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Young Africans' social representations of sexual abuse of power in their HIV-related creative narratives, 2005-2014: Cultural scripts and applied possibilities

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Abstract

The sexual abuse of power is a form of sexual coercion in which individuals – typically male – use their positions of authority to obtain sex. We analysed social representations of sexual abuse of power in a sample of 1,446 narratives about HIV written by young Africans between 2005 and 2014. The narratives were written at 5 different points in time (2005, 2008, 2011, 2013 and 2014) by authors aged 10–24 in urban and rural areas of Swaziland, Kenya, South-East Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Senegal. We combined three analytical approaches: descriptive statistics of quantifiable characteristics of the narratives, thematic data analysis, and a narrative-based approach. Analysis revealed two underlying cultural scripts describing sexual abuse of power between (a) teachers and female students, and (b) male employers and domestic workers. Cross-national variation was evident in the emphasis authors placed on socio-contextual inequalities, particularly poverty, and on individual level blame. While a minority of Nigerian and Burkinabe authors depicted female characters creatively exercising agency and avoiding unwanted sex, overall there was little critique of underlying assumptions of male sexual entitlement and female responsibility for controlling male sexuality in the context of unequal control of resources. We outline recommendations for strategies to deconstruct these harmful scripts.

Keywords

HIV; Sexuality; sexual violence; Africa; cultural scripts

Introduction

The sexual abuse of power is a form of sexual coercion in which an individual uses their position of authority to obtain sex (Buchhandler-Raphael 2010). Sexual coercion is defined

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as ‘the act of forcing (or attempting to force) another individual through violence, threats, verbal insistence, deception, cultural expectations or economic circumstances to engage in sexual behaviour against his or her will’ (Heise, Moore and Toubia 1995, 7). Sexual abuse of power thus encompasses the coercion facilitated by economic and social power differences between individuals in a sexual encounter. In sub-Saharan Africa, sexual abuse of power against students, domestic workers and in other labour contexts is well documented (Antonowicz 2010; Blagbrough and Ramirez Machado 2013). It is unclear to what degree this form of sexual coercion contributes to the HIV epidemic, although sexual violence – particularly against adolescents and young people – is recognised as a driver of HIV (Andersson, Cockcroft and Shea 2008; Sommarin et al. 2014).

Researchers face methodological challenges in addressing sexual abuse of power, including a lack of clarity as to the definition of non-consensual sex and sexual coercion across cultural contexts. Definitions of rape amongst the general public are often restricted to a sexual encounter that includes violent force and in which the victim physically resists (Peterson and Muehlenhard 2004), referred to as ‘real rape’ scenarios (Estrich 1987). However, sexual abuse of power and other forms of coerced sex operate on a continuum and may include strategies such as pleading, trickery, blackmail or physical force to which primarily young women and adolescents ultimately accede, but experience as unwanted sexual intercourse (Jewkes and Abrahams 2002). In such encounters, the disadvantaged woman or adolescent submits (rather than consents) to the encounter out of fear of reprisal; consent implies sexual autonomy on the part of all parties, which is impossible if one party fears that refusal will harm their ability to meet educational, economic or professional needs or goals (Buchhandler-Raphael 2010). While perhaps less physically violent than the ‘real rape’ scenarios (Peterson and Muehlenhard 2004), these acts still manifest and assert male power and sexual entitlement and female disempowerment (Jewkes and Abrahams 2002).

Raewyn Connell (1987) posits that societies with greater gender inequalities allocate men and women to certain occupations that facilitate male control over resources and, subsequently, relationships. Increased power inequities between the sexes lead to women’s increased risk of HIV (Wingood and DiClemente 2000). Social norms that support male authority and control over resources, and female passivity and dependence, generally facilitate contexts accepting of sexual abuse of power (Jewkes, Flood and Lang 2015). Pro-violence norms lead to justifications for sexual violence that absolve perpetrators of responsibility and blame victims, resulting in toxic environments for sexual violence victims in particular and women in general (Jackson 1978). Any efforts to address sexual abuse of power must incorporate methods to analyse and influence social norms, and their corresponding legal and social policies and practices, which support sexual coercion and gender inequality.

We situate our analyses broadly within the theory of social representations (Moscovici 1981) which focuses on the complex symbolic, emotive and social aspects of everyday lay meaning-making. Social representations are the shared imagery, metaphors, values and practices that allow us to make sense of, navigate, and position ourselves within the social world. They communicate norms and values in symbolic form and are amenable to influence through communication efforts. In this study, we explore young Africans’ social

representations of sexual abuse of power in educational and labour contexts in their creative narratives about HIV with the specific purpose of identifying points of intervention that education, communication and advocacy efforts may use to influence harmful social norms, practices and policies that contribute to this issue.

To accomplish this, we use a distinctive form of secondary data: a large sample of creative narratives submitted by young Africans to a scriptwriting competition between 2005 and 2014 from five different countries: Swaziland, South-East Nigeria, Kenya, Burkina Faso and Senegal. Narratives have been identified as a particularly valuable and underused data source for the study of social representations (Laszlo 1997; Murray 2002). In their creative writing about HIV and AIDS, young people draw on their own lived or imagined experience and on other culturally determined sources of social understanding to create context, meaning and values. This large sample of narratives authored by young people over the course of a decade provides insight into the cultural meanings and resources available to young people within and across the five countries as they seek to make sense of sexual abuse of power in the context of the evolving HIV epidemic.

Methods

Study sample and population

The research described in this paper is part of an ongoing five-country longitudinal study of young Africans' social representations of HIV and AIDS (Winskell, Singleton and Sabben in press). We analysed de-identified narratives about HIV submitted to scriptwriting competitions by young people aged 10–24 from five African countries at five discrete time points between 2005 and 2014 (2005, 2008, 2011, 2013 and 2014). The competitions were coordinated internationally by the non-profit organisation Global Dialogues (www.globaldialogues.org). Contest participants were invited to contribute an idea for a short film about HIV.

In 2005–11, Scenarios from Africa contests invited participants to 'help other people learn about HIV'; in 2013 and 14, the contest, under the name Global Dialogues, was framed in global terms, included a broader array of themes (sexuality, violence against women, alcohol and drugs, in addition to HIV), and encouraged participants to 'participate in creating a better world'. The shift in framing and elicitation did not result in noticeably different narratives on the theme of HIV, hence we treat this data as comparable. Elicitation via a contest leaflet was identical across the five countries.

Scenarios were ineligible for inclusion in the study sample if they did not mention HIV or were team-authored. After eliminating these scenarios, we stratified our data by sex, urban/rural location and age (10–14, 15–19, 20–24) and randomly selected 10 from each of the 12 strata, oversampling locales if necessary to increase likelihood that 20 stories were selected for each age/sex stratum. In some countries, certain age/sex strata still contained fewer than 20 narratives, hence some country samples have fewer than the maximum 120 narratives (Table 1). In light of the size and cultural diversity of the Nigerian population, only those narratives from the Igbo-speaking Southeast were sampled. An overall sample of 1,446 texts for the five countries resulted.

Data processing and analysis

The data were transcribed into English or French and entered verbatim into MAXQDA 12 qualitative data analysis software (VERBI Software, 1989–2016). A summary was written for each narrative and independently double-coded with up to six out of 44 keywords, which included ‘power differential,’ referring to sexual encounters in which one individual occupied a position of power over another, such as a teacher and student. Discrepancies in coding were resolved through dialogue and/or adjudication. We quantified discrete components of each narrative, double-entering them into Qualtrics research software (Qualtrics, Provo, UT); in cases of discrepancy consensus was reached via dialogue and/or adjudication by a third team member. Examples of quantifiable characteristics included the type of relationship in which sexual transmission of HIV occurs (such as teacher-student, employer-employee) or whether a death due to HIV occurs. Data were downloaded to Microsoft Excel files and descriptive statistics were calculated.

Data from 2005, 2008 and 2014 were also analysed qualitatively. Interpretive codes (Miles and Huberman 1994) were identified both deductively, with reference to existing literature on HIV (e.g. ‘sexual violence/coercion/rape’) and inductively, from themes that emerged from the data labelled with the Power Differential keyword (e.g. ‘maid/houseboy scenario’ and ‘institutional response’). These interpretive codes were applied to the 2005, 2008 and 2014 data that included representations of sexual abuse of power scenarios in educational and labour contexts and analysed to describe said representations and their distribution across authors’ countries, gender and age. In order to be eligible for inclusion in the subsample, these scenarios required a power imbalance in terms of authority or influence between characters, such as a teacher and student or employer (or their children) and employee, as we were interested in representations of coercion and consent within relationships of explicit, institutionalised inequality in terms of control over resources. The authors depicted these relationships primarily in labour and educational contexts, which thus became the focus of this analysis. Sexual encounters between school peers were excluded from this particular analysis.

This study, comprising the secondary analysis of existing data, was approved by Emory University Institutional Review Board. We cite the narratives verbatim, with the exception that character names have been changed. Country names are abbreviated as follows: SZ – Swaziland; KY- Kenya; NG – Nigeria; BF – Burkina Faso; and SN – Senegal. Excerpts are identified by the country, contest year, sex, age, and geographic location of the author. For example, an excerpt followed by ‘(SZ 2014, F 21 U)’ comes from a 21-year-old female participant from an urban area of Swaziland, who participated in the 2014 Global Dialogues contest.

The study is not without limitations. As contest participants self-selected, the data are not representative of the youth populations; participants may be better educated, and more knowledgeable and motivated about HIV than the general youth population. As a product of the same contest mechanism, however, these biases are likely to be consistent across the five countries hence the country samples, though not representative, are comparable for our purposes. In addition, elicitation of contest narratives did change over time, as indicated

above. The study addresses social representations of sexual abuse of power in narratives about HIV; the focus on HIV may have influenced depictions of sexual abuse of power.

Findings

Overview

Sexual abuse of power in educational or labour contexts occurred in 79 narratives, or approximately 5.5% of all narratives in the sample contributed between 2005 and 2014 (see Table 2). The majority of narratives on this theme were contributed by Nigerian and Kenyan authors. Sexual abuse of power in educational and labour contexts occurs in all countries across each time point except for Kenya 2008 and Senegal 2013, both of which were small samples (see Table 1).

While the authors' mean age and gender distribution roughly mirror those of the larger sample (see Table 3), a surplus of urban authors included sexual abuse of power scenarios in their narratives when compared with rural authors. This imbalance is particularly pronounced in the Senegalese sample, in which all authors save one who contributed narratives on this theme came from urban residences.

Within the overall thematic sub-sample, there were three labour scenarios for every two educational scenarios. However, while narratives depicting sexual abuse of power in labour contexts occurred in all countries, with a slightly higher proportion coming from Kenyan and Senegalese authors, almost three-quarters of the narratives of sexual abuse of power in educational contexts were contributed by Nigerian authors.

In both work and educational contexts, many narratives followed two common storylines describing the experience of sexual abuse of power. In school or university settings, a female protagonist is forced to meet with a teacher alone. During this meeting, the teacher propositions her, often offering grades in return for sexual favours. The female character either consents immediately, initially rejects the teacher's advances only to reflect, return later and consent, or is physically forced into sex. These narratives depict aggressors as male and, with one exception, all the victims as female. This scenario occurs most often in Nigeria but is found with lesser prominence in other country samples. A variation of this scenario describes young protagonists who require financial support (i.e. 'school fees') to continue their education and are sexually exploited by older, wealthier patrons, and female students who actively seek out sexual relationships with teachers in return for grades and other gifts or financial support.

Within work contexts, the common storyline described young female characters who, through financial hardship, are forced to seek work (most often as domestic workers, commonly labelled 'maids') and fall prey to the sexual advances of their male employers. The typical storyline described a young, impoverished female character who is forced to work as a maid to support herself and her family. Male perpetrators are older, married men in the household where the young female works. These men, unable to resist the allure of the young maid, may offer financial incentives or threaten the maid with loss of her job to facilitate sex. The maid either accepts the gifts and/or money as complementary income,

loses her job or is raped. The act is usually discovered only when one of the characters becomes symptomatic and is diagnosed with HIV; the maids may also be the vector of HIV across an entire family. Variations of this scenario included sexual abuse of power against male houseboys and female characters working in positions of lower authority, such as secretaries and vendors, and female protagonists who actively seek out transactional relationships with male employers, although these feature less frequently in this thematic subsample.

Cross-national variations can be detected in the emphasis authors place on vulnerabilities due to social and economic inequalities and individual level blame. Swazi and Senegalese authors underscored the role poverty plays in making female characters vulnerable to sexual abuse of power. Swazi authors also highlighted orphanhood as a risk factor for sexual coercion. Kenyan authors acknowledged the role of poverty, but ultimately resort to individual level messaging around the importance of abstinence in addressing the HIV epidemic. These overt messages conflict with the plotlines describing disempowered female characters attempting to negotiate sexual pressure and meet the economic needs of their families. Burkinabe narratives, while acknowledging the role of poverty and male sexual entitlement, included scenarios in which female characters exercise agency and leave coercive settings (albeit forfeiting wages in order to do so). Acknowledgement of factors such as poverty or lack of social support occurred most often in labour contexts and school fee scenarios; individual level blame and moralising overtones characterised the teacher-student plotlines, which as stated occurred most often in Nigerian narratives.

We could detect few thematic differences in authors' treatment of sexual abuse of power based on author sex or age. Male authors more often depicted hopeful or positive endings to these scenarios than female authors (48% of male authors versus 26% of female authors). However, these positive endings often comprise those of the employers, teachers and their families rather than that of the maid or student or reflect the positive endings of the virtuous female in a good girl/bad girl dichotomy. Similarly, differences in representations based on author age become complicated when compared cross-nationally or over time. For example, younger Senegalese authors (between 10 and 14 years of age) who contributed narratives in 2005 ignore the power dynamics at play in employer-maid scenarios and rather blame the female house help for crossing social boundaries: "A maid should always stay in her maid's place" (SN 2005, M 14 U). However, this difference dissipates over time, with narratives authored by younger Senegalese participants roughly mirroring those authored by older participants in 2014. Cross-national variations as described above are more distinct than differences based on author demographics.

Continuum of sexual agency, vulnerability and blame

Scenarios incorporating degrees of sexual agency amongst disempowered, primarily female, characters blur the distinction between consensual sex and the sexual abuse of power. Authors portrayed the sexual encounters along a continuum of agency ranging from strategic use of sexual favours to obtain financial or educational rewards to forced sex and rape. A small portion of primarily 2005 and 2008 authors described female characters encouraging the exchange of sex for either economic support or educational advancement. In Senegal and

Kenya, these are live-in maids who encourage sexual relationships with richer men in the household in order to support their families. In Nigeria, female students engaging in such relationships are most often side characters who exert negative peer pressure on virtuous protagonists and promote transactional sex. All acquire HIV as a result of such relationships and serve as cautionary examples to the reader.

Submission/Acceptance

More common, however, are the scenarios in which protagonists are threatened with loss of grades or wages in order to facilitate sex. In school-based contexts, the male teacher or school director isolates the female protagonist by giving her a bad grade or denying her a scholarship. The female character meets individually with the teacher or director, who proposes sex in exchange for academic advancement. The student may then hesitate, reflect with peers or, in one case, another teacher, and ultimately accede to the male character's request:

Students were in class on the day of grade calculations. Everyone in the class is admitted except a girl. The students leave the class and the professor stops the girl and says: 'I will pass you into the upper class if you accept to come to my house tonight.' The girl after a few minutes of hesitation ended up accepting. In the evening she goes to the professor's house and spends the night there. Then she goes to the upper class. (BF 2005, F 15 U)

Similar propositions occur in labour contexts and school fee scenarios, in which the character is able to reflect on options and most often, prioritise economic needs over sexual abstinence. The degree of blame placed on the female character aligns with the cross-national variations described above: in Swazi, Senegalese and, to a lesser extent, Burkinabe narratives, the role of poverty was underscored whereas Kenyan and Nigerian authors blamed the female characters for engaging in sexually risky behaviour.

Physical force or rape

In the portion of narratives in which female characters refuse the proposition of either their teachers, school patrons or employers, these male characters most often resort to physically forced sex; these forced sex scenarios underscore the disempowerment and lack of sexual agency of the female characters. Roughly 1 in 3 narratives include the use of terms such as rape, abuse or forced sex, most often in labour contexts. Narratives contributed in 2014 include more descriptions of the use of force than 2005 and 2008, especially in Burkinabe, Senegalese and Swazi texts. These forced encounters may include the use of alcohol or drugs or payment upon completion of sex.

It was a good evening when Angel's husband came home drunk and violent. He beat Grace up and attempted to rape her. He was clouded by the alcohol he had taken. Grace ran but he could not let her go by any chance. He resulted into raping her after Grace had put up a defensive fight (KY 2014, M 17 U).

At times, the use of the term 'rape' becomes complicated by elements of consent in the description. For instance, in a Kenyan narrative, Emma's employer wants to rape her, 'but Emma refused and said my mother and father died of H.I.V.' (KY 2005, M 12 U). Rape here

becomes predicated on verbal consent, and therefore may be ‘refused’. Forceful sex may also be described as enjoyable for the victim: ‘he pushed her to a bench in the office and made love to her. After the incident the girl enjoyed that and was fully delighted in everything’ (NG 2005, M 17 R). Sexual pleasure that leads to further sexual exploration with multiple partners occurs most often in Nigerian narratives. The power dynamic of these encounters goes unquestioned by the authors who conflate sexual abuse of power with consensual sex, and authors (both female and male) ultimately blame the female characters for their sexual behaviour. Narratives that conflate sexual abuse of power with consensual sex were most common in Nigerian and Kenyan texts contributed by younger authors in earlier study years, though not exclusively.

Responses to the sexual abuse of power

Emotional responses—Most narratives, in all countries and years, briefly describe the sexual encounter and do not address any psychological effects or potential consequences beyond HIV infection. Characters’ reactions and feelings surrounding the encounter are rarely described. Similarly, most narratives do not include representations of protagonists seeking out emotional support after a coercive encounter. This absence stands in stark contrast to the often-in-depth engagement around HIV infection, in which protagonists may spiral into depression post-diagnosis or aspire to live positively with the virus. These protagonists turn to their family or friends to disclose their HIV status. Upon disclosure, the family or friends either stigmatise and isolate the character, which typically preludes the character’s ultimate death, or provide them with support and connection to resources to live positively. The differences in the response to sexual abuse of power versus HIV could be a product of the contest focus on HIV and/or could reflect a lack of engagement with the emotional repercussions of sexual coercion.

Institutional responses—Institutional responses – such as involvement with police or school administrators, even in cases of overtly identified rape – are also notably absent. No narrative includes a description of a character considering reporting the encounter to the police; this contrasts with narratives outside of labour and educational contexts, in which a minority of rape victims do choose to report the abuse to outside agencies, including the police (Singleton et al. 2018). In one narrative, a school director addresses teachers for sleeping with young girls (SN 2005, M 12 R). However, the admonishments are based on the threat young girls are seen to represent as vectors of HIV and promote discrimination of HIV-positive persons rather than an institutional response to sexual abuse of power.

Social responses—While no male character ever discloses his experience of coerced sex, some female characters do discuss the experience with friends, family members and, in one case, another teacher. However, the majority of these conversations push the victims to return to the situation of risk in which they must either accede to the sexual advances or be raped. Most common in Nigerian-authored texts, authors described peers who promote the exchange of sex for improved grades, at times sharing their own experiences of transactional sex. These interactions normalise the experience of sexual abuse of power within school settings and influence the female characters to accede to their teacher’s request. These arguments may be packaged within ideas of sexual appeal as a symbol of maturity and

agency. For example, Chinasa's lecturer fails her for two semesters. Chinasa seeks advice from her friend, who argues: 'use what you have to get what you want by selling your body to the lecturer and get all your papers because as I am talking to you now, that is what I always do' (NG 2005, M 20 U).

In labour scenarios, victims rarely disclose their experiences to a peer or a family member with the aim of seeking social support. Rather, the sexual encounter (or violence, if portrayed as such) is revealed when the protagonist, their employer or both test positive for HIV. In the two texts in which the protagonist denies the sexual request and discloses the situation to her parents, the parents encourage them to return and accede to the request in order to continue earning their wages: 'After a little bit, the girl explained her situation. And her parents responded, "Why didn't you obey the orders of your bosses? Why didn't you accept to do what he asked of you?"' (BF 2014, M 19 R).

Alternative narratives and longitudinal differences

There are relatively few examples of scenarios in which maids, employees and female students are able to avoid unwanted sex solicited by men in positions of authority. Burkinabe and Nigerian authors contributed the few that occur. There were only nine Burkinabe narratives that depicted the sexual abuse of power between 2005 and 2014; Burkina Faso in general was characterised by a relative lack of sexual coercion portrayed in the narratives. In the few Burkinabe narratives that did include sexual abuse of power scenarios, three depicted female characters (one from 2005, 2008 and 2014) forfeiting economic wellbeing in favour of avoiding unwanted sex and HIV. These characters experience mixed outcomes, ranging from subsequent abuse to a scholarship to continue studies.

2005 and 2014 Nigerian narratives were characterised by moralistic depictions of male sexual entitlement in educational contexts and female failure to abstain in the face of sexual abuse of power. The 2008 subset, however, included several narratives in which female characters, when faced with the same scenario as in 2005 and 2014, are able to creatively exercise agency and avoid unwanted sex. Two narratives depicted female protagonists faced with engaging in unwanted sex for school fees or to pass a class. In both scenarios, the characters are able to refuse without incurring a violent reaction and are rewarded by remaining HIV-free. This scenario also occurred in a 2008 Burkinabe narrative. All three protagonists are contrasted with a female classmate or sister who chooses to engage in sex to obtain educational advancement and subsequently contracts HIV. Another scenario found in two Nigerian narratives (one in 2008, another in 2005 – the only 2005 narrative in which a character successfully avoids unwanted sex with a teacher) describes a female character who pretends to have 'menses that flow ceaselessly' (NF 2008, F 14 U); mention of the condition successfully averts the male teacher's lust. The similarity of the two narratives implies they are drawn from the same source such as a book or popular film, although we are unable to confirm this. They were both contributed by 14-year-old female authors, one from a rural residence (2005), the other urban (2008).

While these 2008 (and token 2005) Nigerian authors did not question the assumption that young women are ultimately responsible for controlling male sexual behaviour, their narratives did deviate from 2005 and 2014 in their depictions of a positive outcome for

female characters faced with the same sexual abuse of power scenario. Rather than succumbing to the coercion of their teachers, these female characters are able to exercise a minutiae of agency and avoid unwanted sex. However, the overt messages of these alternative narratives continue to enforce the importance of sexual abstinence as a defining characteristic of virtuous femininity, rather than a critical reflection on the power dynamics in sexual abuse of power scenarios.

There were no distinct longitudinal differences across the sample. Swazi and Senegalese authors in general critically engaged with the poverty, orphanhood and/or social isolation that disempower young female characters in their efforts to exercise sexual agency. Kenyan authors, on the other hand, continued to depict in both 2005 and 2014 the role of poverty and class inequalities in their narratives, while at the same time drawing on individual level messages that blamed the female characters for failing to sexually abstain in the face of sexual abuse of power. The Emma narrative, mentioned above, is the only Kenyan narrative in which a female character (a maid, in this case) avoids unwanted sex: she ‘refused’ to be raped, leaves her employment, becomes a prostitute out of economic necessity and is subsequently raped in a club. The author concludes the narrative stating ‘you should not go to C[lubs]’ (KY 2005, M 12 U), ignoring the power differentials that led Emma to become exposed to HIV. No Swazi or Senegalese author portrayed a character successfully avoiding unwanted sex in a sexual abuse of power scenario.

Discussion

Cultural scripts

This cross-national and longitudinal analysis provides insight into the social representations of sexual abuse of power as depicted in young Africans’ narratives about HIV and AIDS. Analysis of the narratives that incorporate this theme reveals two underlying cross-national cultural scripts around the employer-maid and teacher-student relationships. Cultural scripts form part of the three areas of social life intrinsic to the production of sexuality; while interpersonal and intra-psychic scripts are the individual and interpersonal notions about expected sexual behaviours and their meanings, cultural scripts make manifest the social assumptions and expectations around sexuality and sexual behaviour (Simon and Gagnon 1986). These cultural scenarios ‘essentially instruct the narrative requirements of specific roles’ (Simon and Gagnon 1986, 98), and thus, at the collective level, may prescribe sexual expectations for a given encounter based on culturally-specific norms and values. In this way, cultural scripts may serve to either constrain or foster agency within sexual encounters. We view cultural scripts as a prescriptive form of social representation in narrative form.

Taken together, these narratives point to cultural scripts prescribing male entitlement and female disempowerment in both educational and labour contexts. Female characters are able to exercise minimal agency within situations constrained by material needs and gender inequality and become disproportionately burdened with the consequences of poverty and HIV. These findings reflect other national and cross-national studies on the cultural scripts influencing sexuality in the region (LeClerc-Madlala 2009; Barnett, Maticka-Tyndale and HP4RY 2011; Maticka-Tyndale et al. 2005; Duby et al. 2016). Swazi and Senegalese authors demonstrate a greater ability to identify and empathise with impoverished female characters

and ultimately identify their experiences as sexual coercion rather than moral failure. Burkinabe authors, albeit a minority within the larger Burkina Faso sample, are most able to reformulate the script such that female characters opt for loss of economic support rather than unwanted sex. While loss of economic earnings within impoverished contexts is impossible for many, these alternative narratives nevertheless reflect a degree of flexibility within scripts concerning female agency to negotiate coercive sex – a ‘small win’ in the quest to end sexual violence (Weick 1984).

Perhaps more importantly, however, is the absence of any critique or challenge to the social norms reflected in the scripts of male sexual entitlement and female responsibility for controlling male sexuality. Scenarios from all countries reflect a cultural script in which female protagonists are faced with the obstacle of male characters requiring sex in exchange for economic wellbeing or self-betterment via educational attainment. Male control of resources and uncontrollable sexual drive goes unexamined in the narratives, such that having access to female bodies as their domestic workers or students leads a situation to become sexual. While authors may convey an overall sense of sadness or regret for the vulnerability that female characters face, none engage with the responsibility of male characters in curbing their lust nor challenge the cultural assumption that ultimately, it is the female characters’ responsibility to avoid unwanted sex, even when faced with a power dynamic in which they will most likely experience reprisals should they refuse. The fact that there is little variation between male- and female-authored narratives reflects the hegemonic nature of these scripts, such that groups disempowered by them perceive the scripts as normal. No alternative masculinities are put forth in these scenarios that challenge prescriptions of male sexual entitlement.

Scripts and local realities

The two different scripts – the maid-employer and student-teacher scenarios – vary in their prevalence in the narratives contributed from different countries. Most distinctively, Senegalese authors exclusively and Kenyan authors primarily portrayed employer-maid scenarios, while Nigerian authors primarily contributed student-teacher scenarios, suggesting that the cultural prominence of these issues differs by context.

Senegal and Kenya, like many countries, have large numbers of domestic workers, the majority of whom are female and have migrated for work, leaving behind families and other support networks (Blagbrough and Ramirez Machado 2013). In Dakar, for example, about 1 in 4 women (25.9%) work as domestic workers, with only a small portion having been born in Dakar (République Du Sénégal, Ministère De l’Economie Et Les Finances, and Direction de la Prévision et de la Statistique 2004); millions of domestic workers provide support to households in Nairobi (Hughes 2008). Domestic workers, often including migrant and/or child workers, are made vulnerable by their poverty, social isolation, education levels and, often times, gender (Blagbrough and Ramirez Machado 2013). Domestic work is often viewed as informal work, and many workers (especially minors) live with employers, who may also be distant relatives, blurring the lines between professional and personal relationships. Given this, domestic work becomes difficult to regulate and as a result

domestic workers are subjected to a variety of abuses, including withholding wages, physical and sexual abuse, among others (Torriente 2016).

Both Kenya and Senegal have organisations that work to address the needs of domestic workers (Hinshaw 2010), such as, for example, the Centre for Domestic Training and Development (see <http://www.cddtd.org/index.php?r=site/index>). However by virtue of their isolation and economic vulnerability, it is very difficult for domestic workers to organise in groups to address their particular needs (Hughes 2008; Ochieng, Katz and Stockton 2013). Programmes that aim to strengthen domestic workers' professional skills and economic capacity in conjunction with providing health education have shown positive results (Ochieng, Katz and Stockton 2013), although, ultimately policies must complement broader multisectoral efforts to protect domestic workers (Blagbrough and Ramirez Machado 2013). Kenya has recently passed a new law assuring equitable pay and legal rights for domestic workers (Muthoni 2017); Senegal, despite much dialogue around the importance of protection for domestic workers, has yet to ratify the Domestic Workers Convention 189 as proposed by the International Labour Organization (International Domestic Workers Federation 2017). Non-profit and grassroots organisations, women networks and domestic work unions are currently lobbying for the ratification of the Domestic Workers Convention.

While teacher-student coercion has been documented in other settings (Antonowicz 2010), Nigerian authors contributed the majority of these scenarios. Education in general is highly valued in the Igbo-dominated southeast as both a symbol of modernity and social mobility. However, schools and universities represent the potential for economic and class attainment as well as a 'locus of sexual corruption' (Smith 2000, 100), in which family and collective control over adolescents weaken and young Nigerians may experiment with identity and sexual formation. During his ethnographic fieldwork, Daniel Smith observed: 'There is a widespread myth (not borne out by my own data) that many young people have their first sexual experience with teachers... [There] was a fear expressed in the community that teachers used... after-school sessions as opportunities for sexual predation' (Smith 2000, 104). Smith attributed this myth to the general preoccupation with loss of control over young people's sexuality in the face of social and economic changes, rather than interpreting it as indicative of large-scale teacher-student coercion. While studies do indicate that some Nigerian teachers abuse their power to obtain sex from female students (Kullima et al. 2010), the storylines reflected in our data point to ongoing fears around youth sexuality within a space conceptualised as both necessary for socioeconomic achievement yet dangerous to individual, familial and collective well-being.

Implications for translation into practice

Cultural scripts around gender and sexuality may both constrain behavioural choices and legitimise structures of social inequality (Diaz 2013; Parker and Aggleton 2003). However, they may be responsive to structural changes, hence the need to advocate for the kind of policy change in favour of domestic workers' rights outlined above and for similar policy changes in educational systems that address the vulnerabilities of students. Cultural scripts have the potential to be renegotiated in daily life (Howarth, Foster and Dorrer 2004), for example, by 'positive deviants' (Marsh et al. 2004) or individuals who – despite facing the

same structural constraints as others – deviate positively from local norms. Existing scripts of male entitlement and limited female agency may also be deconstructed (Paiva 2000) and new models of male sexuality and gendered interactions proposed in multi-level education, communication and advocacy efforts, for example, using participatory interactions with groups or via mass media entertainment-education formats (Singhal et al. 2004). In these efforts, it is important that the onus for change is not placed on individual victims but lies within multi-level efforts to address both structural and social drivers of these scripts.

Addressing each script – the employer-maid and teacher-student script – requires a different approach. By nature of representing a more general population, students are easier to access and can be reached with a broader, multi-level approach to deconstruct scripts individually or in groups. Peer leaders may be mobilised to support such efforts (Maticka-Tyndale and HP4RY 2012) which, if complemented with other forms of narrative-based entertainment education and group organising, can influence pro-violence norms (Singhal et al. 2004; Jewkes, Flood and Lang 2015). Scripts may also be incorporated and deconstructed in gender sensitive sexual education (Muhanguzi 2011) or leveraged to advocate for policy changes within Ministries of Education and individual universities, colleges and schools. Such efforts ideally would address the harmful assumption of male sexual entitlement and female responsibility for controlling male sexuality that undergirds these sexual abuse of power scripts and would result in protections and redress for victims incorporated into school or university structures.

Domestic workers, on the other hand, are not as easily reached by virtue of their isolation, economic vulnerability and, frequently, mobility. Despite this, organisations – both local and international – have proposed interventions and services designed to meet the unique economic, health and rights needs of domestic workers. The scripts presented in our analysis may be used to support ongoing efforts to increase domestic workers' knowledge of their rights, as well as in advocacy and outreach to policy makers, to ensure they take into account the vulnerability and needs of this unique population. Scripts may also be deconstructed via mass media or other entertainment education formats to address the fear of maids as vectors of HIV and familial destruction and promote empathy and identification with domestic workers and other marginalised groups.

Conclusion

Sense-making around the sexual abuse of power in labour and educational contexts is an understudied phenomenon. This analysis reflects the same power dynamics that drive the cultural scripts around other relationships, including dating, married or casual relationships; specifically, the presumption of male sexual entitlement and female responsibility for controlling male sexuality in unequal relationships (LeClerc-Madlala 2009; Muhanguzi 2011). We have identified a number of possible implications for practice based on our narrative findings. While the focus of our recommendations lies in policies and interventions related to school and domestic worker labour contexts, addressing these particular cultural scripts can form part of any larger movement to address pro-violence norms, as ultimately norms contribute to the power inequalities that perpetuate these cultural scripts.

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Table 1
Sample distribution

-----Keywords and quantifiable characteristics-----						
<u>Country</u>	<u>Thematic codes</u>				<u>Thematic codes</u>	<u>TOTALS</u>
	<u>2005</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	
Senegal	107	79	--*	14	67	267
Burkina Faso	112	100	27	--	56	295
Nigeria	120	93	34	65	88	400
Kenya	88	25	--	45	116	274
Swaziland	72	50	--	48	40	210
TOTALS	499	347	61	172	367	1446

* Some countries do not have samples for certain years, indicated with ‘—’.

Table 2
Longitudinal and cross-national distribution of sexual abuse of power narratives

Country	2005	2008	2011	2013	2014	Total
Senegal	6 (5.6%)	1 (1.3%)	--	0 (0%)	4 (6.0%)	11 (4.1%)
Burkina Faso	3 (2.7%)	3 (3%)	2 (7.4%)	--	1 (1.8%)	9 (3.1%)
Nigeria	10 (8.3%)	12 (12.9%)	2 (5.9%)	4 (6.2%)	4 (4.5%)	32 (8%)
Kenya	9 (10.2%)	0 (0%)	--	2 (4.4%)	7 (6.0%)	18 (6.6%)
Swaziland	4 (5.6%)	2 (4.0%)	--	1 (2.1%)	2 (5.0%)	9 (4.3%)
Combined	32 (6.4%)	18 (5.2%)	4 (6.6%)	7 (4.1%)	18 (4.9%)	79 (5.5%)

Table 3
Author demographic information

	Author characteristics					
	<u>Average age</u>	<u>Standard deviation</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Rural</u>	<u>Urban</u>
Overall sample	16.7 years	3.7 years	48%	52%	46%	54%
Sexual abuse of power subsample	17.3 years	4.0 years	44%	56%	32%	67%