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SEXUALITY AND SEXUAL PURITY: RELIGIOUS LEADERS' PASTORAL RESPONSE TO HIV & AIDS AMONG CHRISTIAN ADOLESCENTS

Sinenhlanhla Sithulisiwe Chisale

Background

There are assumptions that the church is not a space to address or teach about sexuality, HIV & AIDS. Teaching adolescents about sexuality and HIV is often confined in the family and traditional cultural community spaces. The church is often held responsible for her silence and ambiguity on adolescent sexuality and HIV prevention. Following an exploratory design, qualitative data for this study were collected through structured in-depth interviews and informal conversations with eight religious leaders from Johannesburg metropolitan serving in African Independent Churches (AICs) and mainline churches. The aim of this study was to explore and describe how religious leaders negotiate issues of adolescent sexuality in a context of HIV prevention in their churches. Findings were analysed by integrating pastoral care particularly the 'guiding' function and feminist cultural hermeneutics theory to discuss efforts made by religious leaders to address adolescent sexuality and HIV interventions. Findings highlight that religious leaders do not have specific approaches to negotiate adolescent sexuality in an HIV & AIDS context and they use sexual purity and morality theology to justify this. Their theologies of sexual purity and morality are often used to exclude adolescents, differently abled persons and queer sexualities from enjoying the gift and pleasures of sexuality.

Introduction

Increasing interconnectedness and globalisation have had a huge impact on adolescent sexuality. Adolescence is a stage where the body goes through a lot of changes that include sexual and hormonal changes. According to Stanely Hall (1844-1924), adolescence is a period of Sturm and Drang (Storm and Stress), “when all young people go through some degree of emotional and behavioural upheaval before establishing a more stable equilibrium in adulthood” (Arnett 2006: 186). Adolescence refers to those who are between thirteen to nineteen years of age. This age group’s sexuality is highly moralised across the different continents, cultures, religions and social groups. In some cases, particularly traditional conservative cultures and religions, adolescent sexuality is understood in connection to sexual purity, where virginity is used to measure sexual purity both in the secular and religious world. In Christian contexts, the understanding of sexuality is influenced by St Augustine (354-430)’s negative views about sex and sexuality as a source of disorder, corruption and “shame, which attends all sexual intercourse” (Augustine 1952: 88). Sexuality in Christian contexts is generally understood from morality measured by heterosexual marriage and the ideology of purity. Christian adolescents and those not yet married are expected to abstain from sex and reserve it for marriage (Eriksson 2011: 22), because marriage is sacred. Church theology on sexual purity is generally consistent across the various denominations. It condemns sex outside marriage, both girls and boys, women and men are expected to only have sexual intercourse with their marital partners in heterosexual marriages. In the Roman Catholic theology, sexual intercourse is meant for procreation in a context of marriage and any sexual act outside marriage is a serious sin (Salzman & Lawler 2008: 11; cf. Salzman & Lawler 2012). Although adolescents are aware of these teachings, they are not implementing them as the church teaches due to the different values about sexuality that they are exposed to. The catechism classes that adolescents attend in the mainline church do not explicitly address adolescent sexuality or HIV & AIDS. The focus of catechism classes is often divorced from the reality of the adolescents.

Scholars of adolescence and sexuality studies have written extensively on perspectives of adolescents on sexuality and the factors that influence their perspectives (Dykstra 2013, cf. Maluleke 2007; Rudolfsson, Tidefors, Stromwall 2012). Teenage pregnancies and HIV prevention seem to top the debate on adolescent sexuality (Maluleke 2007; Erickson 2011, Moyo 2004).

Issues of sexuality are crucial when extending pastoral care to adolescents in the context of contesting and contradictory sexual information. Technology has changed the way sexual values and norms are instilled in adolescents because it exposes them to different information about sexuality. Adolescents learn the way of life from the internet, media, peers, schools and families. Thus, the church is overwhelmed, because often, sexuality education from the internet, media and peers contradicts education from the Bible and church. This leaves adolescents from faith communities confused, traumatised and stressed when it comes to issues of sexuality and HIV prevention. Maluleke's study on adolescent sexuality argues that, in their confusion, adolescents expose themselves to sexual health risks such as unprotected sex and rape (Maluleke 2007: 4).

Sexual health risks are a consequence of the internet, media and peer pressure that encourages adolescents to drive in the fast lane where religious leaders and their use of the Bible which is an ancient book cannot compete. Dykstra confirms this in arguing that adolescents and the clergy come from different contexts, as a result, this makes it difficult for clergy to talk about sex and sexuality, church tradition and culture with adolescents (2013:4). Thus, this chapter seeks to explore and describe how religious leaders negotiate issues of adolescent sexuality in a context of HIV prevention in their churches. The aim is to create an interesting creative dialogue on pastoral care and adolescent embodied sexualities. Qualitative data for this study were collected through structured in-depth interviews and informal conversations with eight religious' leaders from Johannesburg metropolitan. The study purposely recruited eight religious leaders, four from African Independent Churches (AICs), all male, four from different mainline churches, three male and one female. The aim was to get views from at least a balanced perspective of churches. The data were initially collected for a doctoral research project, but could not fit in the project. The findings for this study are analysed through integrating pastoral care particularly the 'guiding' function and feminist cultural hermeneutics theory to describe how religious leaders negotiate issues of adolescent sexuality in a context of HIV prevention.

Pastoral Care and Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics in the Question of Adolescent Sexuality

“All things are subject to interpretation. Whichever interpretation prevails at a given time is a function of power and not truth.” (*Friedrich Nietzsche*)

Current discourses on sexuality focus on sexual orientation such as being Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Intersexual, Queer (LGBTIQ+) or purity theology such as abstinence from sex. The term sexuality in traditional African contexts is defined in conservative ways. Sexuality may literally mean sex where virginity of girls and unmarried women is emphasised. It is also assumed to mean heterosexuality of humans, where anyone who does not conform to heterosexuality is regarded as unclean and sinful. Conceptually, sexuality encompasses many variables, other than just sex. It is a concept that includes; gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, sex, eroticism, intimacy and reproduction (van Drie, Ganzevoort, Spiering 2014). Sexuality is both socialised and inherent in human beings; it is experienced differently by different people depending on the way they were socialised. Sexuality is not exclusively about sexual orientation, but it is linked to the sociological, biological, psychological and spiritual nature of a being. The Intervention for Support Healing Awareness (IFSHA) (2005:1) understands sexuality as:

“the totality of being human not simply the genital acts, sexuality is concerned with the biological, psychological, sociological and spiritual variables of life that affect personality development and interpersonal relations. It includes one’s self perception, self-esteem, personal history, and personality concept of love and intimacy and body image.”

The IFSHA definition rejects the focus of sexuality on genital acts which contributes to the surveillance of the feminine body and sexual minorities. It defines sexuality as a human variable which encompasses behaviour, relations and body politics. The definition resonates with Moyo’s understanding of sexuality as ontological, in her argument that human beings are sexual beings with sexual needs that are natural, just as hunger related needs (2004: 76). Sexuality is a gift that God gave to creation for both pleasure and procreation through sexual intercourse. Moyo argues that sexual intercourse as a variable of sexuality is a gift given to humanity to be enjoyed by two people who had committed themselves to each other (2004:76).

For many adolescents, sexual intercourse does not mean commitment, but it is a developmental stage that is often abused for pleasure during

their puberty. Chitando (2007:32) articulates that Christianity in Africa does not emphasise sex as a gift for pleasure but it emphasises the procreation part of sex. Therefore, because adolescents are not yet matured for marriage and parenting, the church teaches them to abstain. The main aim for abstinence from sex is to conform to the purity and morality teaching, where sex is accepted only within the confines of marriage. Some of Maluleke (2007: 9)'s findings on the perceptions of sexuality by adolescents reveal that adolescents understood sexuality as physical and emotional development and also as sexual intercourse between a woman and a man.

This study is about adolescent sexuality and health communication in a religious context; therefore, I find the pastoral care function of 'guiding' relevant in studying health related behaviours of adolescents, because adolescents learn and imitate models of behaviour from adults who are mainly their primary role models. Guiding as a pastoral care function encourages the caregivers to 'read the signs of the times' in journeying with adolescents through their confusions and stress. Gerkin (1997) argues that the guiding function directs the religious leader to take the role of an 'interpretative guide.' Interpretative guide according to Gerkin is where a religious leader takes a role of interpreting not only the Christian story, but the "conflicts and pressures, the contradictions and pitfalls, the lures and tendencies toward fragmentation of contemporary life" (1997:114). Osmer (2008) refers to this as the 'interpretative task' of practical theology or sagely wisdom. The interpretative task asks the question of "why is it going on?" In the interpretative task, a religious leader should ask him or herself, 'why should the church negotiate and engage with adolescent sexuality in a context of HIV & AIDS?' Why is theologising adolescent sexuality critical for church theology in a context of HIV? Osmer on the interpretative task says sagely wisdom is applied in relation to thoughtfulness, theoretical interpretation and wise judgement (2008: 82-83). Adolescent sexuality, therefore, is conceptualised and theorised from a sociological and theological perspective where guiding as a pastoral care function is integrated with African women theologians' feminist cultural hermeneutics as conceptualised by Oduyoye (2001) and Kanyoro (2001; 2002). Feminist cultural hermeneutics explains the intersection of religion and culture on people's conceptualisation of reality at a particular time and within a specific context (Kanyoro 2002). This theory exposes the patriarchal biases embedded in scripture and emphasises the awareness of patriarchal

bias of scripture. It argues that the one right meaning of male, androcentric exegesis cannot support the desires of all humanity to find good news and liberation scriptures (Rakoczy 2004:164). Thus, it stresses the reading of scripture with African eyes in order to sift the liberative from the oppressive (Oduyoye 2001; Dreyer 2011). Integrating guiding and feminist cultural hermeneutics benefits this study in that the combination is able to explain the intersectionality of religion and culture in pastoral care initiatives towards sensitive issues such as adolescent sexuality in a context of HIV & AIDS.

Pastoral Care in a Context of Adolescent Sexuality, Sexual Purity and HIV Prevention

Religious leaders revealed the complexity of adolescent sexuality in pastoral care settings because of the cultural and theological issues attached to understanding sexuality in African spaces. Addressing issues of sexuality publicly is a taboo, both in religion and African culture. Thus, the majority of the religious leaders confirmed that sexuality is not an easy topic to tackle in their pastoral care ministries with adolescents. Therefore, like African traditional culture, religious leaders emphasise sexual purity through emphasising adolescent virginity. Some African cultures, including the Zulu from KwaZulu Natal in South Africa, justify the guarding of virginity as sexual purity and as an HIV prevention strategy. In this study, religious leaders treated adolescent sexuality and HIV as a 'double crisis' for the church.

Adolescent Sexuality and HIV Prevention - Religious leaders speak

All religious leaders in this study linked adolescent sexuality to HIV. On the one hand, AIC religious leaders' description of sexuality focused on sex, immorality, purity and gender roles. On the other hand, the mainline church religious leaders' responses focused on the question of negotiating and raising awareness on adolescent sexuality about HIV prevention. Some religious leaders said they do not speak about sexuality and HIV with adolescents because sex before marriage is sexual immorality. Statements such as, "the Bible is clear that sex outside marriage is promiscuity,

adultery or immorality, sexuality should be taught by parents,” were recurrent. Fear emerged from the religious leaders.

Hiding behind the Bible to promote abstinence from sex and HIV prevention

In questions about their role in guiding adolescents on issues of sexuality and HIV prevention, religious leaders raised mixed reactions. An AIC religious leader said:

In the first-place adolescents are not supposed to engage in sex, the Bible is clear on that, very clear, so if they are infected with HIV or fall pregnant before marriage it is because they have ignored the biblical teaching on sexual morality. I don't talk about sexuality or HIV in my church. That is ungodly.

In agreement, another religious leader from AICs said:

Go to Exodus 20:14 the Bible puts it in very simple words “you shall not commit adultery.” So, because adolescents are not yet married, if they are true Christians, they will be safe from that disease (HIV). This is not something that should be preached about in Church, what kind of church speaks about sex and HIV? That is a sacred space not a social club. Christians should understand and live by the Christian ethos where they are commanded to run away from sin that promotes sexual immorality, they must never engage in sexual immorality or fall pregnant before marriage, it is an unforgivable sin.

These religious leaders understood and linked HIV infection to sexual relations. Their views are based on the idea that HIV is spread through sexual intercourse and ignore other factors that increase adolescents' vulnerability to HIV, such as unequal gender roles and stereotypes. Further, a girl does not fall pregnant on her own: there is a boy or man involved. The AIC religious leaders' responses highlight a gender biased approach. They also seem to believe that Christians must not be infected by HIV, because HIV is an infection caused by sexual immorality or adultery. Some theologians have critiqued this theology for reinforcing stigmatisation of people living with HIV & AIDS (Denis 2003:75). I, therefore, probed for more information on their understanding of sexual immorality. For them, sexual immorality means sex before marriage or sex outside marriage. One of them went to the extreme as he explained sexual immorality in terms of two dogs mating. He said:

Sexual immorality is adultery, and it is disgusting to the church and God's eyes. You see my Ndebele/Zulu Bible from Old to New Testament says "ungaphingi" and "ukuphinga" in our understanding in Ndebele from Zimbabwe or Zulu from South Africa is when two dogs are mating, but not people. You see, God had to put it in this language to show people that it is disgusting! Do you understand me? I am saying it is disgusting! In my church we rebuke such people and put them in holy water for cleansing.

The way this leader interprets sexual immorality is extreme and surely people will be afraid to seek for pastoral care when they are raped. For the two religious leaders, adolescents should be safe from HIV because the Bible commands them to abstain from sex. For them, teenage pregnancy reveals that a girl is not abstaining, suggesting that abstinence from sex before marriage applies to adolescent girls, but not adolescent boys.

All mainline religious leaders who participated in that study have attended a seminary and had university degrees in theology. They also raised the same text that was raised by their AIC counterparts, but they referred to this text in a liberal way. A religious leader from a mainline church said,

As you know that the primary mode of HIV transmission is sex, our duty is to protect the sheep of God from dying, so we need to address this in an empowering and careful way. We need to conscientise our adolescents and youth especially our sisters because they are more vulnerable to HIV and teenage pregnancies. If they can't abstain, they need to use preventive methods like a condom or use other methods of prevention such as being faithful to that one sexual partner. They need to date men whom they trust and men who respect their rights.

Probing further, I asked him if he tells adolescent girls to use condoms and have one trusted faithful sexual partner and why should it be girls who are conscientised more than boys? His response was:

Remember that people come to church to hear the Goodnews about the Kingdom of God and that is what I preach and feed them with. I encourage them to abstain from sex as the Bible teaches, but because I know that they cannot abstain since they have already tasted sex; in our youth meetings I tell them to use prevention measures. Come on my sister! Most of the girls in my youth league have babies, I can't encourage them to abstain, they need to use a condom to be safe, they need to play it safe or otherwise we risk losing them to sexually transmitted diseases. Although I do not have refugee children in my church, but if they come, I will treat them like the other adolescents from my church.

One of the religious leaders from a mainline church said:

I can't just throw scriptures from the Bible at people. My theology is against that, theology taught me to interpret the Bible from a particular context. These days we can't just say abstain because we know it is impossible. We cannot use the Bible to discriminate or to kill. We need to teach a message of liberation that guides the Christian adolescents in protecting themselves from STIs, including deadly diseases like HIV and live life to the fullest free from preventable diseases and death.

The other issue that was raised by mainline religious leaders on abstinence was that abstinence may encourage masturbation.

The truth that we must face as clergy is that technology has made our jobs difficult, our adolescents are exposed to pornography. They are teaching themselves issues of sex. The teachings from the Bible are questioned by adolescents who learn from peer pressure rather than the Bible. These kids tell each other that sex is nice. We cannot run away from this reality, so, rather than giving them half-truths, we need to be explicit. Otherwise, they end up masturbating and becoming addicts. This has serious consequences for their adult sexual life. So rather than demonising sex, in youth gatherings I teach them reality to play it safe by using condoms and enjoy their sexuality. I do not want to be facing a problem of addicts of masturbation in the years to come.

It is evident that AIC religious leaders' use the Leviticus code in the Old Testament to theologise their responses. While counterparts from the mainline church use liberation theology lenses to theologise their responses. The danger of using the Leviticus code uncritically reverses the hard work that has been done by the church in preaching a theology of life in a context of HIV & AIDS. Similarly, using liberation theology uncritically may lead to unrealistic romanticised theology which affects the praxis of the church. The responses above also reveal the significance of theological education for religious leaders. This helps religious leaders to interpret the Bible critically, from a liberation perspective rather than condemnation. Prior studies have identified the connection of adolescents' abstinence from sex to the teachings of the Bible and religious affiliation (Verona & Regnerus 2014; cf. Eriksson 2011). Although using the Bible to promote and encourage adolescents to abstain from sex can be accomplished, the behaviour of the religious leaders is important because adolescents' behaviour is influenced by their primary role models. However, even the mainline church leaders' approach towards masturbation needs to be updated. Further, the above responses do not imply that religious leaders from mainline churches are superior to those from AICs: more work on both sets needs to be undertaken.

Parents and communal responsibility

Religious leaders expressed that adolescent sexuality and HIV education is a responsibility of parents. AIC religious leaders argued that because the Bible is clear on issues of sex before marriage; teaching adolescents about sexual issues is the responsibility of their families not the church. One of the AIC religious leaders said:

Every family is aware of its responsibility in initiating adolescents into adulthood by teaching and guiding them to have responsible behaviour. For those who are forced to live on the streets without parents, like foreigners from other countries and street kids, the government and social workers should obviously play a role by taking them and putting them in safe places where they will be taught about these things by caregivers and adult community members. It takes a village to raise a child.

In this case, the religious leaders appeared to be influenced by the African context of raising a child. They acknowledged that a child is the responsibility of the whole community. However; the family should play a strong role in influencing and shaping children and adolescents according to the family's norms and values. As a result, one of the mainline church leaders said:

In Africa we say a child reveals who his or her parents are and where he or she comes from, so families and the community at large are aware that guiding their children is their responsibility. The church's role is to sustain the good character and behaviour that is instilled by the family, because a child also reveals the values of the church where that child worships. As much as parents should play a significant role, the church also, as part of the community, must play a significant role.

In this response, religious leaders resonate with caregivers in Chisale (2014) who believed that a child should be guided to responsible behaviour by a family or parents and in the absence of parents, caregivers should guide adolescents to responsible behaviour for the reason that *isikhumba sigqwa sisemanzi* (an animal skin can only be folded when it is still wet) (Chisale 2014: 210). Once a child is grown it will be difficult to guide or instil in him or her ethical and accepted values and norms. This is consistent with Lester's (1985: 25-35) argument that the pastoral neglect of children and adolescents is influenced by stereotypes and cultural myths that children and adolescents are a responsibility of their parents and any initiative directed to these may be interpreted as interfering in

parents' task or intruding in family affairs. Religious leaders from mainline churches agreed with their AIC counterparts that parents should help in teaching and guiding adolescents on sexuality and HIV. Their reason was that because in church adolescents do not come from the same culture, families should initiate their adolescents in their cultural beliefs and the church will play its part of sustaining good behaviour in adolescents. Culturally, adolescents are initiated into puberty by aunts, grandmothers, sisters, uncles, grandfathers and brothers. Different cultures have their own ways of initiating adolescents to puberty by focusing on their sexuality. Some of the Southern African cultures initiate their adolescents into puberty through virginity testing, labia elongation and male circumcision (Buthlezi 2006). It is clear that pastoral care ministry does not have proper vocabulary to teach Christian adolescents on such issues. Talking about sexuality in the church space is regarded as a taboo, because the church attaches shame and guilt to sexuality. Due to this, many religious leaders struggle to address issues of sexuality. Bishop Verryn argued that because pastors are not experts in the field of sexuality and HIV prevention, they should work in collaboration with public health experts to come and do workshops with the youth on issues of sexuality and HIV prevention (Chisale 2014). This underscores that the church can partner with other stakeholders on issues of sexuality and HIV prevention.

Fear of suspicion

Some pastors also expressed a fear of suspicion or being accused of statutory rape by people, given that in some African cultures any form of friendship between a man and woman is looked at with an eye of suspicion. This was mainly raised by male religious leaders who said they were afraid to talk about issues of sexuality because some female adolescents may misinterpret their openness as a motive for a sexual relationship with them. Some also said adults in church do not approve of such openness and if one forces it, the male pastor may be accused of sleeping with young girls or boys in church. A mainline religious leader said:

A colleague was once in trouble in his church because he tried to implement life skills education for both Sunday school and youth leagues. His openness to these leagues created a strong bond between him and these children and rumours started that he is sleeping with these children because of their suspicious behaviour when they are around him. You know our youth if you are friendly to them, they tend to enjoy spending time

with you, when you are around, they will joke with you and some adult congregants see this behaviour as suspicious.

A woman religious leader said she does not mind talking about sexuality and HIV with adolescents, but it is not an easy topic to tackle in a church setting as the motive of talking about sexuality and HIV may be misinterpreted. Fear of suspicion resonates with Lester's (1985:31) findings. Lester also confirmed fear of suspicion as one of the reasons for neglect in the pastoral care of children and adolescents. The woman religious leader also communicated that the challenge the religious leaders face in communicating about sexuality and HIV in church contexts is that sometimes adult congregants interpret this as a motive to encourage adolescents to engage in sex. She said:

Anything to do with sexuality and HIV is always looked at with an eye of suspicion . . . they believe that because I am young and not yet married then I cannot be able to communicate acceptable sexual health behavioural messages to their children. Sometimes we are accused of encouraging the youth to engage in sex or of promoting homosexuality to the youth of the church because of our liberal approach to sexuality. I don't know how many times the parish council has accused me of encouraging the youth to engage in premarital sex and promoting homosexuality in church. You understand that this is not an easy theme to address in conservative and township churches that we serve in.

This response takes us back to African culture, where it is believed by some cultures that only adult or married women can counsel and guide young girls, hence, the Nguni saying, "*indlela ibuzwa kwabaphambili*" (wisdom is learnt from elders), which means that experience is the best teacher. I believe that young and unmarried pastors are able to break the influence of peer pressure among adolescents. From the above responses, it seems that the challenge that religious leaders face in their churches is resistance by adult congregants who are against transparency on issues of adolescent sexuality and HIV. Religious leaders find themselves caught in between old-fashioned adult members who drive on the slow lane of traffic and digital natives or adolescents who drive on the fast lane of traffic. The two generations' ideologies of sexuality and HIV clash as the former is resistant to change and the latter moves with the signs of the times.

Pastoral Care in a context of Adolescent Sexuality and HIV Prevention

Issues of sexuality and HIV among adolescents require the evoking of the guiding function of pastoral care. Guiding from a pastoral care context, according to Larney (2003:65) enables the guided people to use available and personal resources to protect themselves from a crisis. In a context of adolescents, guiding means leading, directing and showing the rightful path. Religious leaders, as assets and resources of the church, can play a critical role in guiding adolescents to understand issues of healthy sexual behaviour in the context of HIV. Adolescents are at high risk of STIs. A study conducted by Mahati (2015:183) with unaccompanied migrant minors highlight that some adolescent migrants use sex as a survival strategy. This means that pastoral care cannot help but engage with adolescents on issues of sexuality. Oppressive biblical and cultural interpretations weaken pastoral care interventions in contexts of adolescent sexuality and HIV prevention. Thus, through the pastoral care ministry, the church should engage in dialogue with adolescents on “sexual questions and interests often deemed unsafe and unspeakable by church and culture . . .” (Dykstra 2013: 4).

The guiding function of pastoral care can learn from the traditional and cultural approach where aunts and uncles guide adolescents to sexuality for them to understand right and wrong sexual behaviours. The Bible is and should be a tool of guidance and decode a contextualised message that is relevant to people’s contexts. The challenge that religious leaders face is that they interpret the Bible through patriarchal and homophobic lenses. The problem with this is that male or patriarchal interpreters want to convey a message that upholds their status in society (Masenya (ngwana’ Mphahlele) 2003: 115). Masenya (ngwana’ Mphahlele) (2003: 115) argues that it is a responsibility of the affected to reinterpret the Bible in a more empowering way, particularly in context of HIV. Pastoral care ministry calls upon religious leaders to be facilitators of liberation in reinterpreting the Bible, where interpretation should be through the lenses and lived experiences of the reader, as advocated by feminist cultural hermeneutics. The delaying of sexual debut for adolescents in AICs is not only based on biblical interpretations but patriarchy since some AICs marry off adolescent young virgins or non-virgins to older married men in polygamous marriages (Museveni 2017: 192). As a result, some the AICs enforce patriarchy in their churches by interpreting the Bible literally,

and in ways that feed and benefit the patriarchal egos of the leaders of those churches (see also the chapters by Tsara & Siwila and Vengeyi in this volume).

Addressing Adolescent Sexuality in Pastoral Care

Adolescent sexuality is highly moralised through the sexual purity theology. This makes adolescents more vulnerable to HIV infections because the church is in denial and fears to accept that adolescents are sexually active and diverse. The denial is due to that sex is regarded as being confined within marriage and premarital sex is considered as immorality according to church teachings (Mashau 2011). The findings from this study highlight that religious leaders conform to a theology that condemns premarital sex and is informed by purity theology. Purity theology teaches about the purity of the body, which should not be polluted by sin physically and spiritually. This is because of the emphasis that the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, as preached by Paul to the Church of Corinth (1 Cor. 6:19). Because they are not yet married, adolescents are expected to stay pure sexually and spiritually. Adelakun (2016: 5) writes from a Pentecostal theology perspective in arguing that churches teach that God makes no provision for premarital sex or fleshly pleasure in the Bible. Christians in some of these churches are forbidden from having a boyfriend or girlfriend as it is said that this leads to sexual immorality and is a leeway to lust. Due to these beliefs, many religious leaders find themselves caught in-between reality and religion. Reality says the church finds itself in a changing context that requires flexibility, adaptability and contextuality. In such a scheme, religion says that the Word or Bible does not change, and the Word is infallible or African traditional religion says culture is static. All this calls for critical hermeneutics. Although the Word is infallible, the interpretation of the Word is fallible. Thus, one has to interpret between the Word and hermeneutics. African women theologians argue that the Bible and culture are double-edged swords for women and other marginalised communities because the two are used to liberate, or oppress (Kanyoro 2002). Thus, African women theologians and feminist theologians coined different biblical and cultural hermeneutical tools to interpret scripture in relation to contemporary social and spiritual issues affecting women and marginalised communities. These include feminist cultural hermeneutics that stress that women must read and interpret the

Bible through African lens and distinguish and extract from it what is liberating (Oduyoye 2001:11) and Bosadi (womanhood) hermeneutics that challenges the disempowering notions of womanhood as embedded in African cultures and the Christian bible (Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) 1998). Thus, in addressing adolescent sexuality in religion and society, feminist cultural hermeneutics should be applied.

A reinterpretation of purity in adolescent sexuality, HIV prevention and pastoral care

Church praxis through pastoral care ministry cannot ignore that adolescents need guidance about their sexuality. Religious leaders are key in informing and shaping the sexuality of congregants and communities surrounding their churches. Religious leaders in this study seemed to have been informed by patriarchal beliefs. This confirms Eriksson's findings. According to Eriksson (2011: 41), religious leaders that participated in her study were informed by patriarchal norms that burden girls, they implied that girls were supposed to be taught about sex and HIV prevention. Moyo (2004: 73) laments the patriarchal standpoint of sexuality as she argues that sexual rites and sexual education in religious institutions or faith-based communities suggest that women should be taught about sex and sexuality, while men know how to do sex. This is a pastoral concern where pastoral leaders should integrate feminist cultural hermeneutics in their pastoral care ministry to reject theology that condemns and kills, and campaign for theology that promotes liberation and life. Christ protected life, in John 10:10, Christ said 'I have come so that all will have life and have it to the fullest' (John 10:10).

The perception of linking HIV to sex is discouraged for assuming that everyone living with HIV is promiscuous. It is scientifically proven that sex is not the only cause of HIV infection, some were born with the infection, some were infected through accidents and other ways. Thus, religious leaders' connection of adolescent sexuality to sexual purity in a context of HIV is harmful and destructive and cannot be accepted. Rakoczy (2002:5) reminds the church, theologians and all Christian communities that their belief in Christ challenges them to forge a positive theology of HIV & AIDS that is life affirming. This then requires the idea of sexual purity to be revisited and reinterpreted as the theologies of sexual purity are negative and contrary to affirming life. Additionally, the integration of

feminist cultural hermeneutics to pastoral care contextualises pastoral care in contexts of cultural and human diversity. It confirms that rather than condemning sexual diversity through sexual purity theology, pastoral care ministry should promote theologies of liberation, where sexuality is celebrated and enjoyed rather than controlled and condemned. Religious leaders in all churches in Africa should embrace conversations about sexuality and sexual diversity in church spaces and allow adolescents to freely speak about their sexuality and HIV prevention choices. This will create a space where sexuality and HIV are discussed in public like any other social and health issues. The idea of sexual purity is a myth, but sexuality is a reality. Therefore, other than focusing on sexual purity, pastoral care ministries should focus on theologising sexuality from a liberational approach, where people are given the choice to have authority over their sexual bodies.

Positive and life affirming theologies of sexualities are able to emerge from people's lived experiences if they are allowed to reinterpret sexuality and HIV from their lived experiences. Such a space can be used to disrupt patriarchal hermeneutics of sexuality, where all bodies are expected to conform to the sexual purity myth as theologised and interpreted by patriarchal and misogynist gate keepers. A reinterpretation of sexuality should remove the shame and guilt that is attached to sexual diversity, premarital sex and HIV dialogues. The emphasis on sexual purity limits human freedom in exploring and enjoying their sexuality. Sexuality is a gift that is given to humanity by God, where God allows humanity to explore their sexual bodies. This gift is not confined only to heterosexual marriages and able-bodied people nor is it age restricted. Adolescents, differently able-bodied and LGBTI communities should be allowed to enjoy this gift responsibly, as it is God given. Pulling the sexual purity card means that those who do not conform to heteronormative marriages are not able to enjoy sex. It also means that the differently able-bodied persons who are assumed to be asexual and considered not fit for marriage by society (Goyal 2017: 140) are not able to enjoy sex, if sex is confined to able-bodied heterosexual marriages. Furthermore, it means that victims of rape do not fit in the sexual purity identity. This alone exposes the weakness of the sexual purity theology. Sexual purity theology excludes and divides humanity, as a result, I argue, in agreement with Valenti (2009:25), that sexual purity is a myth that is used to protect patriarchal ideologies of sexuality.

Sexual purity theology also condemns fornication, premarital or extra marital sex, pornography, prostitution and sexual behaviours not conforming to the teachings of the church (Adelakun 2016:5). Valenti (2009:24) rightly argues that sexual purity is both a myth and a complicated lie, used to control women and queer sexualities. Her argument unveils the androcentric and misogynist interpretations of scripture. Sexuality then is often feminised and queered, because androcentric hermeneutics perceive sexual purity as a women, girls and marginalised sexualities' agenda. I, therefore, argue that pastoral care should be able to disrupt androcentric sexual purity hermeneutics by conscientising all humans, including adolescents, queer and different able-bodied sexualities on their right to responsibly enjoy and celebrate their sexualities. Masturbation as a sexual act helps humans to explore and understand their bodies by knowing them better without the pressure of pleasing another person. Masturbation has advantages for adolescents since it can be used to prevent teenage pregnancies, unwanted pregnancies and sexual transmitted infections (STI) such as HIV & AIDS. It also protects those who may be humiliated by virginity testers if they are no longer virgins.

Non-penetrative sex such as masturbation is accepted in some African traditional cultures such as Nguni traditions and is known as *ukusoma*, *Ukuhlobonga* or *Ukumentsha*. *Ukusoma* is the preferred sexual performance in contexts of HIV prevention and unwanted teenage pregnancies (Mchunu 2005). Like masturbation, *ukusoma* is non penetrative sex where two people satisfy each other sexually without penile penetration. This sexual practice is encouraged in cultures where virginity of young girls is emphasised, in a context of HIV and teenage pregnancies *ukusoma* is promoted (Buthelezi 2006). It allows adolescents to understand the changes in their bodies while satisfying their sexual desires without the risks of HIV and teenage pregnancies. Due to the availability of alternative ways of enjoying sex without penetration, I argue that sexual purity theology should be reinterpreted in a liberative way to embrace the changing times. Unmarried women contest the sexual purity theology by resorting to sexualities that are invisible to the gaze of the church and society (Kandela 1996: 1615). Their contestations show the limitation of sexual purity theology because surveillance and policing are on the genitals of a girl and woman than on the character, behaviour and conduct of a person. Valenti (2009) rejects the ideology of sexual purity as illogical because it focuses on feminine and queer sexualities. As a result of this, I suggest that sexual purity theology should shift its focus from feminine and queer sexualities

and be imagined from a human behavioural standpoint. An imaginative of theology of sexual purity that targets human behaviour and character will be able to condemn those who cause sexual harm to others, such as rapists. This then takes me to my next discussion where I seek to reinterpret adolescent sexual morality, HIV prevention and pastoral care.

A reinterpretation of morality in adolescent sexuality, HIV prevention and Pastoral care

As much as the church focuses on morality, the teachings of morality differ due to the diverse contexts churches are situated in. The theme of sexual morality and HIV prevention emerged from all religious leaders. For religious leaders, sexual morality, purity and HIV prevention are intertwined. One has to conform to the theology of sexual morality and purity to avoid HIV infections. This theology has been condemned by theologians for stigmatising those living with HIV & AIDS (Phiri 2003; Denis 2003). It is surprising that some religious leaders who participated in this study still enforce this theology to children, adolescents and the whole Christian community. Morality theology has been used as a quick fix to HIV & AIDS challenges and it is used in the current contexts to silence arguments on sexual diversity.

Morality theology is problematic because those who conform to the conservative hermeneutics of morality believe that they must not be concerned about HIV & AIDS. It clearly emerges from religious leaders that the conservative theology of sexual morality and purity is used as an HIV prevention strategy and excuse not to address sexuality in church spaces. This raises a critical ethical question of whether the moral aspect of sexuality can be used as an HIV prevention strategy or to police and control sexualities of those not yet married. My argument is that although sexuality and HIV are linked, this link should be carefully addressed, because treating HIV as a consequence of sexual immorality condemns those who live with HIV. Moreover, using sexual morality theology to police and control those that are not married stigmatises and condemns victims of rape, queer and different able-bodied sexualities. The pastoral care ministry should be able to reinterpret morality in order to create a liberative and an inclusive society. Biblical texts of morality should be interpreted through the eyes and lived experiences of different ages and diverse sexualities.

Mashau (2011) perceives premarital sex as immorality and discusses it from a genital surveillance rather than ethical behaviour and character perspective. My contention is that the sexual morality argument is conservative and overlooks the reality that in this day and age there are some people who are not interested in getting married due to the dangers associated with marriage, such as gender-based violence and femicide. Others are just not interested due to personal or career endeavours; how then can we use the sexual morality theology to deny enjoying God's gift of sexuality? In this case, heterosexual marriage cannot be used to build an argument on sexual morality. Instead of condemning and excluding people from enjoying the pleasures of sex, pastoral care should read the signs of the times. It should reject theologies that define marriage and HIV prevention as an antidote of sexual immorality. This is because immorality is an attribute of action and behaviour. It defines the right and wrong behaviour and actions to God's creation. The right behaviour is to love God with one's everything and one's neighbour as oneself. For me this is morality that is justified and defended by Jesus. Wrong behaviour is behaviour that does not display loving God and your neighbour. The question of sex and sexual morality has made it difficult for the church to talk about sexuality in history, and today the church still struggles to debate about issues of sexuality (Black 1997). This silence has made it difficult for the church to preach the Gospel of love.

Conclusion

The findings of this chapter highlight that religious leaders' perceptions about adolescent sexuality in the context of HIV prevention is based on sexual purity and a theology built on morality. Religious leaders who participated in this study linked sexuality to HIV prevention, adopting the theology that some scholars have worked hard to deconstruct. This is a theology that argues that HIV is a punishment by God for sexual immorality. By integrating the pastoral care function of guiding and feminist cultural hermeneutics as coined by African women theologians, this chapter argued that conservative sexual purity and morality theology cannot be justified as it fails to read the signs of the time. A theology that ignores the signs of the times tends to exclude other people, such as adolescents, queer and differently able-bodied persons' sexualities. The chapter argued that since findings from religious leaders confirm that adolescents are

sexually active, therefore, using sexual purity and morality theology should be reinterpreted from the lived experiences of adolescents. Thus, pastoral care should be sensitive to the lived experiences of adolescents. This implies that rather than focusing on negative aspects of sexuality, pastoral leaders should enter into their space and journey with them, without condemning them, since they have a choice to exercise their sexual freedom. Adolescents need guidance on experiencing a sense of agency as they explore their bodies and sexualities. Sexual purity and morality cannot be used to control HIV & AIDS: there is need for a revolutionary theology, such as that articulated by Nyambura that reminds humanity to love God and their neighbour.

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