devoid of coercion and exploitation by the peers. These become apparent in cases where money or gift was given without the older man making it clear that they are to be compensated through a sexual relationship.

Evidently, adolescents tend to do what they believe their friends are doing. Adolescents who perceive that sexual activity will increase the extent to which they are respected by peers are more likely to engage in sex. Poverty leads many young girls to agree to give in to the pressure from their peers hence getting into sexual engagement with older men so as to receive finances, shelter protection, clothing, food as well as jobs among other opportunities like their peers.

Poor background contributes to young girls engaging in sponsor relationships and some of these girls are single or double orphans and often do not have a support network that would enable them to compete with their peers (Abate, 2008). Inequality in economic opportunities, as well as the need to access education, oftentimes, promote sponsor relations and sometimes engagement in commercial sex work (Kuate, 2004). Jonathan (2011) added that in Uganda and Zimbabwe, about 19% of females surveyed reported having received material support or other help in exchange for sex during childhood. Young girls who are schooling resort to sexual relationships with older people so as to afford school fees which may lead to intimate relationships hence leading to health problems like unwanted pregnancies and abortions.

A previous study by Kelly, Gray and Sewan (2003) revealed that most teenagers, especially girls, do not get into a sexual relationship with older people because of sexual pleasure. In fact, most girls do not regard sexual activities with older people as a pleasant activity where their intimate need would be fulfilled. To them, sex is a means (currency) with which they will buy their basic needs and wants, and as such, teenagers may hold on to the sponsor relationship despite the risks and discomfort. The young girls may uphold this practice for various gains such as obtaining food, housing, tangible goods and cash (WHO, 2011).

There are other reasons that explain prevalence of “sponsor” relationships, especially among young girls in high school within the urban centers of developing nations. Such teenagers may not necessarily get into sponsor relationships solely to get financial or other material benefits because of their poor background, instead, they are after a sense of security or privilege among their peers.

Such teenagers engage sexually with older people, who are relatively influential to gain popularity, and gain a socialite status (Luke & Kurz, 2006).

Available figures as indicated by Sumner et al (2015) found that the percentage of girls accepting sex in exchange for food, or for material gifts in some countries, can be significant. In Tanzania, a survey of 1,116 school-going adolescents found the prevalence of girls in transgenerational relationships to be to as high as 21%. According to a 2012 study in Burundi, 30% of persons interviewed said they had been victims of sexual exploitation and 70% said they had witnessed it. The persons involved were mainly persons offering financial or material rewards, particularly shopkeepers, mine operators, foreigners in transit and soldiers. In Uganda and Zimbabwe, among 16-24-year-olds who had sex before the age of 16, about 19% of females had received material support or other help in exchange for sex during childhood. In Nigeria, among 16 to 18 years old, 8.3% of females had been asked to exchange sex for goods or favors during childhood. In Kenya, among females aged 14 to 18 who experienced sexual negotiations and even violence as children, more than 7% reported having received money for sex.

In Egypt, the Centre for Egyptian Social and Criminal Research recently reported that 36% of street children have highly been involved in negotiation and sexual abuse, violence and other coercive practices through “transactional sex”. According to a 2010 study in Zambia, 580 children per 100 000 people were involved in “transactional sex”. In Uganda, a 2011 study indicated that the age of sex started way long back; they were 10 years old when they first engaged in “transactional sex”. The high prevalence of transactional sex in Africa is also evidenced by the high prevalence of teenage pregnancies on the continent. In 2013, Africa had the highest prevalence of teenage pregnancy in the world. Teenage pregnancy was especially found to be higher in neighborhoods characterized by high levels of poverty, as teens in those communities are more likely to become victims of exploitation through “transactional sex” (Plan West Africa, 2008).

### **Social media and Internet**

The online environment in Africa remains largely unregulated, with very few laws criminalizing online sexual crimes. Agha (2019) found out that, the world has witnessed a giant leap in science and technology. Science and technology have contributed a lot towards making lives better and worth living. However, the rise in science and technology has negatively influenced human morality, especially in Kenya. Despite other positive uses of the internet in areas of research and communication, negative and immoral practices are also learned from the internet. Michael Pennock and James Finely (1966) aptly points out that sexual attitudes have changed since (our) parents’ day, and have changed very dramatically since the days of (our) grandparents. What was formerly done in secret is now done openly, and the mass media and public opinion condone such actions by their lack of criticism, or even promote the “new morality” by presenting it as up-to-date and glamorous.

Fitting with the Media Practice Model and Slater’s reinforcing spirals model, a three-wave study conducted in Philadelphia found similar patterns of early exposure to sexual content in multiple kinds of media and subsequent sexual activity but also showed that the relationship is reciprocal. Thus, sexually active adolescents may be more likely to seek sexual content in the media and that content may then encourage them to engage in sexual behavior. Other studies suggest that exposure may increase perceived self-efficacy for engaging in sexual behavior, and more explicit media

portrayals such as can be seen in Internet pornography may arouse viewers and increase their interest in engaging in sexual behavior.

For example, many pornographic sites abound on the internet are patronized by the youth for sexual activities. Like the internet, increased access to electronic gadgets like television, compact discs, digital video discs and mobile phones, have also contributed to immoral behaviors among Kenyan youth who are still in secondary school. Through these media, most of the Kenyan youth have also learned and embraced cultism, gangsterism, drug abuse, prostitution and violence among other practices. When people begin to practice what they learned from the internet and those electronic gadgets, moral decay becomes the order of the day as we are witnessing in the world today. The advancement and availability of technological devices and accessibility of the internet facilitate contacts as well as nurturing of sponsor relationships (Kuate, 2004).

Many studies have been conducted to link internet usage among adolescents and widespread HIV/AIDs and other STIs, the conclusions of which have always been evidences that the internet has a profound impact on the way friendships, contacts and sexual relations are nurtured (Keller *et al.*, 2009). The fact that one is able to transmit information to other/others fast and anonymously, makes it possible for older men to search, through social media, for young girls and take advantage of their innocence. There are online websites and applications that are designed not only for adult content but also explicitly to facilitate sponsor relationships.

Various researches show that sugar-daddies-and-sugar-mummy's web provides a platform over which sugar daddies and sugar mamas as well as young people can seek each other, through their profiles, descriptions and photos. Finding a "sugar daddy" may be as easy as a Google search away. They type in the words sugar daddy and a list of opportunities is presented. Mazvarirwofa (2014) reported that students at the University of Witwatersrand simply activate a WeChat account which links them with potential "sugar daddies".

It has been observed that in many developing countries, teenagers may prefer to sexually engage with older people who travel to these countries as tourists, especially from Europe and America. The article, "desperately seeking a sugar daddy" (2013) stated that 292 Georgia State University students, 148 University of Georgia students, 285 New York University students and 100 students at New York City's Columbia University registered as "sugar babies" in 2013. However, some opted out of the sophisticated connectivity of the internet, and researchers revealed that students could locate a "sugar daddy" outside campus (Keller *et al.*, 2009). These people often meet over social media and an online relationship turns into physically intimate upon arrival in the country. It is thus observed that many young girls who are still in high school easily get into such relationships as there is a significant facilitative role played by social media and the internet in aggravating the cases of sponsor relationships. Locally, in our own country, aging white men stroll arm in arm with local girls young enough to be their grandchildren. Many of whom are drawn to the Kenyan Coast by the area's reputation as a haven for sex tourism — especially with children. UNICEF (2018) study found that as many as 30 percent of girls aged 12-18 in Kenya's Coastal areas are involved in some form of sex work. The same study also estimates that among Kenyans' sex workers, one in 10 began before reaching puberty.

### **Male-Female power differential**

Blanc (2001) stated that there is overwhelming evidence that unequal gender and age power influences sponsor relationships to some extent. This is because, the older men have more bargaining power as compared to their partners who are young girls. The power inequality within

the relations involving older men and young girls has been suggested to be at the detriment of the young girls, owing to age, influence, material wealth and other factors that define power in the society. Young girls are thus not in a position to bargain or negotiate how or when the sexual activity will take place (Goparaju *et al.*, 2003). The power imbalance increases dependency on the part of the young girls who are not able to defend themselves from sexual abuse and have to tolerate mistreatment.

As a result, the young girls end up with infections and other physical and psychological problems at a younger age which may result in withdrawal syndrome while in school and even at home. Eisenberg *et al.* (1989) have theorized that gender differences in moral reasoning, as a result of gender-specific socialization processes, could also be the reason as to why young girls prefer to go to older men than boys of their age. He further contends that adolescent girls express a higher level of moral reasoning over adolescent boys.

Previous studies regarding inter-generational sexual relationships have suggested that sponsor relationships often incorporate coercion in a clever way such that the young girl may not refuse the financial or other material favors offered in exchange for sex with the older man because of the severe consequences that she may face (Luke & Kurz, 2006). According to Kelly *et al.*, (2003), the point put forward by several adolescent girls as a major reason for their relationships with their sponsors is coercion, with the sponsor being in a controlling position because of their monetary status. These observations thus characterize the influence of minimum power the young girls have and that makes them vulnerable to the older men.

### **Unguided beliefs**

In several African societies, there has been a misguided belief that young girls are less likely to have sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDs and STIs since they are less engaged to sexual activities. Additionally, there has been an unfounded myth that men can be cured of AIDs after a sexual intercourse with a virgin (Barbara *et al.*, 2006). These propel older men to aggressively pursue younger girls by all means, a practice that increases the practice of “sponsor” relationships. While it is within common knowledge that most teenage girls would be virgins and HIV free, some older men utilize this knowledge to find ways of enjoying sexual activities without regard to what they pass on to the “sponsored”, or pursue them to cure themselves of AIDs (Luke & Kurz, 2006).

A number of studies from across Africa suggest that inter-generational sex is normalized and common as brought out by cross-cultural studies by Holmes *et al.* (1991). Kawanishi (1995) and Pittman *et al.* (1995) indicate that differences in cultural norms are associated with different expectations for sexual behavior, attitudes and emotional expression. These culturally variant expectations emphasize different aspects of morality. As a result, perceptions of sexual morality, as well as the development of it, tend to differ between cultures and ethnic groups. These beliefs cause dangerous behaviors if one has to reciprocate gifts with sex, because older men with higher incomes and jobs were able to afford sexual partners. If having multiple partners proves one’s manhood, then these older men feel pressured to have multiple casual girlfriends. And if younger girls are perceived to be less likely to have HIV (and perhaps even able to cure HIV), then these older men seeking multiple partners looked for young girls. All these lead to widespread prevalence of what is known as “inter-generational relationships” (Barbara *et al.*, 2006).

### **Insufficient Legal Address**

The Government of Kenya has enacted laws meant to address any form of sexual offenses and which protect the victims of such acts as enshrined in The Sexual Offences Act (2010). It also amended the Child Protection Act in 2006 to ensure that courts can convict a defendant in a case of child sexual offenses even without corroboration as long as the court is satisfied with the truth of the victim or witnesses (Jerop, 2018). Kenya's Vision 2030 and the medium-term plan II 2014 – 2017 place youth, and especially young women at the center of the country's development agenda. Yet, young people in Kenya face various health challenges and risks including HIV, gender-based violence and drug abuse. The Kenya Constitution articulates and guarantees the right to the highest attainable standard of health, including right to reproductive health service. However, it has been observed that adolescents and young people have not realized the benefits of these investments despite many programs by the Church and political actors.

It has also been observed that despite the solid legislations, cases involving child protection are numerous but with very few convictions. According to Kuate (2004), there is lack of sufficient legal means by which "sponsor" relationships and their implication are addressed. While there might be laws that deal with sexual relations between older men and young girls, it has been observed that, most of the cases even if involving violence and coercion are not reported. Enforcement of such laws is also weakened by the state of corruption and financial strength that sugar daddies have (Goparaju *et al.*, 2003). The culture is also to blame for the increased sponsor relationships since some girls are encouraged to have relationships with wealthy men, or are forced into marriages at a very tender age. Within such an environment, it becomes very difficult for the young girls to report, since the family as well as law enforcement agencies, perceive it as a commonly acceptable arrangement.

### **METHODOLOGY**

In this study, the researcher used mixed method research design specifically the explanatory sequential design. This design has two phases. The first one was collection of quantitative data and the second was collecting qualitative data to explain on the quantitative results. The study utilized qualitative approach, specifically individual interviews and focus group discussions with various education stakeholders in order to discover and understand the underlying motivation of the young girls who engage in the practice of "sponsor". The use of quantitative research gave the study the quality of measurement in getting to know the general picture and extent to which girls are engaging in the sponsor practice. The data was integrated during interpretation phase although it occurred during analysis and this helped in noting either a lack of convergence or convergence that strengthened the knowledge claim. This design therefore helped the researcher to access the ways in which the Church is responding to the "sponsor" factor in the Catholic sponsored Schools within Catholic Diocese of Nakuru.

### **Target Population**

Orodho (2008) described target population constitutes all the items or people under consideration in a study while Kombo and Tromp (2009), define population as a group of individuals, objects or items, which have one thing in common, from which samples are taken for measurement. The target population for this study consisted of all the girls in secondary school from form one to form four in Catholic sponsored secondary schools in Catholic Diocese of Nakuru, the teachers, parents/guardians and community representatives of these schools. Also targeted are the Catholic Diocesan Priests and Religious men and women serving in these Institutions. The rationale behind

choice of the group of population is that, they are in their prime youthful stage of their lives where crucial life decisions are determined and these choices impacted on them for the longest part of their active life. Therefore, they are familiar with morals and virtues of life of which they are part of the discussion in this research work.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

Data collection instruments are measurement tools designed to obtain data from respondents on the topic under study (Kasomo 2007). There are several ways of collecting data which differ considerably in context of resources and time (Kothari, 2004). The instruments used in this study were the primary sources which include questionnaires, interview guides, and observation guides. The secondary sources were also used and this were from the school records, Bible, other Church documents like pastoral letters from the Bishop, encyclicals from the pope and Diocesan strategic plans, documents from the government and non-governmental publications.

### **Questionnaire**

This is an instrument for research, which consists of a list of questions, along with the choice of answers, printed or typed in a sequence on a form used for acquiring specific information from the respondents. Questionnaires can also be used for an interview that is face to face. When questionnaires are used, the researcher can be present or not as D'Cruz and Jones (2014) asserts that questionnaires are questions in papers which may be used face to face interviews, mailed or distributed electronically. 42 questionnaires will be distributed 30 for the students and 12 for the teachers in the 10 schools in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru. They were randomly distributed to the 30 sampled girls in each secondary school who only live in Catholic Diocese of Nakuru and the rest of the selected respondents that is the teachers. The questionnaires contained both closed and open-ended questions were generated from the four main objectives of this study.

### **Interview Guides**

The interview guides consisted of structured open-ended questions of which one to one (person to person) interactions were administered by the researcher. Respondents comprised of 12 parents, 5 clergy, 10 nuns and 12 community representatives for interviews. The respondents the researcher will use purposive sampling so as to select the principles and the teachers in charge of boarding section. The community representatives and the teachers assisted the researcher to point out the significant parents who have good knowledge of the girls both at home and while at school and so the snow ball approach will be used here. Interview guides were help in obtaining data on the real situation about girls who are already involved with the “sponsors” From the clergy, the researcher found out how many cases they have handling in terms of counselling these students.

### **Observation Guides**

Observation method enables the researcher to collect data by observing the phenomena as it occurs naturally within the environment. Observation is a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place Taylor-P. E, Steele S. (1996) and Jae W. Song, Kevin C. Chung (2010). It is appropriate in situations where full and or accurate information cannot be elicited by questioning, because respondents either are not cooperative or are unaware of the answers because it is difficult for them to detach themselves from the interaction. Taylor, P. (1996) adds that when subjects are so involved in interaction that they are unable to provide objective information about it, observation is the best approach to collecting the required information. The researcher employed the verbal and nonverbal expressions



observations as she carries out her face to face interviews on the participants. The researcher also visited the town and observe what happens after school hours and carry out naturalistic observation on the behavior of girls. This observation occurs directly in the environment where the “sponsor” phenomenon occurs which is around some specific hotels within Nakuru town. The observations were being made as unobtrusively as possible with the researcher not directly interacting with the participants in any way so as to capture their true behavior (young girls) and what they are as opposed to what they say they do. The researcher also used participatory observation by visiting the girls in schools and even at their homes within the estates in Nakuru town.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

The researcher summarized and presented the data using the pie-charts, tables and bar-crafts. Qualitative data collected from the field was be analyzed using thematic framework. Thematic analysis will go beyond the count of explicit words and phrases. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that it is the first qualitative method that should be learned as it provides core skills that were useful for conducting many other kinds of analysis. It was identified and described implicit and explicit ideas within the data (Bernard & Ryan, 2009). The researcher first familiarized herself with the data by doing some transcription of the entire collected data, taking short notes on a printed transcript retaining the information needed while keeping to its original nature. This marked preliminary ideas that describe the content. The researcher then engaged in assigning codes of agree and disagree to the data for the purposes of organizing them into manageable groups. Collation of the codes into broader themes that said something interesting about the data was done by arranging and annotating related information. This was followed by reviewing and refining the themes so that they were coherent and distinctive. Thereafter, the themes were named and described. In Braun and Clarke (2013) words, “you define the essence that each theme is about”. Finally, the final report was written with enough information about the study, giving clear account of what was done both when the research was carried out and the analysis was done.

## **Results and findings**

The researcher sought to find out the reasons which make the young girls to go for the “sponsor” relationship despite the dangers which come with it. Teachers were given four statements in which they were requested to choose the response which best described their feeling on a scale of five points ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The findings were as follows in figure 1.

**Figure 1: Poverty as a reason for “sponsor” relationship among High school girls**

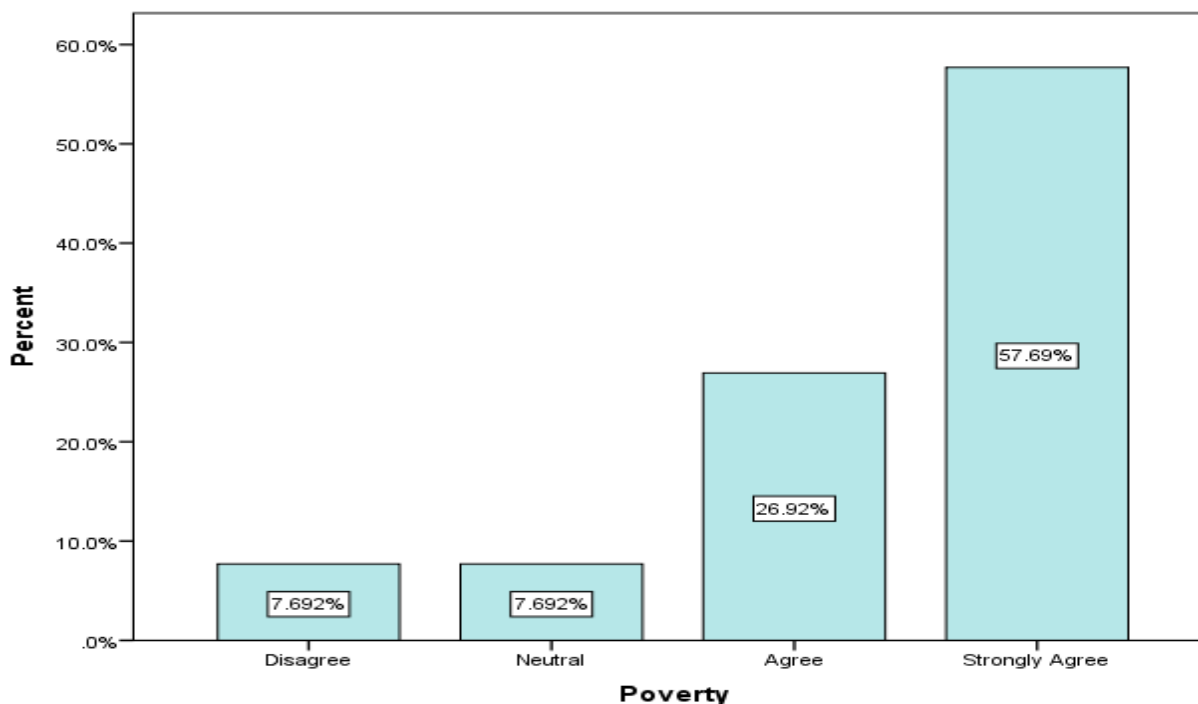


Figure 1 revealed that out of respondents who completed the teacher’s questionnaire a striking 57.69% strongly agreed that poverty is number one reason for many girls going in for “sponsor” relationship. 26.92% also agreed that it is indeed the reason for sexual immorality 7.72% were neutral and 7.72% disagreed. The interpretation was that, a total of 84.61% agreed that, poverty was the number one reason for “sponsor” phenomenon among the high school girls. This finding concurs with what Oyediran (2020) who said that, most of these students come from poor background where sometimes food on their table is hard to come by. Their personal basic needs are equally hard to get including the issue of sanitary towels. Fees is another big issue and for the day- scholars transport and money for lunch is also not easily found, therefore, these girls will be compromised by the sugar daddies(sponsor) who are able to provide for these needs for payback which these girls readily give out themselves so as to continue getting this support. These findings were supported by the focused discussion groups’ respondents who stated that they know some of the girls who depend on the good will of their friends to survive in school. This then explains the reason as to why they will readily agree to the support of a sugar daddy and in return become his love girl. This finding is supported by the study done by Milan (2014) who noted that with a growing number of female teenagers engaging in sex “not with their peers, but with older sex partners” who have money power or economic muscle.

To access more information, the researcher during the one on one interview with teachers and parents, on the question of “what are some of the reasons why the young girls go for “sponsors”?” some of them had the following responses.

*“For me I would say poverty is number one reason, because many of our girls in high school are really poor, some are orphans and are staying with their relatives like old grandparents who hardly have enough to live on, let alone cater for the girls’ personal*

*requirements before even thinking of school fees and other money needed for other activities while in school.” (Teacher 7 personal communication 11<sup>th</sup> May 2022)*

*“I have come across serious poor girls who are of single mothers or dysfunctional families, they even lack shelter and most of them are renting small houses with their grown up children. Some of these mothers will indirectly ask their daughters to know how to survive on their own.” (Guidance and counselling Teacher 17 personal communication 13<sup>th</sup> May 2022). “Another serious reason is because of looking for the father figure therefore they will readily accept the companionship of the older men than the young men.” (Principal 3 personal communications 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022).*

The interview with the parents and community representatives showed that they too agree to the statement of poverty leading quite a number of young girls into the relationship with the sponsors. They stressed that they needed to be helped on how to curb this kind of behavior while the girls were still young and, in a school. Otherwise, sooner or later there could be a likelihood of these same girls transiting to become sex workers, something which the family and society are not at ease with and it is not morally right. All authorities responsible for the formation of the young girls are challenged to try and find ways of solving the problem of some basic needs for girls. Teachers and even girls during focused group discussion mentioned that although the government have tried distributing sanitary towels to girls in high school, still they are not enough and not all school get sometimes the teachers do not distribute for unknown reasons. Therefore, new approaches are needed to awaken the society on way to have sustainable programs which would alleviate poverty in families.

## **CONCLUSION**

All in all, the study found out that the practice of “sponsor” relationship was found in many communities yet the reasons for being associated with it and the impact on the individuals, families and society at large are seldom questioned. The study further established that the reasons for the presence of the “sponsor” phenomenon among girls in secondary schools are attributed to poverty which often bring with it other negative results like peer pressure and family breakdown. Girls noted family and peer pressure to have a “better life” via “sponsors” to be the top reasons for the existence of this kind of relationship. From the research, it was found that these “sponsors” provided for three levels of need: urgent (e.g., food), critical (e.g., school fees), and material (e.g., clothes). During focused Discussion group exercise, the young girls described multiple risks which come as a result of the engagement with the “sponsors”, including “no power” to negotiate and being taken advantage of. Repercussions included dropping out of school because of community stigma, “abandonment” in the event of pregnancy, and sometimes death or health complications in the event of abortions. The young girls in fact face the difficult choice between the need for money to contribute to their families' income and the discomfort and health risks of a “sponsor” relationship.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Churches and religious bodies to be proactive and intensify in teaching sexuality to their youths.
2. Schools to go beyond simply knowing what is good to doing what is right or good and

3. Ensure that moral education is extended beyond the cognitive state to include the affective and the psychomotor.
4. Parents need to try as much as possible to be close and relate well with their daughters. This will eliminate the psychological problem of being loved by the opposite sex equal to the age of their fathers.
5. Parents should take responsibility of discussing sex related issues with their children in order to give them firsthand information on the situation while the teachers and school administrators should develop a curriculum that will embrace the enlightenment on the risk of indulging in sex before and outside marriage

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