

Sexuality and Sexual Pleasure amongst Ugandan Women: a feminist inquiry

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Abstract

Women's sexuality and right to sexual pleasure has been heavily policed and controlled by the systems in power, under the guise that sex is something that women 'give' and men 'take'. There has been a neglect of women's sexual pleasure and desire and there is little acknowledgement of the multicultural experiences of black women, particularly in Africa. Black women are tied to a history of racialized and colonial control of their bodies and dialogue around their sexuality and experiences of pleasure. As a result little is known about black women's experiences of sexuality and sexual pleasure. In response to this gap the current study sought to explore how Ugandan women understand their sexuality, experiences of pleasure and relationship with their bodies; focusing on unearthing the issues that shape these experiences through the use of semi-structured interviews, a focus group discussion and a photo-elicitation project. 10 women between the ages of 19 and 59 years participated in this study. The key argument that this study seeks to make is that Ugandan women are not passive recipients of sex and that sex can be a positive and liberating experience for women.

Key words: Sexuality; sexual pleasure; women; gender norms; body politics; Uganda

Table of Contents

Abstract	iv
Introduction	1
Literature Review	2
Body Politics.....	2
Sociocultural Factors	3
Abstinence-only Sex Education.....	5
Aims of The Research.....	6
Methods.....	6
Research Design.....	6
Participants.....	7
Data Collection Procedure	7
Data Analysis	8
Ethical Considerations	9
Consent and Confidentiality	9
Risks and Benefits.....	9
Results	9
Pleasure is more than just Physical Arousal	10
Perceptions/Experiences of Sexuality and Sexual Pleasure.....	11
Factors that Shape these Perceptions/Experiences	14
Religion.....	14
Culture.....	16
Generational Differences.....	18
Power of the Media	20
Inequalities in Sex Practices and Pleasure.....	21
Sex and Body Positivity.....	22
The Male Gaze	25
Resistance and Reclaiming Power	26

Conclusion	28
References	31
Appendices.....	37
Informed Consent Form.....	37
Information Sheet.....	42
Interview Guide	44
Photo-Elicitation Images.....	46
Referral List	49

INTRODUCTION

Historically, female sexuality has been restricted and controlled by men and those in power, as a means of keeping western patriarchal power in place. This is evident in the treatment of women in early North American society (hooks, 1992) and in Europe and Africa (during and following slavery and colonialism), as hypersexual defiant bodies to be controlled and used as objects of male pleasure (Abrahams, 1998). As a result the dominant narrative is that sex is something women give and men take, and men's sexual pleasure is centered while women are mostly viewed as reproductive objects. More specifically, black female sexuality has been presented as animalistic, immoral and expendable, affecting how black women interact with their bodies, negotiate the terms of sex, express desire for and enjoy sex (Abrahams, 1998). Sara Baartman who was paraded in England as an oddity, particularly for the large size of her buttocks, is an example of such control and negative portrayal. The racist and sexist construction of Sara Baartman as an icon of black female sexuality has contributed to the dominant view that women's bodies are solely for the consumption and pleasure of men (Collins, 2000).

Black women's sexuality and pleasure have been neglected and shamed. Most literature in the world of academia and media has focused on the biology of sex amongst women and has done so based on the hegemonic attitudes and ideologies of religion, patriarchy, and misogyny, meaning that black women's enjoyment and desire for sex has rarely been the focus (Muhanguzi, 2015). This neglect has contributed to the suppression of women's independence and voices, where sexuality and sexual pleasure are concerned. As a result, there is a need for research that acknowledges the multicultural experiences of sexuality amongst marginalized groups, particularly the contemporary African woman. The privileging of a monolith representation of blackness has problematic effects for the myriad of identities, experiences, cultures, and contexts that exist within the identity of blackness (Snyder, 2012). Research available on black women's experiences of sexuality often focuses on the African American experience, and yet African American and African women have different lived experiences, cultures and traditions (Tamale, 2016). Against this backdrop, this study seeks to explore experiences of sexuality and sexual

pleasure amongst Ugandan women, exploring how they relate to their bodies, as a means of deconstructing the dominant narrative that women are passive recipients of sex.

It is important to understand how women experience sexuality and sexual pleasure and to assert that even with the inequalities present it is possible for women to have liberating and positive sexual experiences. Addressing this question is important for supporting fulfilling relationships, promoting safer and more fulfilling sexual relations and dealing with sexual violence (Jolly, 2007). Public health outcomes can also benefit from the acceptance of a positive approach to sexuality; Tamale (2006) highlights how broadening the scope of research can offer a fresh perspective on interventions for critical areas such as sex education, rights, and HIV/AIDS.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is important to locate sexuality, desire and pleasure in the contexts within which they are experienced because they are constructed and influenced by many cultural and social practices (Jackson & Scott, 2002). Globally and specifically within Uganda, literature has highlighted body politics, socio-cultural norms and abstinence-only sex-education as major factors that perpetuate the gendered norms associated with sex and shape women's experiences of sexuality and pleasure (Benard, 2016; Mbugua, 2007; Muhanguzi, 2011). The following section discusses these factors.

Body Politics

Body politics are the practices and policies through which those in power regulate the human body (Benard, 2016). According to the World Health Organization body politics - alongside pleasurable sexual experiences and respect for bodily integrity- are an important part of sexual health and rights (Benard, 2016). Body politics are used to exert power by maintaining a hierarchy of gender, class, race, and sexuality in which first and foremost, the financially independent heterosexual white man remains the gatekeeper of social, economic and political power (Collins, 2000). An example of such control is President Museveni's signing of the Anti-Pornography Act into law in Uganda in 2014, which was followed by increasing cases of vigilante groups undressing women in public as punishment for wearing miniskirts (Tamale, 2016). These women were said to be

distracting male drivers in the city. Contrasting this with the ‘Miss Curvy’ pageant that happened in Uganda in early 2019, it is evident that women’s bodies are criminalized unless they can be commoditized and used to benefit men. In February 2019 the minister of tourism Godfrey Kiwanda announced a pageant showcasing Uganda’s curvaceous women as a new way of selling the country abroad, stating that people will come not just to see the beautiful wildlife but beautiful “real African” women (Akuma, 2019).

Modern imagery of the black female body is hypersexualized and exoticized (Benard, 2016) in contrast to an image of purity and idealized beauty attached to white women (Abrahams, 1998). The projection of exotic fantasies and deviant sexuality onto black bodies has made black women the representation of ‘fallen womanhood’ (hooks, 1992). This has contributed to black women repressing and closeting sexual desires, as a result of the racist and patriarchal legacies that fixate on their sexuality (Lewis, 2005). Claudat and Warren (2014) explored the effects these objectifying practices can have on women and the findings showed that body monitoring and shaming increased body consciousness during sex and decreased sexual satisfaction. This is an issue as body-shaming disproportionately affects women, can affect their enjoyment of sex, and in turn the quality of their relationships.

Sociocultural Factors

Looking at the Anti Pornography Act in Uganda, the underlying motives were based on religious, and misogynistic ideals of the society and Ministers that advocated for the passing of the bill (Tamale, 2016). These rules that society uses to assert self-control and determine what is inappropriate are known as socio-cultural norms, made up of factors that include social organizations, religion, politics, tradition, education and gender roles (Delamater, 1981). One such norm is the unrealistic cultural standard of beauty for women, which constructs the idea of the ideal woman as thin but shapely, firm and tight in the right areas (Markula, 1995). The media is complicit in perpetuating this standard and the notion that women who do not accept this disciplinary body control should be dissatisfied with their bodies and should be barred from expression and experience of sexual desire and pleasure (Markula, 1995).

Gender ideologies that enable and structure different roles for women and men also influence women's experiences and understanding of sexual pleasure (Blackwood, 2000). In 19th century patriarchal China, women were quickly married off, expected to reproduce patrilineage and be sexually faithful, while men were entitled to control wives and were allowed a large number of wives and sexual partners (Blackwood, 2000). This is still reflective in societies globally, where men are seen as biologically given desire, while women are both the objects of and in need of protection from this desire (Connell, 2005). Muhanguzi (2011) carried out a study amongst adolescents in Uganda and identified that sexual desire is seen as being normal for men but not women who are shamed for expressing sexual desire. Adolescent males in the study justified this using biblical references such as "it was the man who was created first".

Evident in such biblical references is that religion also plays a role in influencing women's experiences and understanding of sexual pleasure. Christianity embodies a procreation orientation towards sex, presents physical pleasure as sinful and shames women for wanting to have sex for pleasure (Delamater, 1981). This view of women's nakedness and sexuality as immoral and degenerate was mostly introduced to Africa through the colonial project, which used religion to justify the introduction of laws and discourse that inscribe shame on African women's bodies (Tamale, 2006). For many women who are socialized in accordance with these ideals, it is important that research looks into how this affects their expression and experience of sexual pleasure.

The traditions and politics of respect that govern most African families are another cultural norm linked to how women understand their sexuality. The paternalistic nature of most societies calls for unquestioning obedience to male elders, teaching girls to assume the subordinate role (Mirembe, 2002). Feminine respectability is tied to this subordination, marriage, bearing children within wedlock and earning money for the patriarchal family unit (Hungwe, 2006). Again, perpetuating the narrative that women's bodies are not their own, and their pleasure is a secondary worry if one at all.

There is also a rejection of sexual discussions between parents and children, specifically mothers and daughters. Mbugua (2007) found that in Kenya, Christianity's dominance and residual traditional barriers have contributed to a culture of avoidance of sex discussions between parents and children. Educated Kenyan mothers expressed that

explicit sexual language even referring to ‘private body parts’ is evil, so they resort to using vague innuendos and metaphors such as “bad men catching good girls” and “breaking their legs”, chastise their children for being curious and asking questions (Mbugua, 2007, p.1084). This construction of sex and sexual pleasure as dirty can contribute to women’s distrust of their own bodies and desire for enjoyable sex.

Abstinence-only sex education

The negative construction of sex and sexual pleasure is often also constructed through the sex-education that women receive while in school. An abstinence-only sex education presents forms of teaching and outcome goals that are centered on disease and pregnancy prevention as ultimately a woman’s responsibility, creating fear and negatively affecting women’s experiences of sexuality and pleasure (Herbaland & Rogow, 2015). The domains that dominate abstinence-only sex education models include; sexuality as violence which equates sex with abuse, coercion and AIDS, sexuality as victimization which tells women that they need to learn their vulnerability as victims of male desire, and sexuality as individual morality which emphasizes the importance of young women making decisions that favor premarital abstinence and chastity, viewing sex as a test of self-control and restraint as self-respect and triumph over the test (Connell, 2005).

In Uganda, the abstinence approach has partially been informed by the power that religion has in the state and the HIV/AIDS pandemic dating back to high rates of infection in the 80s and 90s (Mirembe, 2002). Sex education is offered under subjects such as Christian or Islamic religious education, with no connection to sexual pleasure and self-esteem (Muhanguzi & Ninsiima, 2011). This has left a gap in addressing and educating women on their rights to sexual pleasure and self-esteem and the need for erotic education amongst young women asking them questions such as whether they know how to pleasure themselves, whether their partners are pleasuring them, or if they have an idea of what an orgasm is (Connell, 2005).

Adolescent girls in Uganda have also expressed awareness of an unbalanced focus on girls’ sexuality, which gives boys the false impression that all things concerning disease and pregnancy prevention are the responsibility of women (Muhanguzi &

Ninsiima, 2011). Girls and women are made most vulnerable by this lack of holistic sex education that promotes the internalization of gendered and heteronormative sexual relations in which women are constructed as passive recipients of sex with no agency in the process. Studying black women's sexual experiences from their perspective centers the diversity of women's erotic experiences and sociocultural factors that shape these experiences. It allows the wider society to have a better understanding of women's experiences and can contribute to the development of more comprehensive and holistic sexual education models.

AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this study was to explore Ugandan women's experiences of their sexuality and sexual pleasure, as well as how they relate to their bodies. It sought to identify what issues shape their understanding of their sexuality and pleasure, what issues shape their relationships with their bodies, and to what extent if at all the following factors play a role in these women's narratives: body politics, sociocultural factors, and abstinence-only sex education. It also seeks to identify what different intersecting aspects of participants' identities make their experiences of sexuality and sexual pleasure different or similar.

METHOD

Research Design

This qualitative study took on a phenomenological approach that focuses on how individuals make meaning of their lived experiences of a specific phenomenon; sexuality and sexual pleasure in this case (Creswell, 2013). The qualitative approach allows for the collection of detailed data and allows room for unanticipated insight on the subject that the researcher may not have predicted beforehand (Langdridge & Hagger-Johnson, 2009). In this case, it allowed the researcher to see whether the participants' experiences interacted with body politics, socio-cultural norms and an abstinence-only sex education approach in the way previous research suggested. Through the phenomenological approach, data collection and analysis methods focused on unearthing the universal essence of the phenomenon and what commonalities and differences may exist between participants, which suits the aims of the study.

This study also took an intersectional feminist approach, centering the sexual experiences of Ugandan women with awareness that psychology usually privileges knowledge and approaches produced in the global North (Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018), and awareness that diversity that can exist within a social group (Cole, 2009). Intersectionality, a concept coined by Kimberle Crenshaw, highlights how different aspects of one's social and political identity converge to affect one's experiences (Crenshaw, 1991). This approach is an antidote to the erasure of certain groups in research by centering a contextual understanding of their experiences, rather than viewing them in relation to how they deviate from the norm (Cole, 2009).

Participants

Purposive sampling is used for the selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon being studied (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2015). A sample of ten women (n= 10) between the ages of 18 and 50 were recruited through the purposive sampling method to ensure that all participants have experienced the phenomena, and fit the desired demographics of the study. An age bracket of 18-50 years makes sense, as it is representative of the generations of women that make up a majority of the Ugandan population, and presents age groups that were easily accessible to the researcher.

Participation in the study was completely voluntary. Information sheets and adverts were shared on social media and through two NGO organizations that do work with women. All 10 participants were educated women, either currently undertaking studies or holding diplomas, undergraduate degrees, and masters degrees. Most of the participants identified with a denomination of Christianity, while two participants did not identify with any religion. Within the group six participants were single, two were in relationships, one participant was married and one participant was divorced. There were three participants who had children.

Data Collection Procedure

Data was gathered by the means of semi-structured face-to-face interviews, one focus group, and a photo-elicitation project discussed within participants' interviews. Participants were all invited to an introductory workshop where the aims of the research

were highlighted, dates for individual interviews were set and instructions of the photo-elicitation project were shared. Using their phones, participants were asked to a) take a photograph that represents their sexuality, b) a photograph that represents sexual pleasure, c) photograph a time or space where they feel most at home in their body, d) take a photograph that represents where they think they receive messages about body image from. Participants used both images they captured and images retrieved from the Internet. Photo-elicitation allows the researcher to study the social and personal meanings that participants ascribe to photos, and can provide rich data when used in conjunction with individual interviews (Copes, Tchoula, Brookman & Ragland, 2019).

Participants took part in an individual semi-structured interview, in a location of their choice that lasted approximately 60 minutes. Individual interviews are most suited to the nature of the study as the topics discussed are sensitive. Following the interviews all participants were invited to participate in a focus group – in a neutral and accessible space- lasting approximately two hours. The aim of the focus group was to facilitate an intergenerational conversation of the phenomena discussed; examining the relationship between the views and experiences of older and younger Ugandan women, and establishing whether there have been movements in the understanding and experiences of sexuality and sexual pleasure across generations.

Data Analysis

The data from the interviews and focus group was audio-recorded, transcribed, coded and analyzed using thematic analysis, involving; familiarizing yourself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, defining, and naming potential themes, and finally producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This method was an aid in the phenomenological approach of identifying common experiences and the ‘universal essence’ of sexuality and sexual pleasure amongst Ugandan women. While in practice, one’s thematic analysis method cannot purely be inductive or deductive; this study took on the inductive (bottom-up) method prioritizing participants’ meaning-making and data-based meaning in deriving codes and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the UCT Psychology Department's Research Ethics Committee.

Consent and Confidentiality. At the introductory workshop participants were given consent forms (see Appendix A), received a comprehensive explanation of what the study entailed, and were reminded that they have the right to withdraw at any point in the study. Confidentiality could not be guaranteed during the focus groups, however the researcher shared that all efforts would be made to encourage and facilitate an environment of mutual respect and solidarity to minimize the risk. Regarding anonymity, participants were made aware that if uncomfortable, they didn't have to take any images with their faces in them. And they were assured that any information shared would solely be used for the purpose of the study.

Risks and Benefits. It is important that the benefits of a study outweigh the possible risks. Speaking about one's experiences of sexuality and sexual pleasure can bring up sensitive issues and trauma participants may have experienced, which could cause emotional distress. However, participants were reminded that they were not obliged to speak about anything they feel uncomfortable sharing and that they could withdraw from the study at any point (with no negative consequences). Participants were interviewed in spaces where they felt safe and the researcher was careful not to prod on information that appeared to trigger trauma within the participants. Participants also received the contact information of counselors and organizations they can visit to receive adequate help.

Possible benefits of participating in the study included the opportunity to interrogate and reflect on one's sexual experiences in a safe space. As well as share concerns with other women, be affirmed, and encouraged in seeking out one's holistic well-being.

RESULTS

In analyzing the data gathered from the interviews, focus groups and photo-elicitation project five main themes around Ugandan women's understanding and experiences of sexuality and pleasure emerged; 1) Pleasure as more than just physical

arousal, 2) The negative perceptions and experiences of sexuality and pleasure, 3) The factors that shape these perceptions and experiences, 4) Sex and body positivity, and 5) Pleasure as a form of resistance and reclaiming power.

Pleasure as more than just physical arousal:

All participants gave in-depth descriptions of pleasure going beyond physical arousal including factors like; their state of mind, reciprocity, safety, comfort, connection/intimacy, intellect and the state of the relationship. The underlying similarity within the descriptions seems to be the desire to be engaged as active participants, to be seen and not just sexualized during sex. Jackson and Scott (2002) highlight how sexual acts are tied to social relations and the ways in which people are gendered. For women who are often objectified and taught to focus on pleasing the man, this may mean that they are most pleased when their partner acts in ways that affirm their presence and when they feel like they can embody their sexuality.

In the excerpt below a participant found that vulnerability is a big part of sexual pleasure because being comfortable in receiving and giving pleasure requires self-awareness and honesty in sharing parts of oneself that society conditions us to hide.

“...I think it takes a certain level, a very deep level of self awareness right and I don’t know that we’re always brave enough to go that deep because I don’t know what we fear to find out about who we really are, and what that says about us especially in case we find out that we like what is termed kinky.” – J, 49yrs

“ I think central to sexual pleasure is even a frame of the mind. Like it has to sit well, you have to be okay with experiencing pleasure, being pleased, knowing what pleases you, and that journey is still laborious.” – J, 49yrs

Another participant shared a line drawing (see Appendix C, Image 1) in which two bodies were intertwined and the man’s face was near the woman’s vagina.

This image represented pleasure for her because pleasure is about intimacy, connection and having experiences in which her desires are centered.

“I like the continuous line of it because to me it’s showing conjunction between the two people in the picture. It’s like you’re one line so you’re one person, I like that” – N, 25yrs

And another participant shared an image of a car (see Appendix C, Image 2) to express what sexual pleasure means to her, likening pleasure to a journey with a car.

“when you’re going for a journey, first of all, you prepare for the journey, and then when you’re driving, first of all, you need to know your car. And the road you’re going to, is it a bumpy road, or a smooth road? And so you keep changing gears.” – S, 33yrs

It is interesting that a lot of the participants shared that their favorite sexual experiences have not necessarily been the ones where they’ve had the best sex but where their partner has shown interest and care in getting to know their body. Participants also talked more about the ‘in-betweens’ during sex, countering the notion that sex is a linear process and a failure if it doesn’t end in orgasm (Jackson & Scott, 2002).

Perceptions/Experiences of sexuality and sexual pleasure:

Jolly (2007) highlights the dangers of a negative approach to sexuality as disempowering and a form of reinforcing gender stereotypes. In Uganda, this negative approach is coupled with a culture of silence where the topics of sexuality and pleasure are ignored altogether and there are unspoken things people are expected to just know or figure out in private. Participants expressed how this silence in their relationships with their mothers, and lack of comprehensive sex education at school contributed to some confusing and traumatic experiences that these participants feel could have been avoided had they been given more useful information.

In the high schools that all participants attended there was a focus on the biology of the reproductive system, an emphasis on abstinence until marriage, and a focus on

negatives attached to sex with no discussion of safe sex, sexual pleasure, equality, and consent. All but one participant described that their mothers are uncomfortable discussing sexuality and pleasure with them and the reality that their daughters could be having sex is something that they deny.

“even though my mum is really free I think she’s scared to talk about that topic. Like she’s always on edge once something about sex comes up... she gives me that eye of you know, you better be pure you’re my daughter.” – N, 19yrs

Suggesting that being a virgin is a sign of being pure, ties a woman’s worth to her sexual experiences and insinuates that women who have sex outside the heteronormative concept of marriage are of less worth than others. Often, mothers’ values and opinions will affect their daughters’ own perceptions. Avoiding and shaming their daughters’ inevitable exploration of their sexuality can, therefore, lead them to have negative attitudes towards their own bodies and sexuality. For example findings from Lesch and Kruger (2005) in a colored¹ community in South Africa found that when mothers didn’t affirm their daughters’ first discoveries of their sexual bodies it was difficult for them to develop a positive attitude towards their sexuality. The participants in this study expressed similar sentiments.

This tension can also affect the likelihood of women having positive experiences. The participant in the first excerpt below expressed a desire to have more candid conversations with her mother because she values her insight and experiences, and feels there are wiser decisions she could have made. In the second excerpt, the participant expresses a desire to share her own experiences with her mother without judgment because she values her presence in her life.

“These women these mothers of ours, they know, they be knowing these things. And then they’re just keeping quiet as if they don’t go through what we’re going through. I do very much wish that I had talked with my mum.

¹ A racial category created by the apartheid government in South Africa

Like now because I got pregnant twice, I truly feel like there was so much I would have learnt from her.” – We, 29yrs

*“ I feel like it should be normal, we are so tired of hiding. I’m tired of having sex and acting like I’ve been from like lunch like I was at a movie. No, I was not, I was having the time of my life, and I’d like you to know.”
– N, 19yrs*

Lesch and Kruger (2005) also found that when mothers present sex as a dangerous activity and assert a mutual understanding that it shouldn’t be talked about, those daughters are likely to engage in risky sexual behavior. A study amongst a sample of African American adolescent girls also found that parent-child connectedness and communication predicted reduced likelihood of sexual risk behavior amongst the sample (Henrich, Brookmeyer, Shrier & Shahar, 2006), and these findings are reflective of the experiences of those participants who felt that had they had healthier attachments to their parents regarding the topic of sexuality growing up, they would have had less negative experiences. The account of the participant below is an example of how internalizing the silence around sex and having no one who openly spoke to her about sex and contraceptives made her vulnerable to engage in unsafe sex, the consequences of which jeopardized her health.

“And then it became 4 abortions because again since you ‘ve never had the conversation, you don’t know. Yeah don’t even ask me ‘didn’t you know about contraceptives’. I didn’t know about contraceptives I just knew there was no way I could tell my parents that I was pregnant so I just knew I had to abort the babies...” – J, 49yrs

The participant shares her experience of falling pregnant four times because no one had taught her about contraceptives. There was also no one she felt that she could trust and since she had been taught that sex and falling pregnant were taboo, she prioritized hiding the abortions by going to a different clinic for every abortion regardless of the quality of

treatment she was receiving. Abortion is one of the medical procedures put under so much scrutiny by religious and moral ideals in society, and often the discrimination faced by women who choose to terminate pregnancies is linked to the complications, harassment and sub-optimal care that they receive (Mofakeng, 2019). The participant's choice to hide the abortions was fuelled by fear of the stigma she would experience for choosing to undergo the procedure, and falling pregnant in the first place.

Another participant describes how painful and confusing her first time having sex was because she was not prepared for it in any way.

I literally cried throughout it. And I was like I don't know what people say is good about this thing but ain't no pleasure right here. I cried about it and I didn't know what was happening. My body was going through reactions I didn't know it could go through... ” – Ne, 24yrs

Most of the participants expressed not clearly understanding consent during their first sexual experiences and feeling like sex was something they were obliged to give their partners. Jolly (2007) explains how this can be a result of being discouraged through adolescence from imagining or discovering what it feels like to want sex and how you want to have it. Does consent have any meaning if you are only allowed to say no?

Factors that shape these perceptions/experiences:

The negative approach and silencing of Ugandan women's sexuality and pleasure are perpetuated by various factors that contribute to the socio-cultural norms within the country and these include; religion, culture, the media and gender inequality.

Religion. Christianity was a tool of colonial control in Uganda and through this Victorian moralistic and anti-sexual ideals were inscribed on the bodies of women to police and maintain their subordination (Tamale, 2006). The nation is still majorly conservative and religious, and all participants made mention of a Christian upbringing that made sex and pleasure taboo subjects. The immorality religion attaches to sexuality and pleasure creates feelings of guilt and shame for exploring one's desires. One

participant, who started enjoying sex before marriage, knew that this was something she would be shamed for and didn't openly share about this part of her life.

“But like I knew it was a bad thing, it's taboo, it affected how I talked to people about sex, like it always whispered you know like its hush, it's a secret, you're keeping your sexuality a secret” – N, 25yrs

Another participant expressed that feelings of guilt were attached to her discovery of her sexuality and sexual pleasure as a result of internalizing Christian ideals regarding purity.

“So I know that I was masturbating through my teen years but I know that it was also a big point of conflict cause it seemed to conflict with Christian notions of purity and you're not supposed to have vile thoughts. So I always struggled with being a bad girl and yet I liked doing this.” – J, 49yrs

Another describes how values of purity heightened her internal conflict even in a situation where her body was violated.

“And for a long time, I did hold on to the idea of virginity, like a whole egg. But then I got assaulted it was like out of my control and then I had to deal with it, and then I was unclean, and then I was dirty and then I had to repent... So I had to distance myself from that so I could deal with it – I had to distance myself from Christianity...” – L, 19yrs

Christian moral values of purity and virginity and the gender inequalities that these values perpetuate, trump over the violence that women face. Women are blamed even for sexual violence against them because they are portrayed as holding deviant sexuality. Rather than holding men accountable for their actions women's bodies are seen as sights of temptation. As a result, in the above participant's experience of having her body violated she experienced shame and guilt.

Christianity influenced cultural norms regarding what is determined as ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sex and this is premised on heteronormative ideals in which sex is only to be had between a husband and wife. One participant highlights how as a result of this, women within the LGBTQI community are discriminated against and excluded from the emerging conversations around women’s sexuality and pleasure

“...a lesbian friend of mine left a chat group because she said she’s just tired of whenever the conversation about the LGBTQI community comes up, at least those that voice their concerns are usually very anti the conversation.” – J, 49yrs

It was also evident that a few of the participants view sexuality and pleasure from this heteronormative lens contributing to the marginalization of women within the LGBTQI community.

“No it’s a natural thing, God created sex, he didn’t say don’t have it, he just wants you to have it the right way.” – We, 29yrs

Culture. Cultural and traditional norms within Uganda often revolve around women grooming themselves for men, aspiring to be wives and appealing to their husbands' needs. Most participants had similar stories regarding the role of Ssenga’s (their eldest paternal aunt or a surrogate version) that tutor young women in a range of sexual matters and initiate them into adulthood. One participant shared on how the sex education she received from her Ssenga made her feel uncomfortable because all she talked about was how available she should be to her husband

“...If he says jump, do it now. If he says collapse, fall down. She put it in a way that if he demands sex I have no right to say no... like I’m giving it to him cause he has married me” – N, 19yrs

While another participant highlighted how within her culture, although both men and women have separate sessions that are meant to prepare them for sex during marriage, all

the men are taught is what their wives are going to do for them. It is important to note however that the repression of African women's sexuality through traditional education does not apply across all communities and parts of the continent. For example, the Laobe women of Senegal are extensively engaged in the teaching and distribution of information on women's sexuality and traditional erotic culture (Pereira, 2003).

The role of the Ssenga has grown and transformed into an institution of itself, even offering commercial services (Tamale, 2006). And in the absence of educational services at school and at home for most, Ssenga's are very influential. Most of the participants highlighted the conservative and oppressive elements of their roles, but with time younger and more progressive Ssenga's have begun sharing more empowering messages, and are finding creative ways to evade the silence around women's sexuality (Tamale, 2006).

Participants also describe being introduced to the practice of pulling (elongating the labia minora) at a young age as something they should do so that sex would be more pleasurable for their future husband.

"...so she introduced me to pulling because if I pulled I would make a good wife but it was not in the sense of teaching me about sex you understand?" – S, 33yrs

While this participant was introduced to 'pulling' in a negative way that promoted unequal gender norms, research highlights that African practices of sexual enhancement are often presented from a Eurocentric lens, constructing them as backward and oppressive towards the women subject to these practices (Vengenai, 2017). The practice of elongating the labia is also seen to benefit the erotic experience of women; some have stated that they enjoy it when their elongated labia are touched because it transmits sensation to their clitoris (Tamale, 2006). There is debate around the World Health Organization listing this practice as a form of female genital mutilation because this has powerful negative connotations associated with Western imperialist narratives that have equated African sexuality to primitiveness (Tamale, 2006). This is all to say that the mix

of religion, westernization, and local traditions makes cultural sexual practices more complex than they are at face value.

Generational Differences. Ssengas continue to have a growing influence in a society where the culture is that sex and pleasure are to be kept in the private and not discussed between parent and child. However, participants also highlighted how younger women are taking matters into their own hands and becoming more progressive and open-minded regarding sexuality and sexual pleasure, unlike women of older generations. One participant expressed that she can see a difference between the way women spoke about and expressed their sexuality and sexual desire when she was a child versus now as an adult.

“I feel like if I compare to like the years before, as much as I was young but even when you ask the people that were there before, they say that there is a great change...People these days talk about their sexuality, women’s emancipation is like up those ends, women can express themselves and I have male friends that keep telling me, yes even these days girls go for them instead of the other way around...” – E, 27yrs

In exploring the hypothesis that there are age-based differences in the way women view their sexuality and sexual roles, Sigel and Reynolds (1980) suggest that this could be due to developmental differences and differences within the political context. The nature of responsibilities is different across generations, women of older generations have been socialized more to traditional roles of marriage and childrearing and an achievement-oriented goal based on these values. While younger women do not have as much of a ‘stake’ in these ideals and live in a time where they can focus more on their personal development. The contemporary women’s movement is also very concerned with addressing sexual inequalities and making issues of women’s lifestyle a part of the public agenda, which may not have been the case when women of older generations were entering adulthood (Sigel & Reynolds, 1980). This, however, is not to say that responsiveness to the women’s movement and feminist issues, particularly gender equality in sex and sex-positivity, is solely dependent on age (Sigel & Reynolds, 1980).

All women stand to gain from changes advocated by the movement, though younger women are more prominent in the form of these movements.

Participants agreed that resistance to the shame and guilt thrown upon women's sexuality is gaining more power with younger women and that these generational differences have created a disconnect in understanding and conversation about sexuality and pleasure between younger and older women. Particularly in the way mothers and aunts of an older generation advise about sex, which is seen as a result of the times that they grew up in.

“But I guess also we can't blame them because of their background, they were also never spoken to. – N, 19yrs

Another participant explained that these mothers and aunts, in internalizing and perpetuating the cycle of avoidance or discouragement of their daughters from openly exploring their sexuality and pleasure, may feel that they are protecting them from the shame and guilt that society places on women who deviate from what is expected from them.

“I think on the point of why we think they do that, one thing may be that it's been knowledge that's been passed down from their mothers' mothers' mothers. And the root of all that is just – it's not even the patriarchy per se – it's trying to protect yourself from what happens to you when you don't fall in line with the patriarchy” – N, 25yrs

Findings from Sigel and Reynolds (1980) indicated that being socialized into traditional roles of marriage and child-rearing has offered mothers a lot of experiences and status that many younger women haven't had, giving them an emotional commitment to the persistence of these time-honored patterns. Most mothers within the baby boom generation have lived in a time where breaking from these learned norms (not falling in line with the patriarchy) has come with consequences such as social shame, abuse, destruction of the family unit, and loss of economic stability (Awosabo-Asare, Anarfi & Agyeman, 1993). This affects the knowledge that they pass down to their children and the

way they choose to engage with approaches to sexuality that challenge gendered norms. Participants, particularly the ones with children and younger siblings also expressed how important it has become for them to break this cycle, and create relationships and conversations around sexuality and pleasure that they never received.

Power of the media. All participants expressed that in the absence of comprehensive sex education and candid advice; books, newspapers, the Internet and television were where they initially learnt most of what they know about sexuality and pleasure. One participant described how she chose to deal with the confusion and trauma after the first time she had sex.

“So when it happened I didn’t talk to anyone and I was traumatized for like four days but I didn’t talk to anyone. I stayed with myself, I googled a bunch of things on the Internet, Firefox was my friend.” – Ne, 24yrs

Sexual content in the media can have both a positive and negative effect on those who consume it. For example, on the positive side one participant expressed how being exposed to positive queer literature and interacting with other queer people online helped her claim and be comfortable with her queerness and the fluidity of her sexuality, particularly in a conservative society.

“Honestly twitter helps in this life a lot. Because you read about people’s things and you’re like oh they seem to have the same thinking as me, they feel the same way as me and they’re not letting themselves be boxed into this thing.” – N, 25yrs

However, participants also shared that there are misconceptions they held because of the way mainstream media portrays sex

“...media had a weird impact on the way I viewed sex in high school cause I’m thinking how I used to watch like gossip girl, the secret life of

the American teenager, where it's like they were having sex all the time but it was never good. Like you could see the chiks were always suffering for it" – N, 25yrs

Mainstream media has also been a big agent in perpetuating the unrealistic expectations and standards placed on women regarding beauty and desirability, which often affect their self-esteem, self-consciousness and in turn their sexual experiences (Markula, 1995).

Inequalities in sex practices and pleasure. Jackson and Scott (2002) present the idea that we are always embodied in a social context which affects both how we see and experience our own and others' bodies. All participants expressed that the overarching system of patriarchy that governs Ugandan families seeps into their sexual experiences with men. Unlike women, men are socialized to believe that their sexuality is a natural part of who they are and a defining characteristic of their manhood. The expectation of women to play a supportive domestic role and not challenge men's power reinforces this inequality. One of the participants expressed how while she was married she often felt like she had to play this role during sex with her husband.

"Because really sometimes it's about appearances, my husband would ask me but did you cook and I'm like you're not even home...But then we also act in sex right, again we must say kulikayo mwami (welcome back my husband) when you know you did not enjoy at all" – J, 49yrs

Another participant explains her hesitancy to suggest positions and things for her and her husband to try during sex because he would see that as her challenging his dominance in their relationship, and as possessing an uncontrollable sex drive.

"Of course because he's part of the other society of I'm the man here, I'm the one in control, I should be macho in this. So if you start suggesting, isn't your sex drive too high?" – S, 33yrs

While men enjoy greater sexual freedom, women are shamed for enacting their sexuality in ways that seem to challenge their husbands' dominance, and the fear underlying the narrative of an 'uncontrollable sex drive' is that these women are getting sex elsewhere.

All participants found that they have found sex less enjoyable when it has been tied to expectations and obligations. One participant expressed that she is not sure that she likes sex, particularly because it often feels like work

"...I feel like sleepovers are a lot of work, everyone expects you to be a woman so you have to wake up and try cleaning-up or if you don't clean up you don't know what people will either say or things like that." – E, 27yrs

Participants also described finding themselves in situations and relationships where they make compromises and pretend to be enjoying the sex, to avoid emasculating their partner. The unbalanced power dynamics can make it difficult for women to communicate with their partners about what they do and don't enjoy or when they want to have sex. One participant described how even in the presence of a partner who believes in reciprocity and wants to please her, she has internalized the silence expected of her and finds it difficult to communicate to him what she'd like him to do.

"one of the things he tells me is don't just lie there participate, and do what?...like he's the one who really pushes and I'm like ahhhh how do the words even leave my mouth." – J, 49yrs

These findings are similar to Fahs (2014) results amongst a sample of American women, on why women fake orgasms. Additionally, women pretend to enjoy sex because of a desire for sex to end, to avoid conflict and because they feel the pressure to present themselves as 'normal women' who can affirm male performance (Jackson & Scott, 2002).

Sex and Body Positivity:

Sex positivity includes discourses in which sex is normative, shameless and pleasurable (Ivanski & Kohut, 2017). Regardless of gendered norms, all participants

expressed that their role in sex is to enjoy it. Participants spoke openly about the benefits of having safe spaces and people they could have open conversations with about sex and pleasure and the benefits of having shameless pleasurable sex. Muhanguzi (2015) highlights that although there are still imbalances in women's pleasure experiences in comparison to men's it is important not to universalize the suppression of women's sexuality and recognize that they do have positive experiences, which the findings below indicate.

One participant explains how working at a feminist organization that organizes spaces for young people to talk about sexuality and identity is where she began to appreciate that sex is something she can enjoy for herself, rather than a duty or expectation.

So I think that's where I started first of all appreciating that sex is a good thing, first of all for myself, not necessarily a thing that I will give to the person I get married to. Or because I have to give birth to children..." – S, 33yrs

Another participant shares how she enjoys being able to have open conversations with her close friends, and how this has given her a better understanding of sex through sharing experiences.

I talk about it a lot with my close friends, we need to know these things, and because I like it, I do. Now I'm starting to understand the pros and cons, and what it comes with, and the consequences, and also the fact that it's also to be enjoyed." – We, 29yrs

The one participant who felt that she could openly have positive conversations with her mother shared how this has taken away the shame and guilt associated with sex and made her comfortable with speaking about sex.

Positive information around sex has helped participants feel comfortable in their desire for sex and pleasure. For one participant, her aunt demystifying self-pleasure and

encouraging her to explore her body helped her sexual experiences be more pleasurable as she has learnt more about her body

I feel like I've grown so much yeah, I've learnt my body more. Before I didn't used to masturbate. But then I didn't enjoy it at all and no one had told me anything, yeah, and my aunt was like no you need to find yourself, find your body." – N, 19yrs

And another participant expressed that being able to positively own the fact that she is having and enjoying sex has helped in the process of healing from the violence that was attached to her experience of sex.

"We're not really a grown butterfly but we're coming out like now I can own the fact that yes we're having sex. I can speak about my assault now and it doesn't affect me as it used to because I feel like I've healed from it." – L, 19yrs

It is important to women that they own their sexual experiences and pleasure because they exist in a world in which there are power imbalances that make negotiating safe and healthy sex difficult for them. Experts on human sexuality interviewed by Ivanski and Kohut (2017) shared these sentiments in expressing that respect for the individual and autonomy are included as important parts of sex-positivity. Sex positivity discourse should empower women to make decisions that are right for them, should validate their choices and endorse sex for pleasure (Ivanski & Kohut, 2017).

Participants also shared on the benefits of having good relationships with their bodies, and being affirmed in these bodies; agreeing that being confident in your body can make sex more enjoyable because you're less self-conscious. One participant talked about her experience with her body during pregnancy and how important it was for her self-esteem to embrace her new body

“...and you have to get used to that new being and get comfortable and confident. And so there your sex will be amazing with whoever you’re with” – We, 29yrs

For one of the participants who have struggled in her relationship with her body, being surrounded by people who affirm her has helped her unlearn a lot of the negativity she held in regard to her body image.

“the new friends in my life are great, it’s constantly you’re enough, you look good, it’s okay, in your time, don’t put pressure on yourself. From my dad, my dad’s amazing, whenever I’m feeling low. From my significant other, and also now I make it a point to not put negative body messages before me” – L, 19yrs

It is also interesting that all of the younger participants gave in-depth descriptions of their own sexuality as fluid, open to more discovery, and experimentation, given the conservative and patriarchal socio-cultural norms in Uganda. One participant used the image of a color spectrum (see Appendix C, Image 3) to describe her sexuality because she doesn’t believe she can be assigned one label. Another participant used an image of water (see Appendix C, Image 4) to explain how she doesn’t think her sexuality can be confined to one thing because there is still so much she is yet to explore.

“...I think the best picture would be water. I think water represents openness and just ability to just get everything cause everything can get into a water space, so for me it's just that... I don’t know if I’m just heterosexual cause I’ve not tried anything else, so its just fluid, water, there.” – T, 22yrs

The male gaze. The male gaze, which presents women as sexual objects for the pleasure of the male viewer, creates and promotes unrealistic expectations of women’s attractiveness that lead to body shaming and negatively affects their sexual experiences

(Claudat and Warren, 2014). In Uganda there is a preoccupation with women's weight, in which they need to be curvy, can't be too fat but also can't be too skinny. This surveillance makes women begin to believe that their sexual partners place greater value on physical attractiveness and makes them feel insecure when they have failed to meet cultural standards of beauty (Sanchez & Kiefer, 2007). This may be one of the reasons that body positivity and affirmation were described as an important factor amongst the participants.

It is interesting that when asked to take a picture of where they feel most at home in their body, most participants took a picture of either their bathroom, bedroom or nature because these are spaces where they are not subjected to any outsider scrutiny and judgment, where they can be at peace in their bodies. Women are constantly faced with the internal conflict about what their bodies look like during sex as a result of being conditioned to think that they have to present a certain type of body to their partner, which distracts them from simply being present and enjoying the experience.

In the excerpt below a participant expresses how she has felt less desirable and sexy which has affected how much she has allowed herself to enjoy sex, and it is tied to the idea that women's bodies must be groomed for the man.

“When I was less comfortable with my body I was more hesitant to try new things or do new things because I wasn't, I didn't feel like it was good enough, or it was sexy enough, or it was worthy. I always had a comparison of oh but if I looked like this it would be more fun, that type of thing.” - L, 19yrs

Resistance and Reclaiming Power:

As highlighted in the section on sex and body positivity, participants expressed that in light of the inequalities that exist, their role in sex can be enjoyable and positive. Additionally, within this positive outlook, sex and pleasure can be empowering experiences through which women challenge the inequalities that exist between women and men. The participants all describe how for them several acts such as indulging in reciprocal pleasure, self-pleasure centering themselves during sex, and loving their bodies

and sexuality are ways in which they reclaim their sexual power and their bodies. One participant when asked to share a picture that represents sexual pleasure, took a picture of her foot with a heel and anklet on; equating the rebellion of buying herself an anklet to the good feeling of boldness and defiance associated with indulging in sexual pleasure outside of the designated boundaries religion and culture create.

I will be my own woman, I will do what I want, and I will wear what I want. And the heel also wears the boldness of I will step out, I will step into my own, I will go where I want, and its okay because I'm the one wearing the shoes. So that picture is the combination of that, that little defiance but also the breaking of the stereotypes that I have carried..." – J, 49yrs

During the focus group, participants agreed that pleasure and reciprocity are important during sex as they go against the oppressive values they were raised on and agreed that women need to practice more selfishness rather than shrink themselves and make compromises.

"There's a power that you feel after you have had pleasurable sex, I went in this consciously and I allowed to sleep with this person and I allowed myself to have pleasure. And I also communicated what I wanted– T, 22yrs

Participants' sexual experiences have gotten better as they have grown in their agency and realized that they should not make compromises.

"It has gotten better for me cause now I know what I want and I'm not going to compromise at all" – We, 29yrs

Self-pleasure (masturbation) was also expressed as a way of reclaiming one's power and body because knowing how to pleasure oneself means they can share with their partner how they like to be pleased, and also means they don't have to solely rely on another person.

"...this hand has done the most for me and I'm so grateful. Because once you learn about what you like it even helps when you're having sex, and I don't want to rely solely on one person..." – N, 19yrs

"I wish we had an Adult World in Kampala. I think it's important because if I know about myself I can also help my partner know how to pleasure me better because I know I like this thing because when I do it I like it." – N, 25yrs

Most of the participants were willing to openly speak about masturbation and found it to be an empowering and rewarding experience. Masturbation has historically been perceived to be a shameful activity and Hogarth and Ingham (2009) in a study amongst young British women found that not all women are open to speaking about masturbation, and some hold negative views towards the practice.

The relationship between sexual pleasure and power is important because it can be used as a political resource in societies where broader systems of domination disempower women (Pereira, 2003). But it is important to understand that amongst African women, sexual power and pleasure are understood and accessed differently (Pereira, 2003). For example, one of the participants described making a decision to be celibate, and this is still a powerful choice. Additionally, asserting sexual pleasure as the only feminist way of claiming power can be dangerous, because not all women are in positions to do so.

CONCLUSION

Several themes emerged from this study and they include; Pleasure as more than just physical arousal; negative perceptions and experiences of sexuality and pleasure; factors that shape these perceptions and experiences; sex and body positivity and;

pleasure as a form of resistance and reclaiming power. These findings support the argument that while there are inequalities in sex practices that disproportionately affect women, women are not passive recipients of sex and sex can be a positive and liberating experience for them.

The findings discussed do not speak for all women in Uganda; they can be applied to the women interviewed and women of similar backgrounds, social contexts, and identities. The study sought to identify what issues shape these women's understanding and experiences of sexual pleasure. The main factors identified- all playing some role in silencing women's sexuality and pleasure- were religion, cultural and traditional norms, and inequalities created by patriarchy. Christianity that has been used to immoralize African sexuality is described as creating feelings of shame and guilt amongst women who deviate from Christian heteronormative values of purity. Cultural and traditional norms mostly revolve around women grooming themselves to be wives. The overarching system of patriarchy assigns unequal roles to men and women that women find they enact in the bedroom. Their relationships with their bodies have been shaped by the unrealistic expectations of women's attractiveness fostered by the male gaze. All these factors perpetuate the idea that women's bodies exist for the consumption of men.

In identifying the issues that shape women's experiences with pleasure and their bodies, the study also confirmed that women engage in sex as active participants and desire to move away from the disempowering approach that centers male pleasure. This was addressed in their expressions of pleasure going beyond physical arousal, and in the benefits and power, they receive from positive conversations, reciprocal sex and self-pleasure.

The intersectional feminist approach to the study took note of the fact that all participants were middle-class women living in Kampala with access to education, resources, and experiences that are not universal to all Ugandan women. Within the sample, only one participant was older than 40 years, which speaks to what previous research has revealed about the traditions that discourage open conversation about sexuality between mothers and daughters, and generational differences amongst women (Mbugua, 2007). Older women may have been more hesitant to participate in the study. Age also offered the participants different experiences, for example the younger

participants spoke more about the influence of social media and online communities have impacted their perceptions of sexuality. Older participants who had children expressed concern about generational differences and how they didn't want to recreate that cycle of avoidance with their own children.

What this study shows is that women's sexuality and pleasure cannot be separated from the social contexts in which they exist. Society needs to address the barriers and inequalities that women face in everyday life. It is also important that Ugandan schools adopt a comprehensive sex education model that includes a positive approach to safe sex, sexual health, sexual rights, gender equality, and erotic pleasure.

Limitations of the study include the sample size and demographics of the study, which do not represent all Ugandan women affecting generalizability. While the focus group revealed important information, barriers created by the number of participants who were able to attend means that the intergenerational conversation was not as rich as it could be. The study also does not delve into the experiences of women within the LGBTQIA+ community and future research that focuses on their experiences and factors that have shaped them would be useful. It may reveal interesting data to include a sample of men as participants in future research to identify the ways in which they internalize, perpetuate or counter the ideals of masculinity and gendered sex norms they have been taught.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

University of Cape Town

Department of Psychology



Sexuality and Sexual Pleasure amongst Ugandan women.

Dear Participant,

1. Invitation and Purpose

You are invited to participate in this study that explores Ugandan women's experiences of their sexuality and sexual pleasure, as well as how they relate to their bodies. I am a student researcher from the Psychology Department at the University of Cape Town.

2. Procedures

- If you agree to participate in this study I will interview you about your experiences of your sexuality, sexual pleasure, and your relationship with your body. By interviewing you I hope to find out how you understand these experiences and what factors may have influenced them.
- The interview should take approximately 60 minutes and will be audio-recorded, however you can speak to me for a shorter or longer time period.
- The interview will be aided by a photo-elicitation assignment that you will participate in, and that will be explained in detail to you during a photo-elicitation workshop.

- Following your interview you will be invited to participate in a focus group session, lasting approximately 2 hours, with the other participants in the study. The focus group will be a conversation between women of different ages, and from it I hope to examine the intergenerational relationship, and differences between the views and experiences of older and younger Ugandan women. During this conversation, participants may be asked to share from both their personal experiences and perceptions of intergenerational differences.
- Participation in this study is voluntary, and you are free to end the interview at any time with no penalty or consequences.

3. **Risks, Discomforts and Inconveniences**

- This study poses a low risk of harm to you as a participant. Speaking about your experiences of sexuality and sexual pleasure may bring up sensitive issues, which could cause emotional distress. However, you are not obliged to speak about anything you are not comfortable speaking about and if you would like to contact a counselor following your participation in the research you can contact any of the organizations listed on the referral list.

4. **Benefits**

- As a participant you will have the opportunity to interrogate and reflect on your sexual experiences in a safe space. As well as share concerns with other women, be affirmed, and encouraged in seeking out your holistic well-being.
- Be a part of contributing to disrupting the narrative erases women's rights to sexual pleasure in a comfortable and safe environment.
- Be a part of potentially making suggestions to how sex education in Uganda can be more holistic and beneficial.

5. **Privacy and Confidentiality**

- Interviews will take place in a private setting with just you and the researcher present.

- During the focus group, other participants will be present in the space, as you make joint contributions to the conversation.
- Any information you share is strictly confidential, you will remain anonymous throughout the research process and have the choice to be identified using a pseudonym in the research paper.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in the focus group, as participants will be sharing with each other. However, the researcher will make all efforts to encourage and facilitate an environment of mutual respect and solidarity to minimize the risk.
- An audio recorder will be used to record the interview and focus group. No one but my university supervisor and myself will have access to the recordings.
- Findings from this study may be published in an academic paper, or used in presentations amongst groups of people. The photographs may be used as illustrations in the research paper, and may be used as aids in presentations or exhibitions amongst groups of people.

6. **Contact Details**

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study please contact one of the following:

- Shari Mwanika on +256 79 732 8049 or sharimwanika@gmail.com
- Dr. Mandisa Malinga at the Department of Psychology, University of Cape Town at 021 650 4997 or Mandisa.malinga@uct.ac.za
- Rosalind Adams at the Department of Psychology, University of Cape Town, at 021 650 3417 or Rosalind.adams@uct.ac.za

7. **Signatures**

_____ has been informed of the nature and purpose of the procedures outlined above, including any risks involved in participation. This individual has been given time to ask any questions that have been answered to the best of the researcher's ability. A signed copy of this consent form will be made available to the participant.

Researcher's Signature

Date

I have been informed about the purpose and procedures of this study, understand its potential benefits and risks, and consent to participating in the study. I am aware that this research will be written in form of an honors research paper and may be published in an academic journal. I know that I can withdraw this consent and participation in this study at any point with no penalty.

Participant's Signature

Date

I have been informed that there will be a focus group session including all participants following the individual interviews. I consent to participating in this focus group and commit to respecting fellow participants by maintaining their confidentiality.

Participant's Signature

Date

I consent to my interview and conversation in the focus group being recorded using an audio-recording device, transcribed and used for research purposes.

Participant's Signature

Date

Appendix B: Information Sheet



You are invited to participate in one interview (approximately 60mins) and one focus group (approximately 2 hours) about your experiences of your sexuality, sexual pleasure, and your relationship with your body. Participation in this study is open to Ugandan women between the ages of 18 and 55.

- As an aid to the interview process you will also be asked to take part in a photo-elicitation project.
- The conversations in the interview and focus group will be recorded, but you will remain anonymous; your name will not appear anywhere in the transcribed data and you have the option to use a pseudonym for any published research that may result from this study.
- You will have the liberty to choose where you feel most comfortable being interviewed. Regarding the focus group, a neutral and accessible space for all participants will be chosen and communicated to you.
- Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any point, and will experience no negative consequences if you choose to withdraw.
- This study poses a low risk of harm to you as a participant. As the topic of discussion is sensitive, it is possible that you may experience emotional distress. However, you are not obliged to speak about anything you are not comfortable

speaking about and if you would like to contact a counselor following your participation in the research you can contact any of the organizations listed on the referral list.

If you have any questions relating to this study or would like to participate, please feel free to contact me, Shari Mwanika on +256 79 732 8049 or sharimwanika@gmail.com or Rosalind Adams at the Department of Psychology, University of Cape Town, at 021 650 3417 or Rosalind.adams@uct.ac.za

Thanks, Shari Mwanika.

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Main Interview Questions:

1. Please tell me a little bit about yourself?
2. What about this study caught your attention and made you interested in participating?
3. Please share with me what you understand to be your sexuality?
4. How would you describe your experiences of sexual pleasure?
5. What would you say has influenced your understanding of your sexuality?
6. What would you say has influenced your experiences of sexual pleasure?
7. What is your relationship with your body and self-esteem?
8. Why do you think you have the relationship with your body that you do?

Sub-questions:

1. When did you first realize you are a sexual being?
2. What does sexual pleasure mean to you?
3. Where did you learn about sex?
4. What have you been taught about sex?
5. Could you share what your first sexual experience was like?
6. What would you say is the ultimate pleasure of sex?
7. What is your role in sex?
8. When do you enjoy sex most?
9. When are your experiences of sex less pleasurable?
10. How do you feel about your body?

11. Does how you feel about your body impact your self-esteem?
12. How do you experience your body

APPENDIX D: Photo-elicitation images

Image 1: a photograph that represents sexual pleasure – N, 25yrs.



Image 2: a photograph that represents sexual pleasure – S, 33yrs

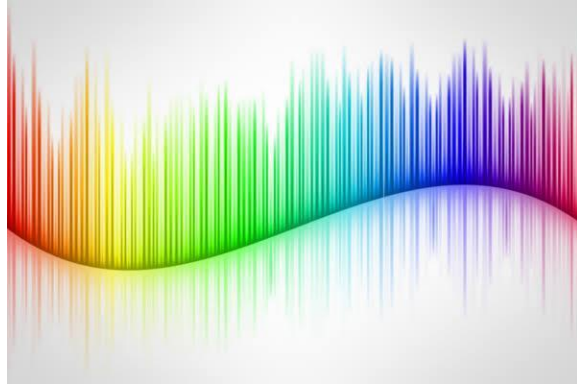


Image 3: a photograph that represents your sexuality – N, 25yrs



Image 4: a photograph that represents your sexuality – T, 22yrs



Image 5: a photograph that represents sexual pleasure – J, 49yrs

Appendix E: Referral List

Marie Stopes Uganda

Services:

Offers general consultation and treatment regarding sexual health, as well as a client-focused hotline, which provides confidential counseling and information

Hotline: 0800 120 333 or 0800 220 333

General contact line: 0414 510 337

Email: info@mariestopes.or.ug

Mildmay Uganda

Services:

Sexual and reproductive health services for both adults and adolescents, including; sexual and gender-based violence counseling, sexual health counseling and sexual reproductive health transition counseling for adolescents

Hotline: 08009 20202

General Contact: 0312 210 200

Email: mailbox@mildmay.or.ug

StrongMinds Uganda

Services:

Treatment of depression within women to enable them to lead more healthy, productive and satisfying lives.

Contact: 0200 923 340

ActionAid International – Uganda

Services: Provides support to victims of domestic violence, rape and sexual harassment.

Advice Line: 0392 220 003 or 0414 510 363

Email: info.uganda@actionaid.org