

**LIFE STYLES, SEXUALITY AND CULTURAL BELIEFS
RELATED TO UNSAFE SEXUAL PRACTICES AMONG YOUTH
IN PERI-URBAN YANGON, MYANMAR**

OHNMAR AUNG

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS (HEALTH SOCIAL SCIENCE)
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY**

2005

ISBN 974-04-5654-5

COPYRIGHT OF MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY

**Thesis
Entitled**

**LIFE STYLES, SEXUALITY AND CULTURAL BELIEFS
RELATED TO UNSAFE SEXUAL PRACTICES AMONG YOUTH
IN PERI-URBAN YANGON, MYANMAR**

.....
Ms. Ohnmar Aung
Candidate

.....
Assoc. Prof. Pimpawan Boonmongkol,
Ph.D.
Major-Advisor

.....
Asst. Prof. Vanawipha Pasandhanatorn,
Ph.D.
Co-Advisor

.....
Assoc.Prof. Rassmidara Hoonsawat,
Ph.D.
Dean
Faculty of Graduate Studies

.....
Assoc. Prof.Luechai Sringernyuang,
Ph.D.
Chair
Master of Arts Programme in Health Social
Science
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities

**Thesis
Entitled**

**LIFE STYLES, SEXUALITY AND CULTURAL BELIEFS
RELATED TO UNSAFE SEXUAL PRACTICES AMONG YOUTH
IN PERI-URBAN YANGON, MYANMAR**

**was submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies, Mahidol University
for the degree of Master of Arts (Health Social Science)
on
24 February, 2005**

.....
Ms. Ohnmar Aung
Candidate

.....
Nwe Nwe Aye,
MSc (PHDC)
Member

.....
Assoc. Prof. Pimpawan Boonmongkol,
Ph.D.
Chair

.....
Asst. Prof. Sucheela Tanchainan.,
M.A.
Member

.....
Asst. Prof. Vanawipha Pasandhanatorn,
Ph.D.
Member

.....
Assoc.Prof. Rassmidara Hoonsawat
Ph.D.
Dean
Faculty of Graduate Studies
Mahidol University

.....
Assoc. Prof. Suree Kanjanawong,
Ph.D.
Dean
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
Mahidol University

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The completion of this study was made by logistical, financial and emotional support from many. I would like to thank to all who truly supported me to complete the thesis although I have not acknowledged to them individually.

I would like to express my appreciation to Rockefeller Foundation for granting me a scholarship to undertake this study. My sincere appreciation to Dr Pimpawan Boonmongkol and Dr Nwe Nwe Aye, for the kind help in permitting me to pursue the study in Health Social Science International Program.

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to Dr Pimpawan Boonmongkol, my thesis advisor for her academic interest in my study, academic excellent guidance, continuous encouragement and support and for her heart kindness. My sincere thanks to my co-advisor Dr Vanawipha Pasandhanatorn and internal examiner Dr Sucheela Tanchainan, for their useful comments and inputs for my study.

I owe special thanks to my external examiner Dr Nwe Nwe Aye for her comments and academic interest in my study. Thanks to my Professors of Health Social Science International Program for their support and academic advice for my study and to develop my thesis proposal. My special thanks again to Mr Rodney Haynes and Dr Mi Mi Khin for their kindly useful english edition for the thesis.

My great thanks to Dr Than Tun Sein (field supervisor) for his academic advice and help during the data collection period. My gratitude and appreciation goes to Dr Kyu Kyu Than, for her inputs and ideas provided throughout my study and also for the kind caring and encouragement as a very lovely elder sister.

I am most grateful to Ms Simonitta Cengarle, for her academic interests and very applicable comments during her field visit to the studied area. My special thanks to the Ko Nyo Aung, male interview assistant for his help in collecting the data. I would also extend my thanks to the staff of Epidemiology Department of Medical Research (Lower Myanmar) for their help during the data collection.

I am indebted to the Youth Peer Educators, youth respondents, community members and general practionioners in the studied area for their kindly help and providing information for the study. The study would have not been possible without their kind cooperation and participation.

I would like to specially thank to my mother, father, sisters, brothers and my lovely kids for their support, encouragement, patience throughout my career and study. Finally, my great appreciation goes to my husband for his kind support to take a step in my career for the future.

Ohnmar Aung

LIFE STYLES, SEXUALITY AND CULTURAL BELIEFS RELATED TO
UNSAFE SEXUAL PRACTICES AMONG THE YOUTH IN PERI-URBAN
YANGON, MYANMAR

OHNMAR AUNG 4637982 SHHS / M

M.A. (HEALTH SOCIAL SCIENCE)

THESIS ADVISORS : PIMPAWAN BOONMONGKOL., Ph.D., VANAWIPHA
PASANDHANATORN Ph.D.,

ABSTRACT

This study was directed to explore the various unsafe sexual practices among selected youth in peri-urban Yangon Myanmar. These unsafe sexual practices were explored from the real experiences of the youth. Youth lifestyles, gender differences in youth sexuality in terms of sexual meanings and sexual partnerships, and beliefs on Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), HIV/ AIDS and unintended pregnancy prevention and condom use were explored to comprehend their influence on sexual practices.

This study was conducted in a selected peri-urban township, which is an economically active industrial zone of Yangon. A total of 21 young people (10 women and 11 men), all of whom had experienced sexual intercourse without using condoms, and some of whom had had STIs and unintended pregnancy. They were purposively selected and interviewed to explore their sexual practices, their lifestyles, sexual meanings, sexual partnerships and beliefs on STIs, HIV/AIDS and unintended pregnancy prevention. Five sessions of focus group discussions were conducted to provide information and general ideas about the youth in the area. Non-participatory observation and key informant interviews were performed to confirm and support the findings of Focus Group Discussions and in-depth interviews. Unstable family structure and poor family interaction led the youth to be exposed prematurely to the outside world moreover; work environment permitted the escape from the traditional family control. These provided the chance to develop peer networks under peer pressure and new interests. These new interests and peer networks lead the youth to create intimate sexual relationship. As sexual matters are socially constructed and also bounded by traditional culture, the concepts on sexuality in terms of sexual partnerships and meanings lead the youth to engage in unsafe sexual practices. Gender differences in perceptions related to sexual partnerships and meanings revealed the young women were at risk for unsafe sexual practices. Most of them would experience negative consequences of these practices resulting in social, financial and reproductive health problems. Similarly, most of the young people believed that they were not at risk of unsafe sex so they used condoms irregularly. This was more so for the young women. Integrated and comprehensive youth programs are necessary to reinforce the pre-existing ones, which affect the unsafe sexual practices of the youth. Future research should address the linkage among insider views and actual sexual practices, sexual acts, homosexuality, bisexuality, condom use and preferred source of information, and gender differences and its effects on real sexual practices among the youth.

KEY WORDS: YOUTH LIFESTYLES / SEXUAL MEANINGS / SEXUAL
PARTNERSHIPS/ BELIEF / UNSAFE SEXUAL PRACTICES / PERI-
URBAN

127 pp. ISBN 974-04-5654-5

CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	x
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Rational and justification of the Study.....	1
1.2 Research questions.....	7
1.3 Research objective.....	7
II LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 Theoretical Concepts.....	8
2.1.1 Theories on Human Sexuality and Youth Sexuality.....	8
2.1.2 Concepts of Social and Gender Identity.....	9
2.1.3 Concepts of Gender and Sexuality.....	9
2.1.4 Concepts of Cultural Diffusion and Youth Lifestyles.....	10
2.1.5 Ruth Dixon-Mueller's Analytical Framework for Sexuality, Sexual and Reproductive Health Study.....	10
2.2 Previous Research Findings.....	12
2.2.1 Youth Lifestyles And Networks Related To Unsafe Sexual Practice.....	12
2.2.2 Gender differences in sexual meanings and partnerships related to unsafe sexual practices.....	15
2.2.3 Perception on STIs, HIV/ AIDS risks and unwanted pregnancy, and condom use related to unsafe sexual practices.....	18

CONTENTS (cont.)

	Page
2.2.4 Conceptual Framework.....	21
2.3 Operational Definition of Variables.....	22
 III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
3.1 Study Design	24
3.2 Study Site	24
3.3 Target Group And Recruitment Process	25
3.3.1 Target Group.....	25
3.3.2 Criteria And Recruitment Process.....	26
3.3.3 Approaching The Informants.....	27
3.4 Methods of Data Collection.....	28
3.4.1 Non-participant Observations.....	28
3.4.2 Focus Group Discussions.....	29
3.4.3 In-Depth Interviews	30
3.4.4 Key Informant Interviews	31
3.5 Data Processing and Analysis.....	31
3.5.1 Content Analysis Data.....	31
3.5.2 Validity of Data.....	32
3.6 Ethical Consideration.....	33
3.7 Methodological Limitations.....	34
 IV RESEARCH FINDINGS	
4.1 Geographical and Demographic Characteristics of Study Area....	36
4.2 Socio-economic Characteristics of Informants.....	39
4.3 Youth Lifestyles.....	42
4.3.1 Living Arrangements	42
4.3.2 Working Environment.....	52
4.3.3 Peer Identity and Peer Pressure	59

CONTENTS (cont.)

	Page
4.3.4 Youth Interests, Transforming of Struggling Life into Sexual Activities.....	64
4.4 Gender Differences in Sexuality.....	65
4.4.1 Sexual Meanings	65
4.4.2 Sexual Partnerships.....	73
4.5 Sexual Practices.....	78
4.6 Beliefs on STIs, HIV/ AIDS and Unintended Pregnancy.....	82
4.6.1 Beliefs on STIs.....	82
4.6.2 Definitions of HIV/ AIDS.....	83
4.6.3 Beliefs on Unintended Pregnancy	85
4.6.4 Beliefs on Condom Use	85
4.7 Unsafe Sexual Practices.....	86
4.7.1 Sexual practices without using condom	87
4.7.2 Coercive or forced sex.....	90
4.7.3 Group sex activities	91
4.8 Youth lifestyles, gender differences in sexuality and cultural beliefs related to STIs/HIV/ AIDS and unintended pregnancy prevention underlying unsafe sex.....	92
V SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	
5.1 Summary	97
5.2 Discussion	101
5.2.1 Gender differences in Youth Sexuality	102
5.2.2 Youth Lifestyles and Networks underlying Unsafe Sex	104
5.2.3 Sexual Practices	105
5.2.4 Beliefs on STIs, HIV/ AIDS and Unintended Preganancy	107
5.3 Conclusion.....	108

CONTENTS (cont.)

	Page
VI RECOMMENDATION	
6.1 General Recommendations.....	110
6.2 Recommendations for Further Studies	115
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	117
APPENDIX	120
BIOGRAPHY.....	127

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Characteristics of the in-depth interview young men.....	39
2	Characteristics of the in-depth interview young women.....	39
3	Gender differences in Sexual Meanings.....	65
4	Concepts of Masculinity and Femininity.....	70
5	Characteristics of Sexual Partners.....	73
6	First sexual Exposure and Sexual acts of Interviewed Youth.....	78

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

STIs : Sexually Transmitted Diseases

HIV : Human Immuno-deficiency Virus

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

WHO: World Health Organization

DOH: Department Of Health

NGO : Non-governmental Organization

CSWs: Commercial Sex Workers

FRHS: Fertility and Reproductive Health Survey

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale and justification of the study

Globally, the youth population is large and is increasing. In 1998, the United Nations reported that the world youth population was 1.04 billion or 18 percent. By the year 2050, the youth population is projected to be 1.18 billion or 13 percent larger than today (United Nations, 2000).

In youth the period of transition from childhood to adulthood, physical, emotional, intellectual, social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and changes happen unevenly. Almost all young people face serious challenges within this period and each of them has their own rights and identities. Considerations of their needs and problems must go beyond physical growth to include their psychological, mental, sexual and reproductive health development. Many young people are vulnerable to harmful and risky activities in all aspects including their sexuality which can affect their development, health, security, dignity and issues surrounding sexuality.

In Southeast Asia, sexual behavior and sexual health issues of the young population are culturally sensitive and it is taboo to explore and study them. This does not change the fact that youth commonly engage in both safe and unsafe sexual practices. However, most of the sexual practices among the youth are unsafe because of the inaccessibility to sex education, sexual and reproductive health services, and risk taking behaviors. Therefore, they suffer from a range of sexual health problems and resulted social problems which can have a life long affect.

Why study various unsafe sexual practices among youth?

According to the WHO, most of the young people (boys and girls, married and unmarried) become sexually active before the age of 20, and generally

they are unable to obtain proper sex education, family planning services (including appropriate contraceptives) and the prevention and care of sexually transmitted diseases. For many young people, the opening times or location of services are inconvenient, or the care is too expensive. Furthermore, many health care facilities require the consent of parents or spouses, or may be forbidden by law to provide services to adolescents. Lastly, the judgmental attitudes of many health care professionals often discourage adolescents from seeking advice and treatment related to sexual and reproductive health (Publication, WHO_ADH_FRH, 2000-2002).

A United Nation's report on Myanmar stated that in 1997 young people (15-24 years) comprised approximately 19% of the total population of 46 million (United Nation, 2000). The recognition that an increasing number of this group engage in unsafe sexual behavior and suffer the consequences has become an important issue. Adolescent reproductive health programs for people 10 to 24 years old (MOH Myanmar guideline) are however, in the preliminary stages of implementation (Ministry of Health p 12, 2004).

Although the traditional belief is that adolescents and youths are not sexually active in Myanmar society, this belief can no longer be assumed among the younger generation. Many studies have shown that unmarried young people are engaging in premarital sex (Htay et al, 2000, Kyu Kyu Than, 2001, Soe Myint et al, 2001). This practice can be assumed is unsafe sex because these young people have been engaging innocently in their desires without proper education and knowledge about sexual and reproductive health.

Myint Zaw's study among the final year students attending Yangon University showed that 38.7 percent of male respondents and 2.9 percent of female respondents reported having sexual experiences. Among these, only 2.1 percent of the males and 0.3 percent of the females were married (Myint Zaw cited in WHO, 1997). This study revealed that premarital sex is not uncommon in Myanmar although formal sex education programs are still being debated. From the facts it can be assumed that unsafe sex is common among the youth.

The most serious outcomes of unsafe sexual practices include unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortions and STI/HIV/AIDS as well as associated social stigmatization. Than Nu Shwe's study on adolescent pregnancy in Myanmar showed

that 47% of the youth between the ages of 15 to 19 that were studied, had had one pregnancy, 6.2% had had two and 0.5% had had three pregnancies (Than Nu Shwe et al., 2001). This study also mentioned that 10% of the respondents have had abortions. In addition to this, MOH & UNFPA reported a significant number of abortions among the people under age of 20 years in some hospitals of Myanmar making them one of the at-risk groups for induced abortion among young women (MOH & UNFPA p 52, 1999).

The UNFPA also reported that at a selected STI clinic in Myanmar 39.4 percent of the patients between the ages of 15 and 24 were STI cases (UNFPA, 1999). However, there is no exact data concerning the difference in prevalence of STI between the young males and females.

Youth in Myanmar are also a high risk group for HIV/AIDS although there is no exact data. A Reproductive Health Needs Assessment mentioned that HIV prevalence among young people staying in the border towns and working in neighboring countries is extremely high. Most of them returned to their home when they became infected with HIV, and in some cases when they reached the terminal stage of AIDS (UNFPA p 52, 1999).

In Myanmar, studies of youth and their sexuality and sexual health are based on surveys by either individuals or groups of researchers and most of them investigate general knowledge and behavior. Therefore, it is imperative to uncover the wide range of sexual practices among the youth to uncover the lack of knowledge relating to safe and unsafe sexual practices in order to provide clues to solve the sexual health needs and problems.

Why study youth lifestyles related to unsafe sexual practices?

WHO Myanmar state that Myanmar was started to open its economy in 1990 and thus has lead to great changes in the society and economy especially among the youth. These changes can make the youth of the country vulnerable and susceptible to external influences from social, cultural, economic and technological developments (MOH Myanmar and WHO, 1999).

The Ministry of Health reported that urbanization and changing lifestyles can transform the common traditional way of youth, especially in urban and semi-urban areas due to migration, staying away from the families for their education and economic advancement, exposure to multimedia communication, modernization and peer group pressure (MOH, 1999).

A subsequent report from the Ministry of Health agreed that changing life styles can encourage youth to engage unhealthy lifestyles and, risky behaviors including unsafe sexual behavior (MOH cited in UNICEF, 2000). This sexual behavior with a lack of knowledge leads the youth to suffer a number of sexual health problems such as unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortion and STI/HIV/AIDS (UNFPA 1999).

Than Nu Shwe (2001) concludes that the rapid increase in unsafe premarital sexual activities among adolescents and youth is the outcome of modernization and exposure to mass media, movies and fashion magazines from outside Myanmar(Than Nu Shwe et al, 2001). Nilar Tin (2003) points that the most favorable places for the urban youth to socialize are karaoke outlets and movie parlors and most of the sexual activities are derived from western films and lifestyle. This study also stats that most of the youth in Chaung Tha, a famous beach in Myanmar, may have changed their lifestyle and sexual behavior after exposure to foreign tourists visiting to this beach (Nilar Tin, 2001).

Lack of adequate knowledge about the change indiates the need to study more deeply unsafe sexual practices. This study starts the exploration youth lifestyles and how these lifestyles relate to unsafe sexual practices.

Why study gender difference in youth sexuality?

In Southeast Asia, most of the women are suffering from the negative consequences of sexual and reproductive health as a result of engaging unsafe and unprotected sex along the gender line. In the sense of unsafe sexual behaviors, women especially young women are more vulnerable to suffer from these negative consequences because of their reproductive organs which can have intended pregnancy, unsafe abortion and sexually transmitted diseases.

A UNICEF report (2000) about gender roles and expectations related to sexual behavior states that Myanmar culture expects that young women should be sexually naïve while young men are expected to be less restricted to their sexuality and sexual behaviors. It is socially accepted that boys discuss their sexuality with their friends, relatives or even their parents. Parents, however especially fathers are very reluctant to discuss about sexuality with their daughters (MOH cited in UNICEF, 2000).

A UNFPA report on Myanmar states that most young girls are ashamed to talk about sex. Since a pre-marital sexual experience for young women is assumed to be bad behavior and young women are not supposed to learn or know about sex. On the contrary, society can better accept that young men engage in premarital sex with both commercial sex workers and/or girl friends. Girls who engage in unsafe premarital sex can also have social problems if it ends up with unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortion (UNFPA p 52, 1999).

There are few studies about gender issues among youth in Myanmar that deal with sexuality, and sexual and reproductive health. Studies exploring gender differences in youth sexuality in terms of sexual meanings and sexual partnership do not exist at all. This study is designed to provide a better understanding of the gender differences underlying unsafe sexual practices among the youth so as to contribute a significant step in further the implications of the adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health programs.

Why study cultural beliefs related to unintended pregnancy, STI/ HIV/ AIDS prevention and condom use?

Cultural beliefs and perception about sexual health problems can also lead the youth to engage unsafe sexual practices because youth understanding about unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortion, STI/ HIV/ AIDS and condom use is still limited to protect themselves from these issues. A UN report from an Expert Group Meeting for Adolescents mentions that there are cultural diversities in Southeast region and these cultural norms and beliefs can adversely affect the ability of youth to get information and education about sexuality and sexual health issues (UN p 7, 1998).

A WHO study of Sexual Relationship among Youth in Developing Countries mentions that knowledge and perception on conception, fertile period and also contraceptive use was not well considered by the youth to prevent the pregnancy so that most of the young women would engage unsafe sex and suffer its consequences (WHO p 14, 2001).

Some myths about HIV/AIDS still exist among Myanmar youth. Ko Ko Naing (2002) points out in HIV/ AIDS knowledge among the young people in Myanmar that the majority of them assumed that HIV/AIDS could be transmitted by sharing utensils or mosquitoes bites and they did not think about sexual transmission. It also mentions that most of them believed that HIV/AIDS could not be transmitted by first and infrequent sexual intercourse. They also thought that healthy people would not catch of this disease. According to the FRHS report of Myanmar, condom use among youth between the ages of 15-24 is negligibly low (only 0.01%) (FRHS p 68, 2001). There are many myths and beliefs about condoms among the youth.

Therefore, the society should be aware of these issues and also there are very limited number of studies about cultural beliefs and perceptions related to unintended pregnancy, STI/HIV/AIDS prevention and condom use in Myanmar. Therefore, this study is intended to understand exactly the real picture underlying the cultural belief and perception related to these issues which influenced the unsafe sexual practices among the youth.

1.2 Research questions

1. What are the various unsafe sexual practices among selected youth in peri-urban area of Myanmar?
2. What are the life styles of selected youth in peri-urban area of Myanmar?
3. What is the gender difference in sexual meanings and partnership related to unsafe sexual practices?
4. What are the cultural beliefs related to STIs, HIV/AIDS, unintended pregnancy prevention and condom use?
5. How life styles, gender differences in sexual meanings and cultural belief related to STIs, HIV/AIDS, unintended pregnancy prevention and condom use influence the unsafe sexual practices of selected youth in peri-urban area of Myanmar?

1.3 Objectives

1. To explore various unsafe sexual practices among selected youth in peri-urban area of Myanmar.
2. To explore life styles of youth in this area.
3. To explore the gender differences in sexual meanings and sexual partnership.
4. To explain the cultural beliefs related to STIs, HIV/AIDS, unintended pregnancy prevention and condom use among the selected youth.
5. To explore how life style, gender difference in sexual meanings and cultural beliefs influence the unsafe sexual practices of selected youth.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical concepts

2.1.1 Theories on Human Sexuality and Youth Sexuality

Beach F.A mentions that there are four perspectives to review the human sexuality. The developmental perspective revealed that the human sexuality can not only be developed under the influences of nature of the endogenous factors such as hormones and sex organ development but also be changed by external stimulation (Laurance cited in Beach, 1996). For the sociological perspective, Laurance emphasized that the sexual culture of a society is fundamental part of the whole culture and the human sexuality is constructed by the culture of this society. The sexual meanings and acts of a society can be completely embedded with the cultural knowledge of this society (Laurance, 1996).

Physiological explanation of Laurance described that sexual feeling and behaviors are the responses of the stimulation to the body according to the stimulus-response paradigm and the stimulus should be accounted from internal as well as external environment. Evolutionary perspective mentioned that the sexual behaviors could not be totally controlled by the genes and immune system of the body but also influenced by the learning and practices externally (Laurance, 1996).

Udry (1987) stated that sexual drive abruptly rises in early adolescent because of hormonal changes within the period of puberty (Laurance cited in Urdy, 1996). Brooks and Paikoff (1993) mentioned that there are four stages of development which is necessary for the adolescence, which included that feeling comfortable to their body changes, feeling confidently to their sexual desire, feeling freely to choose their sexual activities which should be healthy and safety. These sexual activities can be meant that they have already understood and chosen voluntarily for themselves and for their partners. The last stage is fully understanding about healthy sexual developments and practicing safe sex which meant sex which can be avoided from

infections, unintended pregnancy and other social and psychological problems (Laurance cited in Brooks, 1996, p. 403).

2.1.2 Concepts of social and gender identity

Mead (1992) mentioned that social identities are the groups, status or categories in which an individual is socially recognized as belonging. An individual not only see himself in terms of such categories but also comes to see himself as possessing certain tendencies to respond certain disposition (Blumer,1998, P 311).

DOH & UNICEF Myanmar conclude that youth are recognized as a belonging in their peer groups as social identities and they are not only seen themselves in terms of young people but also as a possessing certain tendency to respond certain dispositions. Youth is a time of individualization when young peoples try to establish an identity apart from their parents (DOH & UNICEF Myanmar, 2000).

Judith Lorber (1991) stated that “Gender is constructed through psychological, cultural and social means. Race, class and gender synergistically oppress and dominate in different direction such as men to men, men to women and women to women. Gender plays an important role in every day lives of the society in terms of everyday practices” (Judith Lorber p. 9, 1991).

Gender identity concerns for the young people related to their sexuality and sexual behaviors. Gagnon & Henderson (1985) mentions that gender identity is considered of “femaleness” and “maleness”. Socialization of male and female is important component of identifying gender in which sexual preference and sexual objectification emerge (Lorber cited in Gagnon, 1991).

2.1.3 Concepts of gender and sexuality

Caplan (1987) stats that sexuality should be studied differently from gender, which could be expressed through sexuality. The sexual act can be considered as a risk or pleasure and also as safe or unsafe behavior. Furthermore, there are both positive and negative outcomes of sexual behavior with regard to different contexts and times (Caplan P, 1987).

Greenberg (1988) and Stein (1989) mention that the social construction of sexuality including sexual feelings, preferences and sexual practices can be explained

as related to the social construction of gender (Judith Lorber cited in Greenberg, 1991, p. 7). Gender also play an important role in the sexuality and sexual practices of youth on an everyday basis.

In the sense of gender differences, boys identified themselves as males and different from the girls who are females. Females are constructed sexually attractive objects within the patriarchy society. Biological definition of gender, which is sex, and gender, which is socially constructed and institutionalized, are intertwining each other. Socialization and institutionalization of gender could be explained to maintain their status within the society (Gagnon & Henderson, 1985).

2.1.4 Concepts of cultural diffusion and youth lifestyles

Diffusion theory, Tylor states that cultural development of a society is influenced by relationships with other societies which had other cultures. This contact leads to the transmission of cultural elements from one society to another (Nanda S, Theory in Cultural Anthropology, 4th Edition).

A WHO report on the sexual relationships of youth in developing countries concludes that changing social and economic condition, urbanization and the advancement of information technology can very quickly permit cultural diffusion from one society to another. The economic factor is important because it allows adolescent to stay away from their families and communities and to lead independent lifestyles. Some youth try to find their safety and pleasurable lives while staying away from the families resulting in intimate relationships with their boyfriends/ girlfriends leading to unsafe sex. Economic change including industrialization and urbanization can also affect the life style and perception of youth with respect to their sexuality (WHO, 2001).

2.1.5 Ruth Dixon-Mueller's analytical framework for sexuality, sexual and reproductive health study

Ruth Dixon-Mueller's model identify the four elements of sexuality and sexual behavior that are socially organized by gender difference. These elements are sexual partnerships, sexual acts, sexual meanings, and sexual drive and enjoyment. The way

each is viewed can be explained by differences in gender perspective and social and cultural context of the society (Mueller R.D cited in Standing and Kisella, 1989).

Sexual partnerships incorporate the notions of number, time and duration, and the social identity of sexual partnership. Sexual acts focuses on the nature, frequency and condition, chance of choice of specific sexual practices, and different forms of sexual intercourse. These can be concerned in the sexual networking and negative consequences of the sexuality of the youth.

Sexual meanings, refers to the concepts of masculinity and femininity, perception of sexual behaviors, perception of sexual health risks and condom use. Curiosity about sex and love, meanings of love and marriage and perception of sexual risk taking behaviors can be involved in this element for young people because it is the time of experimentation about their sexuality and sexual practices.

Sexual drives and enjoyment includes the perception and knowledge of their own sexual and reproductive capabilities, physical and emotional pleasure and fun. This element is important for the sexuality of the youth who are sexually active and curious about sex (Mueller R.Dp 140-145, 1996).

Apart from the sexuality, it also stated that the consequences of gender inequality among the youth whose perception and practices related to their sexuality and negative consequences of their sexual behaviors are different. It mentioned that social organization of gender differences could link between the sexuality and reproductive and sexual health risks. In this model, the social identity and sexuality of adolescents are changing all the time which reflecting the gender power disparities of sexual behavior in which power can be explained by interpersonal relationships.

In this context, Ruth Dixon-Mueller stated that interpersonal power relationship have a strong influence on sexual and reproductive outcomes. The female adolescents have very limited chance to choose and also limited chance to negotiate their sexual partners rather than males who can choose more freely (Mueller R Dixon, 1996).

2.2 Previous Research findings:

2.2.1 Youth life styles and networks related to unsafe sexual practices

2.2.1.1 Peer identity and peer pressure related to unsafe sexual practices

According to Beesey, nowadays most of today's young people seek identities different from the traditional ones especially surrounding risk taking and unsafe sexual behaviors. This is because traditional ways of teaching and socialization compete with influences from the outside world by family and parents(Beesey A, 2004).

Boonmongkon's study in Thailand relates that group activities among the youth can be homogenous because they encouraged each other to do the preferred performances (Boonmongkon P et al, cited by WHO, 2000). This is reinforced by gender roles and inequalities among the youth.

Josina points out in a study of HIV/ AIDS in Zambia that gender differentiation within the youth is related to their sexuality in terms of perception and practices, and strongly influenced by their peer group. Most of the youth engage in sexual practices as a rite to adulthood to show masculinity for boys and as a proof of love and strong attraction to their partners for girls. Following these identities and memberships in the group can result in unsafe sexual behaviors.

In Thailand, among rural youth, peer pressure and influence are an important drives for adolescents to engage into unsafe premarital sex(Israbhakdi, 2000). The youth want to keep their identity in their peer group and are scared of loss of trust and peer acceptance but most are not aware of what constitutes risky sexual behavior (Population Report 2001, p. 9). Another study about risky sexual behavior and HIV/AIDS among school girls reports that young people reinforces their gender roles and personal identity with other adolescents through their risky behaviors including sexual ones (Josina Z Machel, 2001).

It is very clear about the youth to get their own identity and try to belong to their own group and try to be homogenous to the group even though they are not aware of the unsafe sexual behaviors. Young people have their own ideas and identities to

restore their social lives and values in exchange of taking risks. This can lead the adolescent to introduce to unsafe sexual practices among their group.

UNICEF Myanmar revealed that most of the boys are exposed their first sex through visits to commercial sex workers and most of them did not use a condom in their first sexual exposure (UNICEF & MOH p 29, 2000). Peer pressure and relationship within the group play a key role in this behavior.

UNICEF report says that the relationship among Myanmar youth is primarily friendship and then changes to boyfriends and girlfriends. Most of the boys stated that the relationships with their girlfriends was to have fun, love and sex. The girls who are more on emotion to relate to their boyfriends (MOH & UNICEF p 26, 2000). Gender inequality is also an important issue for the youth lifestyles and peer pressure related to unsafe sexual behaviors because of the intention to make relationship with boyfriends and girlfriends are varied.

2.2.1.2 Living & working arrangements, Leisure times and places related to unsafe sexual practices

Baumer's study of working class youth in the United States concludes that having unsafe premarital sex is influenced by the youth living away from home, having low academic aspirations accompanied with poor attendance at school, and the lack of desirable jobs, working class youth in these conditions, when compared to other, have intercourse earlier and more frequently. Furthermore, they are less likely to use contraceptives, including condoms, than others (Baumer, Eric P et al, May 2001).

Boonmongkon's study in Thailand mentions that working class youth are at risk of having unsteady partners and unsafe sexual practices because of the working environment, during isolation from the family and romantic intimacy. The same study also states that during leisure time activities and going-out lifestyles, the youth who have more chance to be free from the family and school restrictions are more prone to engage in unsafe sexual behavior than others regardless of time and place. This includes young people who work outside their homes even when they are staying with their families (Boonmongkon P et al, 2000).

The same study adds that the leisure places frequented by the youth are different for groups and couples. Movie theatres, karaoke clubs, restaurants, public parks and disco bars are common places for the youth group to spend their time, chatting with each other, eating, drinking and enjoying music. For couples, they start to date in the public parks, coffee shops and movie theatres for sometime and after that, they try to find more private places such as someone's house, which allow them more privacy. In this situation, boys ask the girls to make love or have sex and the girls give in after a while resulting in sexual intercourse without preparing anything and so not using condoms leads to unsafe sex (Boonmongkon P et al, 2000).

In this sense, with the changing of socio-cultural situation and lifestyles among the youth can provoke the unsafe sexual behaviors among them which are also strongly influenced by their identity, peer group pressure and relationship.

2.2.1.3 Alcohol and drug consumption related to unsafe sexual behavior

Some studies in Myanmar mention that alcohol and drug consumption among the youth could be explained as a common habit of experimentation during transition from childhood to adulthood. There is also a strong relationship between alcohol and drug consumption and unsafe sexual behaviors among the youth. These studies suggest that alcohol and drug consumption behaviors among the youth can weaken the control of and at the same time reduce social norms, concerns about unsafe sexual behaviors (Aye Moe Moe Lwin et al., 2000, Kyu Kyu Than, 2001). A WHO study also concludes particularly for young men that alcohol consumption can stimulate visits to the commercial sex establishment, increase the number of sexual partner and increase the chance of getting sexually transmitted diseases (WHO p 14, 2001).

Some studies in Myanmar reports that a large fragment of Myanmar youth engage in risky behaviors such as smoking, drinking alcohol, taking drugs and unsafe sexual behavior. The latter includes sex without using condoms for commercial sex and premarital sex which can lead to sexual and reproductive health issues (Aye Moe Moe Lwin et al., 2000 and Soe Myint et al., 2001).

Kyu Kyu Than's studied on Health Risk Behaviors among Myanmar Youth mentions that out-of-school youth are more prone to have unsafe sexual behaviors rather than in-school youth because they are more opened to the outside world which can strongly affect their risky behaviors including sexual behaviors (Kyu Kyu Than, 2001). This study also mentioned that drinking can encourage the young people to engage in unsafe sexual practices.

Since the unsafe sex behaviors of young males can contribute to their non-commercial partners or girls friends when they have sex without using condoms. As a consequence of alcohol consumption among the youth, both the male and female youth would be undergone to unsafe sexual behaviors resulting in the negative outcome of sexual and reproductive issues.

2.2.2 Gender differences in sexual meanings and partnership related to unsafe sexual practices

2.2.2.1 Sexual meanings related to unsafe sexual practices

Bhakta's study explain that in Asian Society, there are a number of gender imbalances related to sexual meanings and unsafe sexual practices. Young girls engage in unsafe premarital sex to show their love and keep their partners with the hope of getting. Unfortunately, they do not know how to protect themselves from unwanted consequences. Furthermore, they do not understand their own sexuality and have no chance to understand about their sexuality. Male adolescents, on the other hand, engage premarital sex mostly for fun; curiosity, or to show their manly adulthood rather than to show love.

This study also mentioned that the motivation of premarital sexual behavior is likely to be different between male and female youth. Male tend to have the sexual debt out of curiosity or for the sake of sexual pleasure, however female are more likely to have this practice to show their love and emotional, and closely relate with marriage or long term relationship for the sense of security (Bhakta B. Gubhaju, 1998).

Kyu Kyu Than's study on Health Risk Behaviors of Myanmar Youth reports that gender inequality is an important issue in the sexuality of Myanmar youth. Most of

young Myanmar women engage in unsafe premarital sex as a preliminary to their marriage showing that the meaning of marriage and sexual practices are strongly related (Kyu Kyu Than, 2001).

A report of MOH and UNICEF for Myanmar agreed that gender differentiation is very clear between male and female youth in regards to sexual desire and control. Boys have more freedom to have sex and less need to control sexual. In contrast, girls have to control their sexuality and sexual desire and for their dignity. Sex outside marriage is impermissible for good girls (MOH& UNICEF p 31, 2000).

2.2.2.2 Perception of Masculine and feminine sexuality related to unsafe sexual practices

Sexual and Adolescent reproductive health in Asia (2000) reports that 40% of young Thai men tried to have sex since they wanted to be like their friends and to allow they are real man. In contrast, traditional social norms support maintaining virginity so as to be good girls and sexually inactive. These young women are going down between their peer group and boy friend's demand, and social pressure to be good women (Asia Population Studies, 2000).

A study of Free Trade Zone communities in Sri Lanka reported that most of the young women suffered the consequences of unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion and stigmatization of being a single mother as a result of unsafe premarital sexual practices. Most of them had premarital sex hoping to get married later. In reality their partners left them to be suffered from the negative consequences of this practice (Hettiarachchy and Schensul, 2001).

Bhakta reports that a double standard concerning premarital and extramarital sexual behavior presents in many Asian Countries. They are accepted and encouraged for men but women they are restricted (Bhakta B. Gubhaju, 1988). Josina's study of unsafe sex among schoolgirls in Mozambique revealed that love is an emotional and special prerequisite affair for the girls to engage in premarital sex but not for the boys (Josina Z Machel, 2001). This study showed that the perception of feminine sexuality about love is different from that of boys and this perception tended to encourage the young girls to engage in unsafe premarital sex.

According to Bhakta's study of Asian society, young women who are undergone unsafe premarital sex by their partner's pressure which can be assumed to be masculinity concept of the sexual double standard of society. Young women are naïve and they do not know how to negotiate the sexual demands of their partners leading to unsafe sexual practices (Bhakta B. Gubhaju, 1988).

Soonthorndhada observes that young women in Thailand were labeled as loose and bad girls by the social norms if they did not maintain their virginity up to marriage; on the other hand they were under the pressure from their partners who were encouraged by society to be sexually experienced (Soonthorndhada A., 1992a).

These studies showed that there was different in the perception of masculine and feminine sexuality on love and marriage which could largely influence the unsafe sexual practices among the young people.

2.2.2.3 Sexual partnership related to unsafe sexual practices

The WHO report on Sexual Relations among Young People in Developing Countries states that gender disparities among the youth related to their sexual partners widely ranged. Most of the young men have a large number of multiple sex partners than young female. In one study from the Philippines, however, young female had as many partners as males at the one selected colleague studied (WHO p 12, 2001).

Ford and Kittisuksathit's study in Thailand agreed that gender differences in terms of sexual partnership among the youth in which girls have much limitation to choose their partners and they are probably to have sex with steady boyfriends. In contrast, the boys who used to practice sex with many categorizations, which are girlfriends, commercial sex workers and also both (Ford, N and Kittisuksathit, S p 149, 1996). This perception and practice of sexual partnership is more prone for the youth to have unsafe sex.

Boonmongkon(2000) emphasizes that the number and duration of sexual partnerships among youth depends on gender. Most young girls want to have a prolonged and strong relationship with a single partner who is ideally a colleagues or a businessmen. Boys have short or long terms sexual partnerships depending on their feelings and attachments. The perception of the sexual partnership for young girls is

mostly based on the hope of marriage, love and money while young boys are strongly affected by the beauty and emotional attachment of the girls (Boonmongkon P et al, 2000).

These studies clearly show that gender disparities related to sexuality among youth. Young girls are at a disadvantage because they have less chance to choose their partners and less power to negotiate having safe sex. Gender differences in sexual meanings and partnerships among the youth exaggerated them especially young girls to engage unsafe sexual behaviors related to the negative consequences such as unintended pregnancy and STI/ HIV/ AIDS.

2.2.3 Perception on STI/HIV/ AIDS risks and unwanted pregnancy, and condom use related to unsafe sexual practices

2.2.3.1 Perception on STI/HIV/ AIDS risks and unwanted pregnancy related to unsafe sexual practices

Christine M concludes that sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/ AIDS are increasing among young people all around the world. In the United States, almost half of the newly HIV infection are among youth under 25 year old. Almost four million youth under 25 are suffering from sexually transmitted diseases in the United States (Christine M et al, Aug 2003).

Ford N and Kittisuksathit's study in Thailand finds that youth are aware of sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS and try to have sex with their peers rather than with commercial sex workers. They perceived that sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS can only be transmitted only by the commercial sex and not from their non commercial peer partners. This perception on STI/HIV/AIDS transmission makes youth more vulnerable to engage unsafe (Ford N and Kittisuksathit S p 150, 1996).

Boonmongkon's study on Thai Adolescent Sexuality points out that perception on HIV/AIDS risks and prevention was strongly related to the existing cultural beliefs among the youth. Although the youth are aware of these risks, they are still considering these risks are indicated by personality, personal appearance and

imagination about behaviors. They have never considered having a blood test for these diseases (Boonmongkon P et al, 2000).

Sharful in Sexuality and sexual behaviors among male STI patients in Bangladesh that cultural beliefs about HIV/AIDS are strongly related to the religion. Accordint to the report about Muslims believed they could not get the disease because they had good religious characteristics (Sharful I. K.1997). This cultural belief can closely related to the unsafe sexual practices among the youth because they think that Muslim youth can not catch these diseases.

MOH Myanmar reported that young people are unclear in their perception of STI/ HIV/AIDS. They think that these diseases are related to promiscuity and contracted from people who have bad manner, guys, promiscuous women, frequent travelers, businessmen and commercial sexual exposure. Youth can get information about sexuality, and sexual and reproductive health issues from their peers, movies and print media (Ministry of Health Adolescent RH section, 2004).

A study of youth in Mexico City (Ehrendeld, 1994) points out that majority of them think that occasional sex and sexual debut does not lead to pregnancy (Ehrendeld by WHO p14, 2001). A study by Ford N and Kittisuksathit in Thailand emphasizes that there are myths and beliefs concerning pregnancy and sexual practices. A large percentage of the youth in the study still believe that pregnancy could not occur from the first time of sexual intercourse. Also, they believe that women can not become pregnant if they urinate after intercourse and even they can get pregnancy by withdrawing before ejaculation (Ford N and Kittisuksathit p99, 1996).

2.2.3.2 Perception on condom use related to unsafe sexual practices

Condom use is a major concern when considering the sexual behaviors among youth because their knowledge about condom use is negligible. Condom use among the youth is low and only a minority of sexually active and sexually experienced youth use condom and a small percentage of them use condoms persistently (Mehryar.A et al, 2003). This irregular condom use and low use of condoms is closely related to unsafe sexual behavior.

Knowledge about condom use is not strongly related to peer pressure, community relations or accessibility; it is strongly related to the increasing level of self-efficacy and partner communication concerning condom use (Mehryar.A et al, 2003).

Ford N and Kittisuksathit's study reports that condom use is perceived as related to commercial sex not for use with steady girlfriends and boyfriends. One study mentioned that condom use is high in sexual relations which one with sex workers and very low in relations with steady partners. The belief and conception about condom use among youth is very different between relationship with sex workers and partners. Most of the youth perceived that they do not need to use condoms with non-commercial sex partners because condom use can reduce intimacy, trust, commitment of love and also can reduce the emotional and sexual pleasure (Ford N and Kittisuksathit S p 150, 1996).

Nilar Tin (2001) explains the gender differences in knowledge and perception of sexual and reproductive health problems and condom use. Young women are not aware that condoms are for safe sex not only for contraception. Young men are fully aware of using condom to protect themselves for both (Nilar Tin, 2001).

A MOH Myanmar report reveals that most young people may intend to use condoms in commercial sex situations but do not use condom in non commercial sexual relationship because of unrestrained desire and unintentional sex (MOH & UNICEF p v, 2000). Most of them perceived that condom use is only for commercial sex to prevent STI/HIV/AIDS not for sexual relationships between lovers.

UNICEF Myanmar reports that very difficult to negotiate the use of contraceptives including condom between boyfriends and girlfriends because they have their own meanings concerning the use it. Most of the young girls could be presumed to be bad girls when they try to discuss the use of any contraceptives. This is a big barrier for youth to negotiate safe sex and lead to negative consequences of unsafe sexual behaviors (MOH & UNICEF p 33, 2000).

This report also mentioned gender differentiation is still existing in using condom also because one boy mentioned in this study that girl should not ask to use condom otherwise she would be suspected as a bad girl or prostitute. However, the reason for

the boy not using condom is thinking about reducing sexual pleasure (MOH & UNICEF p 34, 2000).

Regarding to Josina (2001), school boys (ages 13 – 20 year) are more aware to use condom to protect themselves from STI/HIV/ AIDS than the girls. Girls have knowledge about using condom more preferable for the purpose of contraception than prevention from sexually transmitted diseases (Josina Z Machel, 2001).

This study showed the consequences of lack of knowledge about using condom among the youth. Although young men are more knowledge about using condom to protect themselves, young women only know about using condom for the purpose to prevent pregnancy rather than protection themselves from STIs and HIV/AIDS. This is the result of gender inequality by education and socialization (Josina Z Machel, 2001).

Although these studies mentioned that gender differential related to knowledge and perception of negative consequences of sexual and reproductive health can lead the young women to be suffered more than young men, it need to explore more detail what extent and how gender can affect these problems related to unsafe sex.

2.2.4 Conceptual framework

In order to investigate the unsafe sexual practices of a selected group of youths, a conceptual framework has been developed based on a review of the literature and concepts of youth sexuality, social and gender identity, cultural diffusion and Ruth Dixon Mueller analytical framework which are related to sexual practices of youth. The review of relevant previous studies in the Myanmar only discusses about social structure, lack of information and knowledge about sexuality, and sexual and reproductive health issues. This study will explore youth identity, lifestyles and networking related to their sexuality in terms of sexual meanings and sexual partnership among the youth.

Since this conceptual framework is created based on the above mentioned concepts and some important variables from the Ruth Dixon Muller's model, it is not completely created from classical theories and Ruth Dixon Mueller model. This study will explore about youth lifestyles and networking, cultural beliefs of youth related to

sexual health risks prevention and condom use, and gender inequality in youth sexuality.

The first concept uses the Ruth Dixon Mueller Model, that is adolescent's perception of sexuality in terms of sexual meanings and partnerships related to unsafe sexual practices leading to sexual and reproductive issues. Gender differentiation among the young people exists, in which enjoyment, fun, curiosity and rite of passage to adulthood is the sexual meanings for male youths leading toward unsafe sex. On the other hand, love, trust, attraction and the hope to get married with their partners are the sexual meanings for the females engaging in this behavior. These gender power disparities and different perceptions affect the sexual meanings and partnerships of the youth and influence their unsafe sexual practices resulting in the negative consequences of sexual and reproductive health among the youth.

Secondly, changes of youth culture and their life styles due to social changes can be assumed to influence their sexual practices leading to unsafe sex causing sexual and reproductive health problems.

Lastly, cultural beliefs related to STI/HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancy prevention and condom use among the youth and within their community. This factor can influence the perception and belief of youth related to their sexuality and unsafe sexual practices.

Within this framework, the factors influencing the problem of unsafe sex during social changes are interrelated each other and strongly affect the outcomes of unsafe sexual behaviors among youth.

Operational Definition of variables

Youth or young people

This study will use the WHO(1986) definition of young people which is defined as people aged of between 15 and 24 years which the critical period change from childhood to adulthood which can influence the well-being of his or her future life (WHO, 1997).

Sexual partnership

This refers to the number of sexual partners at present and also in the past, duration and social identity of the sexual partner. It also includes the nature of the relationship in terms of boyfriend/ girlfriend, CSWs, colleagues or others, and the conditions of partner selection and change.

Sexual meanings

This refers to the meaning person gives to their sexual practices and relationships.

Peer identity

The individual's own definition of being a youth based on their perception of cultural role expectation from their youth group including sense of belonging to their youth group.

Unsafe sex

This refers to sexual acts without using condom, intermittent and irregular use of condom, multiple partners and coercive or forced sex.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Design

This is a qualitative and case study approach to explore the life styles, sexual meanings and cultural beliefs related to sex practices of selected youth workers in one peri-urban area of Yangon, the capital of Myanmar. Qualitative methods of data collection were used to explore the real situation of sexual practices among the youth; this study was used to gain in-depth information and insight into unsafe sexual practices in the context of youth lifestyles, their own meanings and beliefs related to these practices.

The focus group discussion method was used to explore the general information of youth lifestyles, sexual meanings and beliefs on STI/HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancy and condom use. The in-depth interview method was used to explore the real pictures and their inner feeling of gender differences in sexual meanings and partnerships, youth lifestyles, perception on sexual health risks prevention and perception on condom use from emic view.

Non-participatory observation was also done to study the socio-economic status of the youth and their families, the atmosphere between the youth and their community, life styles and working condition of the youth to support the in-depth interview findings.

3.2 Study site

The area selected for study is a peri-urban area of Yangon, the capital of Myanmar, which is 20 km distance from the down town area. In this area, most of the population have moved from other places such as another provinces and other slum areas near Yangon.

They came to stay the studied area to study and also to work in the private sector such as factories, karaoke bars and similar low income employment. Some of them with their families, some stay in rented houses with their friends or colleagues and

some stay in factory hostels. Some of them are studying in University as part time students and also working. Some are out-of-school youth working in private sectors. Some of them are jobless and staying with their friends and spend their times in teashops, video parlor and karaoke clubs.

In addition to this, this area is industrial zone and economically active which attract the young people from the rural areas to work and earn money, and also study as part-time students. The accommodations in this area are comparatively cheap and it is very easy to go and work in downtown area of Yangon.

None of the youth workers have health insurance and sex education program in their work places are lacking. Video parlors and karaoke clubs are the main sources of entertainment for these young people in their leisure times and provide a chance for social and also sexual networking. The young people can make sexual contacts with entertainment girls in some karaoke clubs. In this context, most of the youth are at-risk to engage in unsafe sexual practices without knowledge of the sexual and reproductive health issues.

Therefore, this study is designed to explore their real situation concerning their sexuality from a gender perspective and their lifestyles. Furthermore, the study will design an integrated sexual and reproductive health program for adolescents.

3.3 Studied Target Group and Recruitment Process

3.3.1 The studied target group

The sample was male and female youth between the ages of 17-24 years with which majority out- school and working in factories and businesses, only three youth were part-time students at Distant University. All were staying in a peri-urban area of Yangon, Myanmar and had moved from slum areas of Yangon or other provinces. This group were selected for the study because the youth are sexually active and are economically independent because they were working.

Altogether eleven female, twelve male and six male homosexual youth were selected voluntarily chose to participate in focus group discussions with informal talks were followed to build the trust and friendship. Five boys and three girls of the focus group participants were asked to participate in in-depth interviews to share their

experiences concerning sexual practices. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used in this study to find respondents who wanted to share their experiences voluntarily. The steps outlined below were followed.

3.3.2 Criteria and Recruitment Process

Sampling Criteria

The respondents were both male and female youth between the ages of 17-24 who have experience of sexual exposure without using condoms, irregular and intermittent condom use, those who have had multiple partners, and those who have had history of sexual health problems such as unwanted pregnancy, and STI/HIV/AIDS.

Entering the research field

The very first step is contacting resource persons who conduct social research on HIV/ AIDS prevention among the youth in the area, youth peer educators and the managers and supervisors from the private businesses.

The researcher made appointment with supervisors and researcher officers who were conducting social research on HIV/ AIDS prevention among the youth in the area, gave the research proposal to them and discussed the preparation and work plan. The supervisors provided a very good network of Youth Peer Educators (YPEs) from the field site. YPEs were working for an HIV/AIDS prevention project and two of them worked for an Adolescent Reproductive Health Project of the Myanmar Red Cross Society.

Recruitment of youth peer educators and male interview assistant

The researcher met the YPEs and discussed her work plan, research objectives, possible respondents and the best ways to approach them in the proposed study area. YPEs in this area were well experienced and they have a good networking with the respondents needed for this research. The researcher explained to the YPEs about the research.

The researcher herself conducted Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with male youth, some of the respondents were reluctant to share their knowledge and information. In order to make male respondents feel comfortable male interview assistant was responsible for male respondents. Male interview assistant, Nyo Aung worked a research assistant from Department of Medical Research was working on an HIV/AIDS study in the research area and was interested to participate in the study.

The researcher explained the objectives and interview guidelines of the study to male interview assistant and conducted on the job training by performing an interview with the male respondent who was recruited from FGDs. The duration of the interview was approximately only one hour and male interviewer thought that he did not get any information from the respondent. The researcher gave feedback to the interviewer and asked the male respondent about this feeling while being interviewed.

The male respondent wanted to speak openly but was reluctant to reveal his secret personal matters. The male interviewer was very fast to change questions and could not wait for answer so the respondent did not have chance to answer the previous question properly. Eventually, he felt uncomfortable with the interviewer and stopped the interview.

The male interviewer was given feedback and accepted the respondent's complaints and admitted his excitement. He was able to perform future interviews combining the lessons learned from this time. He later conducted nine in-depth interviews with male youths and the researcher performed follow-up interviews after reviewing the transcripts.

3.3.3 Approaching the Informants

YPEs already have clients who have experience of STIs, HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancies. They worked in Adolescent Reproductive Health Project of the Myanmar Red Cross Society for two years. The project finished six months before this research. They have performed FGD for both males and females people aged 15 to 24 and they referred some youth clients with experience of STI, HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancies to the project's clinics. Prior to this, they discussed the project with these clients to determine if they would help the study or not.

Youth were approached by YPEs and existing respondents to see if they were interested to share their experiences of youth lifestyles and associated sexual practices. Those who were interested were asked to participate in this project.

A preliminary FGD was performed as a first step of this study so the researcher could observe the situation of the respondents and to plan how to approach them smoothly.

3.4 Methods of data collection

The period of data collection was from first week of July to the end of October. To fulfill the objectives of the study, multiple methods of data collection were used including focus group discussions, non-participant observations and interviews.

3.4.1 Non-participant Observation

For the very first step, the researcher visited the research site and observed how the youth spent their leisure time, where they spent it, with whom, with same sex or opposite sex, in groups or in couple. Observations were also made of the living arrangements and relationships among their peer groups.

Observation and preparation were done at the same times and the researcher visited the places where the youth meet their friends, spend their time and enjoy life. Observation was done up to the end of data collection period because the researcher could observe their activities by going with the youth during the data collection period.

The researcher went respondents to the places they visited, such as cinemas, parks, temples, tea shops, beer stations, some lover's lanes and popular quiet place surrounding a big lake in the research area. The socio-economic status of the youth and their families, the atmosphere between the youth and their community, life styles and working conditions of the youth were bserved to support the findings of the in-depth interviews.

Trust building and informal talks

The researcher met with the youth, introduced herself and talked informally with the youth in the area in tea shops, beer stations, work places and at their homes or

dormitories through the help of YPEs, factory supervisor and youth leaders. The researcher explained the aims and objectives of study and tried to build good rapport with the youths.

3.4.2 Focus Group Discussion

There were five sets of focus groups based on whether they were male, female or male homosexuals to explore their own opinion of the youth concerning with lifestyle, sexual meanings and cultural beliefs about STI/ HIV/ AIDS & unwanted pregnancy and condom use. Six participants participated for two male, one male homosexual and one female group in each section and five participated in one female group. Each discussion lasted for round about 2 hours.

It was difficult to meet the participants at the same time because they all worked long hours and their free time did not coincide because they at they worked day and night shifts. In addition, they have one holiday in the entire month. The researcher tried to conduct interviews in the late afternoon after the respondents finished working hours however; this was not convenient for them as they were all tired after working long hours.

Interviews were conducted in places of their choice such as houses in which no one was there at that time, tea shops which were used to spend their time by these respondents, a big park and a quiet place near a big lake. At the tea shops and quiet places, observation were made to provide a picture of youth spending their time in these places with their friends or their lovers.

As a part of the interview the researcher explained the reasons for the study of their lifestyles, their cultural beliefs and their perceptions about reproductive problems, and the perception on using condoms.

A research officer in the Department of Medical Research, who had experiences as a moderator in many focus group discussions, acted as the FGD moderator. One research assistant and one YPE served as note takers. the researcher arranged for tape recordings and logistically support throughout the FGD.

The researcher carefully observed the behaviors of the participants and these were noted down. Possible respondents for in-depth interviews were also selected. Three FGDs, two of girls and one of boys, were conducted in empty houses provided

by the Youth Peer Educators. One FGD of boys was done in a quiet place near a big lake. An FGD with male homosexuals was conducted in their work place (a beauty saloon) while their customers were not present.

Refreshments were provided to all the participants. The moderators tried to lead the discussion to satisfy the objectives of the study and tried to overcome the influence of one or two participants.

3.4.3 In-depth interviews

The respondents were female and male youths with experience of unsafe sexual practices, that is having sex without using condoms, intermittent or irregular condom use having multiple sexual partners. Five boys and three girls who participated in the FGDs were requested to participate in in-depth interviews to share their experiences.

In-depth interviews were conducted at their preferable places and houses so that the researcher had a chance to observe their houses, the atmosphere of the neighbors and also their lifestyles. Five girls were interviewed at quiet coffee bars and six boys were interviewed at tea shops which they preferred and because our conversation would not be disturbed. The others were interviewed at their houses when other family members were working. Interviews with two girls and three boys were performed at quiet place near a big lake.

Firstly, the researcher talked about sexual and reproductive health issues and requested them to explore their needs and problems. Secondly, informed consent was asked from the respondents related to the objectives of the interviews. After that, their followed informal talk to build friendship and rapport with the respondents. The researcher to share her own experiences related to sexual practices and explained to the youth how to cope with these problems and to overcome them.

During the conversation, notes were taken and the whole conversation was recorded. Only one female respondent did not want to be recorded on tape so note taking was taken and written up as the field notes after the conversation. Each interview took about 2 to 3 hours.

In follow-up meeting, the main points were asked again to validate the data and the main ideas were explored more in depth. Meeting with each respondent occurred at least twice so as to become more friendly and to get as much data as possible.

3.4.4 Key informant interviews

Key informants were two YPEs working for the Adolescent Reproductive Health Project of the Myanmar Red Cross and two working for ongoing HIV/ AIDS project of the Department of Medical Research (Lower Myanmar). Key informant interviews were conducted with two medical doctors who are self employed as family health care doctors in their private clinics and also with one community member.

3.5 Data processing and analysis

Data analysis was done manually during data collection in the field. Field notes were written up from the data collected from observation. Field notes and records were kept of the informal talks, in-depth interviews and key informant interviews and reviewed daily. All the tape recordings were listened to on the night of the interview and transcribed Myanmar language. After that, field note was written up by reviewing the transcript and short notes from the field.

The transcripts of interview notes and tape recordings were reviewed and checked in order not to miss anything. Everytime a particular respondent was interviewed the data were checked with earlier data to ensure consistency.

The collected data was open-coded for all cases and all information related to the research questions. After that, the coded data was sorted according to the main theme of the study. Reviewing and quoting of the original information will be done in the analysis.

3.5.1 Content analysis

The main theoretical concepts of this study relate to youth lifestyles, gender differences in sexual meanings, and partnerships related to various sexual practices among the selected youth. These are linked to cultural beliefs and perceptions of sexual health risk prevention and perceptions about condom use and their influence on the sexual practices of the youth.

Sexual meanings and partnerships were socially and culturally constructed withing the group but also influenced by external factors. Youth lifestyles and peer pressure were influenced by the external factors which in turn influenced sexual

meanings and partnerships which, again, in turn the sexual practices among the youth. The cultural beliefs about unintended pregnancy and STI/ HIV/ AIDS prevention and condom use were assumed to be embedded in the youth life styles, gender differences in sexual practices and meanings. These cultural beliefs also influenced the sexual practices of the youth.

The above mentioned theoretical concepts will be analyzed by using case studies and the life stories of the informants.

3.5.2 Validity of data

To get valid information data were collected through focus groups, informal talks, in-depth interviews and key informants interviews. The collected data was triangulated to check its validity. At least two in-depth interviews were conducted with each respondent as a further way to validate the data.

The researcher introduced herself as a student and a researcher, dress and behaved similar to the youth in order to reduce but age and position differences. Some of the female respondents were reluctant to talk with the researcher because she was much older than them. The researcher tried to overcome this by behaving as their friend by talking about romantic movies and sharing her own experiences.

The researcher explained that she had youth experiences like the respondents and also understood the youth's feelings and experience. The researcher also explained the ways to overcome these situations. Finally, she told them she was a medical doctor so she was willing to listen to the respondents' reproductive health problems. She also tried to help them when the respondents were found to have some reproductive health problems by prescribing or giving drugs and, by referring them to youth friendly clinics.

After establishing good rapport with the respondents, they explored feelings and experiences concerning their sexual practices and also their social and family problems. In this situation, the researcher listened and discussed with them how to solve these problems, and tried to solve problems by giving advices and financial support.

The researcher tried to validate the information by conducting a second time of interviews with the same respondents. All the interviewed respondents were willing to

meet and talk with researcher for a second time so researcher could validate the information from the first interview.

3.6 Ethical consideration

Confidentiality

Since this study was very sensitive, the identification of study area and the name and workplaces of the respondents must be confidential. All data were guaranteed to be safe, private and confidential. All the data and tapes were destroyed after the analysis and report writing.

Informed consent

Informed consent of the respondents was obtained by the researcher after explaining the aim and objectives of this study so that the respondents participated voluntarily. The consent was also asked from the in-depth interviewees. The researcher worked with the female respondents and a male interview assistant with the male youth.

One young woman interviewed did not allow the researcher to record her conversation so the researcher had to write down the conversation.

Privacy

All the in-depth interview process were done as one to one interviews and privately according to the preferences of respondents. The interview places were kept private. During the non-participant observation, the researcher just observed the youth and their activities in their area, work places and leisure places and never tried to close to and disturb them.

Benefit and reciprocity

The researcher being a medical doctor was consulted by some respondents who suffered RH problems and information concerning available medical services as given. The researcher also listened their complaints about their RH problems and provided necessary drugs and referral for the informants.

Information related to sexual and reproductive health was provided so as to empower the youth to be more confident to explore their own practices. The researcher also tried to motivate the respondents by giving advice and contacts concerning with their jobs, and giving financial support to encourage them. Small gifts and cash were given to the informants to compensate them for their time taken by the interviews.

3.7 Methodological Limitation

The sexuality study among youth is very sensitive, so there are a number of limitations related to this study that are described below.

The sensitivities were different between young men and young women. Young men wanted to exaggerated their experiences and exposure. Young women very reluctant to talk about their sexual matters so that some of them tried to hide. One female respondent tried to hide in the Focus- Group Discussion and was assumed to do so in the In-depth Interview. These forms of biased responses shade the reliability and validity of the data.

Most of the respondents in the study were recruited through the Youth Peer Educators in this studied area so that some information concerning their beliefs and knowledge about condom and reproductive health problems, was biased by their previous personal relations and and they tried to discuss to their best with is knowledge.

The researcher tried to validate the data of in-depth interviews by repeated interviews in a different way, and thus made the respondents uncomfortable and annoyed. This in turn may affect the validity and reliability of the data.

The information from focus group discussion could be biased because of the settings and the relationship of the participants of FGD. Some of them were very close to each other and they did not want to explore their friends' experiences concerning sexual matters. On the other hand, some of them were very strangers to each other so they did not want to explore their own group in this situation.

The interviews took a long time to cover all the themes in the proposal, so most of the respondents were uncomfortable with a long conversation with the researcher who was an older stranger. This may affect the validity and reliability of the data.

Due to the length of the interviews, some important information could have been missed because of some unexpected interruptions or because the interviews had to be stop due to time limitation on the respondents' side.

The guidelines for the focus group discussion were pretested on two groups to detect obstacles to gather the respondents and time limitations because the respondents were working. The in-depth interview guidelines were designed by the researcher and performed to the respondents to avoid too much invasion of privacy. Both activities are assumed to be uncomfortable for the respondents because the interviewer did not have enough time for proper preparation.

Finally, the sample size is very small and cannot account for the life styles, sexuality and sexual practices of all youth residing and working in area studied. In the same way, sexuality and sexual practices are very sensitive and rely on the wide socio-cultural perspectives which cannot be generalized by the results of the study.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Geographical and Demographic Characteristics of Study Area

Malee*, the study site is located in the peri-urban area of Yangon surrounded by H*, I* , M* and HB* Townships to the north, south, east and west. The area is 15.21 square mile and includes 27 wards¹ and 5 villages. It has a total population of 200514 divided into 99428 men and 101086 women. The majority of the population is Bammar, Buddhist with a minority of believers are Islam. There are 33272 residential houses and 34378 households. The township is a newly developed satellite township in which a lot of active industries are located.

The population between the age of 15 to 24 years comprises 25% of the total. The three categories of youth in this area are students, full time and part-time workers and people who are neither students nor workers. Youth lifestyle and activities can be divided into two, routinely daily activities and activities those related to special occasions.

There is one township hospital with 100 beds, one urban health center, one rural health center, one maternal and child health center, and one school health program. Within the township, there are non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association (MMCWA), the Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS), the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA). They work with the Ministry of Health and Department of Health to provide health care services. There are private clinics and some of them provided reproductive health services in collaboration with an International NGO (Population Services International). There are 47 primary schools, 3 middle schools and 4 high schools, and they follow the school health program conducted by the Department of Health. There are two universities and one technical college in this area.

¹ * Initials are used to call township and places (i.e lakes, public park as well as person being interviewed in order to cover the real name of the places and persons to be identified.

The industrial zones and water transportation facilities are located along the Hlaing River. There are approximately one hundred factories (small and medium) in the area and 12 public bus lines run through the crowded areas, industrial zones and markets in the township. The study site is about one and a half hours drive from the Yangon downtown and can also be reached by train. Since the area is quite close to the downtown area, the Yangon lifestyle is easily transmitted to the township. This includes the lifestyles and behaviors of the youth.

There are many places for the youth to spend their leisure time. There are many teashops, beer stations, karaoke lounges, guesthouses, quiet places such as big public park, city temple compound and places near a big lake. There are a number of brothels.

4.1.1 Routine daily activities of the youth in Malee Township

Most of the young men in the study spend their mornings chatting till noon at the teashops (La-phet yay saing htiang da). However, working youth do not sit and chat since they need to be on time at work. The teashop is a free meeting place for talking and chatting. The chatting concerns matters related to the previous days activities, football matches, last night drinking experiences, dating with girlfriends, gambling and commercial sex. Playing snooker and TV games are popular among the youth to kill their spare time.

For the employed youth, work usually begins at 8 am and finishes between 4 pm and 7 pm. Most of the employed youth go to work in the downtown area of Yangon or in factories within the same township. Some of the youth work in their family's small businesses, such as betel shops, grocery shops, green grocery shops and small food shops.

In the evening, the youth come back from their work places and factories between 5:00 and 10:00 pm depending upon the type and place of their work.. Most of the young men join their groups at the tea shops and talk about their daily experiences. Some drink beer and alcohol with their friends and then sometimes have commercial sex when they have enough money. The meeting places for commercial sex are guest houses, quiet lanes, empty houses and some places in the industrial zone. Going back

home is a necessity for the youth who live with their parents. Some of the working youth also work overtime at night in their work sites and factories for extra money.

The majority of the girls come back from their work between 5:00 and 8:00 pm. Some girls take a bath, have their dinner, walk around with their boyfriends and watch videos in video parlors. Some of the girls work at night for over time. Some meet their boyfriends and chat with their friends instead of going to work. Some stay at home after coming back from work.

Youth activities during the weekends take place in a big green park* (green area with big lake), quiet places* and also a big public park* located next to this township. Tad* is a very quiet place near a big lake and with a big forest around it. It is a good place to date and spend leisure time for the youth in groups and is also a famous meeting place for couples.

There are a number of quiet places* which are a little bit far from the crowded area of this township. Another big park is located nearby the township has well known places that youth normally go to for their leisure activities. There are a lot of couples who visit these places with their friends, or to meet and date each other. Some of the youth tease the couples but some go to work as over time.

Most of the youth join traditional festivals such as the Water festival locally known as the Thingyan festival. Drinking alcohol and beer become a common practice nowadays especially for the boys. Some girls drink alcohol and beer during these festivals. A lot of girls wear very fashionable tight jeans and blouses. Most of the youth can go out freely with their friends and peer group for the whole day and at night during these special occasions.

4.2 Socio-economic Characteristics of the Informants

Table : 1 Characteristic of Interviewed Male Respondents

No	Age	Education	Occupation	Living arrangement
1.	24	Primary	Bus conductor	Uncle
2.	22	Secondary	Bus conductor	grandparents
3.	24	Secondary	Food factory	Parents
4.	21	2 nd yr University student	Garment factory	Grandma
5.	22	1 st year University student	Karaoke operator	Parents
6.	24	Secondary	Bus conductor	Divorced Mother
7.	22	3 rd yr University student	Garment factory	Grandparents
8.	21	Secondary	Repellent factory	Grandparents
9.	20	Secondary	Green grocer	Divorced mother
10.	23	Primary	Mill factory	Parents and other families
11.	20	Primary	Noodle seller	Parents with extended family

Table 2: Characteristics of Interviewed Female Respondents

No	Age	Education	Occupation	Living arrangement
1.	19	Primary	Betel shopkeeper	Boyfriend
2.	20	Primary	Club girl	Female friends
3.	24	Secondary	Club girl	Divorced Mother
4.	17	Secondary	Garment factory	Aunts and uncles
5.	21	Secondary	Garment factory	Aunt
6.	24	Secondary	Wood factory	Adopted mother
7.	18	Primary	Wool factory	Parents
8.	22	University student	Food factory	Parents
9.	18	Secondary	Printing factory	Hostel
10.	24	Secondary	Garment factory	Divorced Mother

4.2.1 Characteristics of Informants

The age of the respondents ranged from 17 to 24 years with an average of 22 years for the boys and 21 years for the girls. According to the interviews (one young man and two young women) had been married but they are single at present.

Most of the youth in the study come from low income families. The majority of the youth in the study area belongs to families who have migrated to this township from other areas of Yangon or other provinces because of their economic and financial situations. A lot of landless families were moved from the urban slum areas of Yangon to this township as a developmental scheme.

The whole family has to work hard in order to meet the demands of the family. Even though all the respondents in the study are working, their incomes are very low as most of them have limited education and experiences. Very few of them could contribute towards some of their families' expenses and most of them could not even get enough to meet their own expenses. They have to ask money from their families because their income is not enough. Most of the youth especially girls have very low income ranging from 4000 to 8000kyats (\$4-\$8 per month).

Most of their families needed contributions from every family member in order to meet the demands of for the family daily basic needs. This is a pressure for most of the youth in the study. Earning money not only for themselves but also for the family was an urgent matter. They worried that if they could not contribute towards the family expenses, other family members may blame or look down upon them since they were already grown up and mature.

Some of the respondents in the FGDs were temporary migrants from the rural area and stayed either in the factory hostel or with relatives. Most of their families also had very low incomes and all had moved to work in this area to get a better income and in the hope of a brighter future. Their main intention was to contribute some of their earnings to their families.

4.2.2 Family background and Living arrangement

The majority of the youth in the study come from unstable families, some with half parents and some with families that have separated. Some of the respondents had to stay in extended families due to economic conditions. Most of their parents were

divorced or a single mother who have a very low income. Most of the families have to stay together with their relatives under the same roof. Some of the boys and girls have lived apart from their mothers or fathers for a long time for various reasons. The instability of their families is mainly due to financial problems, family crises, parents' work and attachment to their grandparents.

There are five different categories of living arrangements in this study.

Firstly, some of the youth staying with their parents have some restriction on going out. They are however; free to go out as they work outside for long hours. The second group stay with their single separated parents who cannot control them resulting in more chance to go out when compared to youth living with both parents.

The third group stays with their grandparents and relatives because of family crises, separated parents and working in this area. The youth staying with their grandparents, have more freedom as grand parents love them and pamper them. Grand parents indulge them because they think that they are away from their parents and they should get what they want. The fourth group, of which the majorities are girls, stay with relatives and say that they are under stress because of the financial and social pressure of the relatives.

The last group of youth stays in hostels of which there are two different types. One is factory hostel, which is a hall type place where many people live and sleep together. Only same sex people are allowed to stay and it is usually provided by the factory in which they work. But there is no privacy for individuals. They cannot cook in the room but the hostel provides food. There are certain rules that have to be followed. They cannot go out after 7 pm at night. They are free to go out on holidays but are still subject to a curfew. No visitors are allowed to come in to the room but if you have a visitor you can meet in the common lobby.

Another arrangement is youth staying in rented houses with their friends. This, as the respondents said, is the freest type of living arrangements. A group of youth of the same sex rent a room for from 3000 to 10000 kyats and they share the expenses equally. They are free to go out as they wish and no one will restrict them and they can also do anything they want.

Some houses are empty and the owner (some of the informant's parents) go away to work in other provinces and some houses are not empty but the whole family go

out to work all the day. The whole family come back home in the evening and they have to leave for work in the early morning.

4.2.3 Occupation and Educational background

Most of the respondents have a limited education. Only three boys and one girl are university students. Two boys and three girls had passed primary education and the others had passed secondary education. They left school for various reasons such as no support for studying, or family problems, such as dispute between parents, or divorced or widowed mother who could no longer bear the expenses for their education.

All the respondents worked in private factories, small businesses or for government. The majority of them work in factories and four of them were also studying as part-time university students at University of Distant Education.

The duration of working experiences ranged from six months to six years. The majority of the girls worked in garment factories producing soap or food. There were two persons working in transportation (one is a bus sparer and another is a bus driver) and one young man and two young women worked in Karaoke clubs.

4.3 Youth Lifestyle

Youth lifestyle in Myanmar changin in response to the changing economy, hopes of higher level of education, meet the need to rising living costs, hopes to improve their living status, and to fulfill the desires of a materialistic life. In this community, all respondents in this study worked outside their homes, some worked in factories and some in private business in the industrial zone.

The lifestyle of the youth studied was mainly involved the living and working arrangement, leisure activities and places, alcohol and drug consumption, and peer identity and pressure. These were included to explore the youth lifestyle related to the particular sexual practices among the youth.

4.3.1 Living Arrangement

Living arrangements play an important role in the youth's life. This can be organized in terms of family structure, interaction within the family, degree of

freedom to go out, problems in adaptation to stay, reasons to work outside and neighborhood atmosphere.

4.3.1.1 Family structure

Most of the youth in the study are from low income families. The majority of the youth in the study belong to families who had migrated to this township from slum areas of Yangon and other provinces because of their economic and financial situation. A lot of landless families were moved from the urban slum areas of Yangon to this township as a developmental scheme.

The whole family has to work hard to meet the demands of the family. Even though all the respondents in the study were working, their income was very low as most of them have limited education and experiences. Some could contribute a certain amount to their family expenses but some of them could not even get enough for their own expenses.

Most of the youth, especially girls, have very low income ranging from 4000 to 8000kyats (US\$4-8) per month. Most of their families needed contribution from every member of the family in order to meet the demand of daily basic family needs. This was the pressure for most of the youth in the study. Earning money not only for themselves but also for the family was an urgent need. They were worried that if they could contribute to the family expenses other family members may blame or look down upon them as they are already grown up and mature.

Some of the young women respondents in the focus group discussions were temporary migrants from the rural area and some stayed in the factory hostel while some stayed with their relatives. Most of their families had very low incomes and they all moved to the studied site a better to get income and with hope for a brighter future. Their main intention was to contribute some of their earnings to their families.

4.3.1.2 Interaction within the family

Interaction within the family included missing one of the parents and the burden of siblings within the youths' families. Although all the respondents in this study work in the factories and private business, most of them (seventeen

respondents) stay with their families and relatives. Four out of 21 interviewed respondents stayed in the hostels outside of the factories and away from their families.

The characteristics of the families of the youths studied were poor, working class and unstable, the families in this study differed markedly from the traditional Myanmar family. Traditionally, both parents give attention, love and affection to all their children under close supervision, whereby the father is a breadwinner and the mother stays at home while those under the age of 18 either go to school or work.

Absent Parents

The majority of the parents (father or mother) of the youth studied were absent from the family since they had either suffered from chronic diseases or alcoholism or had already died of various unknown causes. Most of these parents belong to the working class and earned a low income since they had to work full-time, part-time and self-employed in skilled or manual labor. The income of the parents ranged from 4,000 – 20,000 Kyats per month (US\$4 – 20) depending on the individual skill and nature of the work.

Findings from the in-depth interviews showed that, the absence of one or both parents both lead to the negative social, mental and financial consequences for the family and often resulted in psychological trauma, thereby losing hope and ambition for the youth.

This instability of the family provoked the youth, especially young women, to work outside the family in jobs needing limited physical, mental and educational skills.

Lay, 20 years old young women said: *“My father who could not work very well and suffered from chronic Asthma, and my mother was pregnant which was overdue for 2 months and baby was died in the uterus. The doctor said that my mother would die if she was not hospitalized. I was only 15 years old and dropped out from school at Grade 6. I just got only 200 kyats (20 cents) by working as manual labor in construction site. I had to work and I cooked at home for my families, feeding my siblings, sending lunch box to my mother in the hospital and taking care of my father. I started my working life”*

Thu, 24 years old young woman explored her life: *“My father left our family to have minor wife so my mother was suffered from social, psychological and economical complication. My mother worked as washer in this area but income was not enough for our family so I decided to work”*

Most of the young women in this study came from the unstable families and were exposed to the outside world in spite of being young and school going age and with limited knowledge and social experiences.

This information was obtained from interviews of young women from unstable families. None of the young men in this study faced such problems even though they also came from the unstable families. This was a difference between the young men and young women in this study related to their family structure.

Most of the interviewed young men tried to find a way to avoid these family burdens by staying with their well-to-do grandparents, by going out to work and joining with their peers out of their work times and coming home only to sleep.

In addition to this, the instability of the family and absence of one of the parents means less chance to get love, affection and supervision from the parents in times of need. The young women in this study did not get any attention and affection not only from their parents but also from their relatives.

On the other hand, the young men obtained a lot of affection from their grandparents being pited as children of unstable families. In stead of using this opportunity the right way, these young men used it the wrong way and took advantage of their grandparents's love by going out anytime for any reason and freely spending their income.

The youth who stayed outside their families and relied on their peers and friends develop peer networks and activities.

Burden of Siblings

Most of the youth in this study come from unstable and poor families. The interviewed youth have large family with 4 to 6 siblings who are the responsibility of only one parent (mother) so they would be expected to contribute their family's expenses. This would initiate serious conflicts among the siblings especially brothers and sisters thereby forcing the youth to work outside their homes. Moreover, in this

study, these burdens were shouldered by the young women because of the irresponsible male siblings.

20 years old women, Da explored her experience with her older brother: *“My father died of chronic respiratory disease when my mother was hospitalized. At that time, my elder brother used to drink everyday and he did not give money for the family so I had to work outside.”*

One interviewed young woman reported that she was unhappy in her relationships with her siblings, because of the economic and financial problems she faced.

A 19 years old women, Khin said: *“I was unhappy at home because I used to fight with my elder brothers and sisters because they gave pressure to me and they looked down me so I decided to work outside”.*

Two of the interviewed young women stayed with their parents and with their siblings' families. This living situation was a burden for the youth and make them unhappy and uncomfortable to stay at home and forced them to go out to work and join their peer group to solve their economic and mental problems.

Absence parents and/or the burden of sibling responsibility it can be concluded is what forced the young women who were studied to go outside to work or to join with their peers to get close relationships.

4.3.1.3 Resettlement and problems in Adaptation

Most of the respondents moved from slum areas within Yangon and other provinces due to the family's economy, parent's occupation, family or problems forced them to work. Seven landless families moved from the slum areas of Yangon to this new area which is still in the early stage of development.

They were not happy to move because they had to face a new social environment. Being a development area, they all tried to adapt to the problems of transportation, communications, electricity and housing arrangements.

Some of them lost their existing jobs when they had to move to this area and they had to manage and adapt to a new work. The whole family had to work hard in order to meet the demands of the family expenses in this area. Even though all the respondents in the study were working, their incomes are very low as most of them

have limited education and experiences. Some of them could contribute a certain amount for their family expenses but most of them could not earn enough to meet their own expenses.

Most of the families needed contributions from every member of the family in order to meet the demand of daily basic family needs. This is a pressure for most of the youth in the study. Earning money not only for themselves but also for the family is essential. They were also worried about the fact of not contributing towards the family expenses since other family members may blame or look down upon them as they are already grown up and matured.

Other people in the studied area moved from the provinces. Some of them moved with their families and some moved alone to stay in factory hostels, outside hostels or their relative houses. They also were not happy to move to this area and to adapt to the new urban social and industrial working environment which was very different from the social working environment of their original areas.

They had very close community relationships in their old area since they had stayed for long time and work comfortably using their own expertise. However, in this area, they had to stay away from their families, had limited time to relax and had to work hard in this industrial working environment with its long working hours. This was a big burden for the youth working and staying in this area.

It was due to the economic situation, family difficulties and social problems, that most of the respondents were unhappy to move here. This was assumed to be due to unexpected and frequent changes of their homes, moving from cheaper to cheaper living arrangements in which their social environment also changed.

Another problem was concerning friendship with their peers. They left their old friends in their old homes and the newer friends in this area provided, less opportunities to talk over their problems, and to share their feelings and thoughts. There was also less understanding between each other and they could not find deep levels of trust.

A 22 year old woman, La* said: *“I was unhappy when I just moved to here because absence of my old friends. After sometimes, I felt happy joining with many new friends here.”*

A 21 years old man, Ag explored his feeling: *“I felt boring when I moved here and after a while, it was relieved by getting many friends”*

The way to solve these problems was to adapt to the new situation, by joining with a new peer group and making new friends in the area and also in the workplace. This peer network could lead the youth to join group activities in their leisure time and to develop new interests and strategies for their lives.

4.3.1.4 Reasons to work outside

The youth in this study entered the workforce for the above mentioned reasons such as family economy, structure and family interaction, and problems of surviving in this area. In addition to this, some respondents work in the factories and private businesses for their own economy, their independency and to go outside of their home.

The in-depth interview found that six out of ten of the young women interviewed and were working and were the main financial support for the household because they were staying with their single mothers as their father were absent from the families. Some young women reported that their fathers left their family for new marriages and they were not supported from that time so they worked in the factories to help their mothers by contributing to the family expenses.

One young woman, the second daughter, whose father died of severe respiratory disease mentioned that she had to work in the factory to support her widowed mother and four younger siblings. Her elder brother did not take responsibility for the family so she left the factory to work in night club.

A young woman who moved from another province to work in this area revealed that she worked in the factory to support her four younger siblings since both of her parents passed away one year ago. A young woman said that she supported her separated mother because her drunken father could not contribute to family's expenses. Another young woman was working to support her adopted divorced mother who had a 12 year old daughter and her income was the main financial support for the household.

A 21 years old woman, Phi said: *“Both of my parents passed away when I was in Grade 9 so no one could take care of our family. I dropped out from the school and*

moved to here to work in the factory. I worked to support my grandmother and my four younger siblings.”

Some of the young women interviewed worked to contribute only a part of their family expenses. Some of them were working in a factory to contribute towards their family expenses because of reduction in their parents' income. A young woman, whose parents had divorced when she was young, was unhappy to stay at home because of the relationship with her relatives (aunts and uncles). This provoked her to work in a factory and earn money independently as she was old enough to work.

A 17 years old woman, Mar working in a garment factory said: *“I stayed with my aunts and uncles as my parents were divorced since I was young (10 years old). My uncle blamed me for whatever I did although I had cooked for them every day. So, I did not want to stay at home and worked in the”*

None of young men interviewed supported household expenses as a main source and eight interviewed young men partly supported their family expenses and three interviewed young men did not contribute at all.

Young men raised in unstable families in which one or both of their parents were absent, needed to work outside mainly for their financial independence and their own livelihood. They only support their family to some extent.

A 22 year old young man, Min said: *“My parents divorced long times ago and my grandparents raised me. Now, my grandparents are already old and I don't want to stay with both of my parents' families (step-father and step-mother) so I have to work to be independent by myself.”*

When the youth joined the work environment they were exposed to the outside environment rather than within the family. It could provoke the youth to move away from the family where they had more chance to learn gain new interests through their peer network and other social relationships in the workplace.

4.3.1.5 Degree of freedom to go out

There are four different categories of freedom to go out lifestyle in this study.

Youth staying together with their parents but have some restrictions on youth activities but still free to go out.

There are five respondents staying with their parents who tried to restrict their activities such as going out times and going out with one of the family members with a very close friend. However, they are still free to go out as they were working outside the house and their parents already trust whatever they do.

“My father asked me to sleep in time and get up early in the morning. He often checks my working hours to my workplace by phone and also checks my bag frequently. My father controls me to some extent.” (22 years old young man)

“I could go out whenever my friends picked me up at home” (22 years old university students young women working in food factory)

Youth whose parents are not good enough to look after because of their jobs, social problems and family crisis

These youth are restricted to a lesser extent than youth living with both parents. Five youth from the in-depth interviews are in this group. Their parents are single or separated, working away from home, or are experiencing social and financial crises. These youth are freer to go out as their parents cannot keep them under their eyes.

“I stay with my parents but they go out to work all the day so I feel free to stay and go outside” (24 years old young men working in food factory)

Youth staying with their grandparents and relatives

The respondents who stay with their relatives (uncles, aunts and grandparents) suffer positive and negative consequences. There are eight young men staying with their grandparents and relatives who are freer to go out as the grandparents love them and pamper them. Grandparents also consider them more because they think that they are away from their parents and they should get what they want.

On the other hand, three young women in the study who stayed with relatives mentioned that they were under more stress because of the pressure from the relatives financial and social problems. Apart from these, they were free to go out to work, for some social activities and some group activities.

“I thought I became naughtier staying with my grandparents because they allowed me to do everything what I want” (22 years old young men work as bus conductor)

Youth staying with their friends

There is a group of youth staying in rented houses with their friends; this is the freest type of living arrangements for youth in the study. They are free to go out when they wish and they can also do everything they want.

Youth staying in factory hostels

There are rules that have to be followed in the factory hostels. They cannot go out beyond 7 pm. They are free to go out on holidays within set time limits. No visitors are allowed to come into the room. If you have a visitor you can meet in the common lobby. They are closely supervised by the senior female supervisor all the time.

The higher the degree of freedom to go out, the greater the opportunities to join with their peers and to develop a network to perform youth activities. These youth activities could be regarded as opportunistic conditions to engage to sexual activities.

4.3.1.6 Neighborhood atmosphere

Most of the respondents in this study grew up in their native social conditions and moved to the study area, with their families or alone, where they were forced to adapt to new social conditions.

A remarkable gender difference noted was that most of the young women in this study supported and contributed towards their family expenses. However, among them, half of them reported that their neighbors had a negative view of them and looked down on their lifestyles which included going out for work and leisure activities. Half of the female respondents reported that most of the neighbors were ambivalent about their way of living in spite of supporting or helping them socially and psychologically.

Neighbors had less restricted views for the young men concerning their going-out to work because of the social and cultural acceptance that men can go out freely for

work or other activities. Therefore, society could excuse the young men going out for any reason because it is the male lifestyle.

However, most of the youth had a the bad image for activities related to drinking, participating in commercial sex, domestic violence, extramarital sex and gambling.

Summary

The overall findings reveal that youth working outside their families come from families that have suffered from socioeconomic crises and unstable families. The traditional Myanmar family allows youth to socialize under the control of parents, elder family members and near-by community; but traditional way are not followed in this studied area.

The absence of either of the parents, working mother due to inadequate income, working male and female siblings, extended families with sibling households, staying with relatives of same socioeconomic status and family conflict created a non-traditional family structure in which traditional roles and control became loose.

In addition to this, staying with relatives (grandparents, aunts and uncles) allow the youth to free themselves from traditional social control. This also put them under pressure from which most of the youth try to find a way out of these pressure by going out of the house.

New strategies, activities and interests to cope with these challenges within their family and their lives developed among the youth. Therefore, most of the interviewed youth were exposed to the work environment outside the control of their family so they had more chance to go our freely thereby leading to changes in their lifestyles.

4.3.2 Working environment

This is included to explore how the youth had got a job, how long they had worked, hours of work and pay job satisfaction, social relationships in the work environment and how they coped with work problems related to intimate relationships.

4.3.2.1 Getting a job

The study area, as mentioned, is economically active industrial zone so there are many job opportunities for the youth and low income families. Small and medium-size factories always demand the new employees, especially young people. The majority of the youth obtained their job through the network of their friends from work and neighborhood, siblings, relatives and neighbors working in the factories and other small businesses such as karaoke bar, transportation, night clubs, and entertainment centers. Only two youth work are self employment in their own shops.

Most of the youth interviewed said it was easy to get a job if they did not worry about the salary, distance from the home or working hours. Although the education level does not influence getting the job, good opportunities for a high position and high salary are for people with education.

Four interviewed youth who are part-time university students in this study obtained higher paying job than the other respondents. From this data it can be seen that getting a job for the majority of the youth is through their peer networks, and their education level is important in getting a good job.

4.3.2.2 Duration of work experience

Although some youth in the study are very young (two girls are 17 & 18 years old), work experience of all youth interviewed ranged from 2 to 6 years. Myanmar, has a labor law allow only those over 18 can work both in government and private sector.

However, some of the youth working in the factories and private businesses are younger than 18 because they could easily lie to the factory officers that they were 18 by using someone's identity card. Even though the factory officers already knew they lied, they were happy to recruit young factory workers for lower wages or salary than normal.

From this information it can be assumed that most of the youth started to work outside their home even though they did not have enough educational, social and mental skills because they were physically mature. This data showed that most of the working youth were out of traditional family control leading to changes of lifestyles, activities and coping strategies for their struggling lives.

4.3.2.3 Hours of work and pay

The majority of the respondents interviewed worked in factories which have day and night shifts. The day shift is from 7:30am to 6:00 pm and night shift is from 8:00pm to 6:30 am the next morning. All the factory respondents had to work six days per week and they also obtained overtime, which earned more attractive pay compared to their basic salary.

Generally, the basic pay ranged from 3000-5000kyats (US\$ 3-5) per month which is very low and they could get 6000-10,000 kyats (US\$ 6-10) per month including overtime and regular attendance bonus.

Some of youth work in the private businesses such as greengrocers in a big fresh market. Workers in karaoke lounge and night clubs have to go work at night time. Youth working as bus conductors work for the whole day. The youth working in such jobs can earn a little more income than those working in factories.

Most of the youth working in factories complained about their working hours including overtime being too long (10 hours) a day which gave them no time to be free for leisure and social activities.

Two female respondents who had worked in garment factories changed their job to night clubs because of the low salaries and long working hours (10 hours a day). The respondents interviewed reported that they could earn much more income while working as a waitress than working in the factories even though they did not make a date with the customers.

The information obtained shows that the interviewed youth mostly used their time working and were more exposed to the working environment than the family environment. This is not the traditional way of living for the youth and encourages them to abandon the traditional Myanmar youth lifestyle.

4.3.2.4 Work satisfaction

Most of the respondents reported that they were satisfied with their jobs and their wages because they were already aware of their limited education. Most of them had a positive attitude to their present job in terms of wages, freedom to go out and the pleasurable nature at work. However, some were not satisfied with their

present jobs in terms of lower wages than their previous one, problems among the employees and fear of working overtime and night shifts.

This information was confirmed by the in-depth interviews. Many youth said that although they were not very satisfied with their jobs, they liked to go out freely and earn money not only to support their family but also for their own needs. The workplaces also provided opportunities to meet with their peers, boyfriends and girlfriends, satisfaction from the ability to earn and to contribute towards the family expenses, while helping them join social activities with their peers.

As a bus conductor young man expressed his feeling: *“I have worked as soldier and laborer. Now, I am a bus conductor which is very nice work, earn a lot of money and I feel free. The old jobs were very hard and could not get enough money for me”* (24 years old bus conductor young men)

A 22 years old store in-charge, young woman said: *“I had to deal with many people who had different manners. I had to communicate with them in different ways. Now, my supervisor appreciated me for the long service in this factory”*.

Most of the young men were fond of the nature of their jobs, because they had enough free time to go out and join with their peers for group activities. A 21 years old man who works as greengrocer in the fresh market expressed his feeling about his job. *“I told my grandma to work at night and I shifted my responsibilities to my younger brother. And then, I went to KTV (karaoke club) and had sex with my colleagues.*

The major complaint of the young women working in the factories was about overtime and night shifts, which scared them because of the work hours, and safety while working at night with male colleagues. A 22 years old reported her feeling about her night sessions. *“I felt unsafe when I worked for night duty in store because the boys and men could go in and out of the store and office whenever they wanted.”*

Some of the young women interviewed felt dissatisfied with their jobs. They support their family with their income, they fear the negative views of their family members and neighbors lead to “bad reputation” for their lives.

Two young women interviewed who work as waitresses in night clubs reported: *“My neighbors blamed me that I worked as waitress in night but I don’t care it because I worked for my family and I am not a CSW. I worked there to promote my*

living standard and also my life. I changed my work to Garment factory two months ago but the income was very low and was not enough for my family” (20 year old young woman).

Most of the youth interviewed in this study had to work outside their home whether they were satisfied or not to support their families, to be economically independent and to be free to go out for social activities.

4.3.2.5 Social relationships of working environment

Social relationship in the work place can be described as male-female, female-female or male-male or as relationships with colleagues, supervisors and seniors. This research intended to explore how the social relationships of the youth in the context of work places developed new interests and provided opportunities to engage in leisure and sexual activities.

Most of the garment and food factories organized the workers by sections and gender. All the garment factories were dominated by female workers in mending, cutting, stitching, ironing and packaging. In wool factories, however male workers are out number female workers in all the sections. In this study, there were both male-female and female-female relationships in the factories.

Male-female social relationship

Eventhough most of the factories are organized by sections and gender, youth workers communicate with male and female colleagues for work-related issues, during lunch time and while taking the ferry to and from the factory.

Half of the female youth workers had to communicate with male workers and male supervisors in term of work-related problems and they said that they had a good understanding with their male colleagues during working hours.

A 22 year old woman working in food factory reported: *“Some supervisors wanted to give pressure to me but senior uncle (one of my supervisors) protected me from it. He is very kind and always stood on my side. He was a very simple and nice guy”*

However, not all the young women feel comfortable with their male colleagues especially in work-related problems. Two young women interviewed who work in a

garment factory said that some of the male colleagues had bad attitudes towards the women who were not very close to them, they wished to show their authority in work-related problems.

A 21 years old young woman working in a garment factory expressed her problems with the male mechanics when her sewing machine broke down. *“I am not happy when my sewing machine is broken. Mechanics are boys and we have to request for fixing. They desired to have a close and friendly relationship, which would enhance towards reaching out for help to fix the machine and if not they do not wish to help. We have to wait them for long time.”*

In addition to this, male-female relationships were built during the daily trips in the ferry to and from the factory. In the evening when they went back home, it was dark and some young men took care of their female colleagues until they were home or near their house. However, some young women reported that they had to be aware of the attitude of the men and not allow them to take advantage before they were well acquainted with them.

A 24 years old man working in garment factory expressed: *“I met my girlfriend while taking the same seat on the ferry going to the factory six months ago. I fell in love with her while talking each other on the ferry”.*

21 years old woman working in a garment factory said: *“Most of the male colleagues in this factory were nice and wanted to take care of female colleagues especially when we returned late from the factory. However, some of them had bad thoughts on the girls and assumed that they were easy to approach”*

Social relationships among the working youth was different according to the nature of their work. Young men who worked as bus conductors had male-female social relationship with their customers but not their co-workers.

The youth working in night clubs and karaoke lounge had more freer and more open social relationships than factory workers because of the nature of their jobs. *“Most of the girls and boys in my work are very open and free to do pleasurable activities because we all have to stay for long time in work and also commute in ferry to work and to go home”.*

Relationships with boyfriends and girlfriends at work

Some of the respondents interviewed had boyfriends and girlfriends from their workplaces whom they met during break-time, lunch-times, taking ferry and working together for long hours. The factory workers, they mostly met each other during lunch time and some other work-related activities such as overtime and night shifts, and taking the ferry everyday.

A 24 years old man working in a food factory explored his experience of dating with his girlfriend who also worked in the same factory: *“I dated with girlfriend who also works in same factory in the field near the factory in spite of going to work for night session”*.

17 years old woman working in a garment factory expressed her experience of relationship with her boyfriend, now her ex-husband: *“I worked in ironing section of Garment factory and then I met with my first boyfriend. Unfortunately, my life has been destroyed since then”*.

Some of the youth working in nightclubs and karaoke bars had better opportunities to make relationship with boyfriends and girlfriends than factory workers because of the freer nature of their jobs.

An 18 years old woman working in a garment factory had relationships with her boyfriend who works in the packing section reported: *“We met each other during the lunch time and then, we became familiar with each other as usual and he accompanied me to go to work as my boyfriend”*.

The information showed that most of the work places provide opportunities for the youth to have relationships with their boyfriends or girlfriends resulting in leisure and sexual activities.

Male-male and female-female relationships in the work place

There is difference between male-male and female-female relationships in the workplace. Friendship among the female youth in the work place can be organized into two categories. One type of relationship is not very close. The women communicated for work-related purposes or informally during the break times. The other type is close relationships which occur as a result of friendship during the

working hours and also in their area. For this friendship, they are very close with each other and discuss their family problems, work-related problems and personal affairs.

Friendship among the young men is concerned with work-related problems joining interested leisure activities and sexual activities. Most of the young men like to consult with their male colleagues who have more experience than them concerning their work, interests and activities related to men's pleasure (drinking, watching sex movies and visiting commercial sex places).

A 22 years old bus conductor expressed his experience concerning friendship with his male colleagues: *"My work is very free and nice for me. I can join with the senior colleagues (senior bus conductor and drivers) to drink and join commercial sex"*.

They also have some work-related and personal problems with their male colleagues in their work.

A 24 years old bus conductor said: *"My male colleagues (bus conductors and drivers) are mostly flexible but sometimes have some problems like picking up the passenger and trying to overturn with other buses"*.

The above suggest that the nature of the work place and hours of work give the youth the chance to meet people of the same or opposite sex. What at first may be casual relationships can and does develop into friendships and sometimes sexual partnerships.

Work also provides good opportunities to share information and interests concerning youth leisure and sexual activities and to build network with their peers outside family control. The economic independence of the working youth encourages them to engage into new interests and new activities with their peer networks.

4.3.3 Peer identity and peer pressure

Peers play an important role for the youth to develop networks to find new interests and have experiences beyond the family context. These depend on various categories of peers and their identity, the types of relationship with their peers, the types of peer group activities, the degree of peer pressure on the youth to participate in peer activities and wanting to belong to their group activities.

4.3.3.1 Identities of the informant's peers

These are in two groups, the informant's peers from their work and these from the area. Except four university students, all the informants mentioned that their peers were young males and females of the same or age a bit older, and the same socioeconomic background.

The four university students reported that they had peers in the area, work and at school but they all said that they were closer with peers from the area than that of the work. They had more formal relationships with peers from their school because of differences in socioeconomic background.

21 years old young man said: “ *I mostly used to spend my free times with my neighboring friends and I liked to join more with them than school mates*”.

22 years old young women said: “ *I am happy to join with my friends within this place because they all are the same status with me*”

Five of the interviewed young men mentioned that they were friendly with female friends in their peer groups, while half of the interviewed young women were friendly with males in their group. Most of the interviewed youth were friendly with same sex peers. Most of their peers were from their areas and their workplaces.

Gender differences were of little important in forming peer group possibly because of the other influences from Yangon. Therefore, the youth could communicate with male and female peers in a friendly and open manner.

4.3.3.2 Types of relationship with their peers

The youth in this study had different types of relationships depending on the identities of their peers. Most of the respondents interviewed had more friendly and close relationship with peers from the area and the other eleven with the peers from work.

Gender difference affected in the nature of the peer relationship for the young men and women. Most of the relationships between the young women were to find jobs, or visiting and chatting with each other at their homes, pagodas, parks and cinemas during their free times.

Young women interviewed reported that they discussed their financial and family problems with their peers and never discussed sexual matters. Some young girls in

this study dated their boyfriends through their female peers who came to their homes to take them out. One young woman reported that she had a close relationship with her female friend who was her boyfriend's sister. She used to help her friend to go shopping, help in her shop and occasionally stays at her house overnight.

Peer relationships among the young men were remarkably close. The shared activities included visiting each other, chatting to each other at the tea shop, parks and beer stations, male' activities and sexual activities such as drinking, gambling and having the commercial sex.

4.3.3.3 Types of leisure activities with peers

The youth spend a lot of their leisure time out of their homes with their peers. Generally, young men are more actively involved in leisure activities than young women because the young men are more socially freer to go out and join with their peers than young women. The activities of young men and women fall into two groups those that are sexual and those that are not.

Activities not concerned with sexual matters included going round in the area, playing football, making food and eating together, chatting with each other at the tea shops, coffee bars, small restaurant or at home, going shopping and joining traditional and religious ceremonies. Activities concerned with sexual matters include going to parks and quiet place, going to beer bars and having hard drinks, watching sex movies and pornography, gambling and visiting commercial sex establishment as a group.

Young women' activities

Most of the young women in this study join group activities not concerning sexual matters. They join common activities mentioned above and most have fun with their group at home, sometimes at the pagodas, parks and traditional ceremonies on special occasions. Most of the girls talk about their jobs, colleagues, family, movies, cousins, cosmetics and purchases.

Some of the young women in this study mostly spend their time at home with their peers eating pickled tea salad and drinking green tea, talking about some common subjects, and sometimes go out from the home during their free time on

holidays and special occasions such as Thingyan festival (Buddhist New Year), Thadingyut festival (lighting festival) and traditional ceremonies within the area.

Young men's activities

All the young men relax with their group in teashops, beer stations, karaoke bars, restaurants and night clubs. They go to pagodas and parks for fun, and to chase and hunt for the women. Most of the young men talked about pornography, sex movies, girls of their jobs, colleagues, family and others.

All the young men frequently drink beer and alcohol with their peers when have money especially on pay-day (getting monthly salary at the end of the month), win at gambling and also when they got together as usual or on special occasions.

The young men mostly spend their time with their peers out of their houses and their families at the tea shops, on street corner and at the beer stations. Society accepts that young men spend their times with their groups outside the house.

These activities were socially bounded as the men's common activities were accepted, by young women were considered strange and naughty when they spent their time in night clubs and tea shops like men.

4.3.3.4 Peer pressure and feelings towards peer group

In this study, peer pressures strongly influenced the youth in their common interests, leisure activities and in socioeconomic factors such as getting a job. Most of the young women interviewed in this study were significantly influenced by peers to engage into sexual activities such as dating with their boyfriends in their friend's houses while the rest of the women interviewed were considerably influenced by their peer groups to join common activities and interests.

19 years old young women said: *"I did not have boyfriend before and my friends asked me to have boyfriend to be excited so I accepted my boyfriend"*. 21 years old female migrant worker said: *"I met my boyfriend by accompanying with my female friend to date with her boyfriend who was my boyfriend's friend"*.

All the young women reported that they never discussed sexual identity and sexual matters within their peer groups as it was considered to be very personal and confidential. They all felt ashamed and were reluctant to talk about sexual matters

within their group. Three young women mentioned that they felt safe and confident by joining with their peer group while going to the parks, pagodas and cinemas. They also expressed that they were reluctant to go alone because other people would think they are bad girls. This information shows that young women are socially bounded not to go outside alone while young men on the contrary would go out either alone or in a group.

All the young men interviewed were significantly influenced by their peers both in common activities and sexual activities. The common activities frequently changed into sexual activities such as visiting commercial sex establishment after drinking in a group. All the young men interviewed reported that they talk about girls and discussed sexual matters such as masturbation, sex movies, pornography, commercial sex and sexually transmitted diseases.

Most of the young men interviewed join with older colleagues from their work and were influenced by them to drink, to gamble and have commercial sex. Some of them reported that their older peers taught them how to drink, how to play the guitar and how to join sexual activities.

All the young men expressed that they really enjoyed belonging to their peer group and having group activities. They felt safe and confident emotionally and financially while joining with their peers for their leisure activities especially drinking and having commercial sex.

24 years old men said: *"I used to join CSWs with my friends in group and never go without my friends. I just have an idea to go without my friends and really do it with friends. It is a good feeling to join commercial sex with friends and I feel a little bit shy without my friends. I became so brave with my friends. But it is not only because of friends but also I have desire to join"*.

It can be concluded that peer pressure significantly influences the youth and belonging to their peers was emotionally and socially serious. These influences and feelings can lead the youth to engage in sexual activities with limited knowledge and without any preparation.

4.3.4 Youth interest and sexual activities

Most youth activities are associated with special interests and new strategies for their lives. The special interests of the young women was to develop special relationship namely love and intimacy with their boyfriends. The young men's special interest belonged was to be part of their group by enthusiastically and energetically joining their peers in activities such as drinking, playing guitar, playing football and sexual experiences in addition to love and intimacy with their girlfriends.

Dating

Most of the youth reported that their group activities sometimes led to sexual activities through dating with boyfriends and girlfriends apart from the group. All the youth interviewed in this study had had boyfriends and girlfriends since they were student. A young man and two young women had been at one time married, although at present they were single.

All the young women interviewed reported that their first date was initiated by their boyfriends while all the young men admitted that their first date was started by themselves.

Group activities and special occasions

There is a difference between the special interests of the young men and the young women. Half of the youth interviewed in this study reported that they had been exposed to sexual activities while joining with their peers in groups, especially on special occasions such as Thingyan festival, Thadingyut festival and other traditional festivals in their areas, and also after drinking and getting together.

Most of the young men engaged in sexual activities after drinking on these special occasions and two of the young women interviewed had the sexual activities while following their boyfriends without any previous intention.

Apart from these differences, the information from interviewed respondents revealed that most peer activities and places where they spend their time were out of the family control in favorable settings such as empty house and quiet places. This led to sexual orientated activities such as dating with boyfriends and girlfriends in the

parks and houses in which the family members were out, joining to commercial sex activities after drinking and after winning money from gambling.

4.4 Gender Differences in Youth Sexuality

4.4.1 Sexual Meanings

The interviewed youth reported two types of sexual relationships. These were sexual relationships without sexual intercourse and sexual intercourse relationships. The sexual meanings were significantly different between the young men and young women because the beliefs, ideas and notions about sex came from their peers and because they had different opportunities from sexual exposure.

As the youth's ideas about sexual matters came from their peers and their social environment, sexual meanings from the youth in this study were influenced by traditional and cultural norms.

Table 3: Gender differences in sexual meanings

	Young men	Young women
Cultural construction of youth sexuality	- more chance to learn about sex and sexual matters - sexually active	- no chance - naïve, innocent and sexually inactive
Meaning of sex	- masturbation, pornographic materials and watching sexual activities	- romantic, eating, hanging around and kissing
Meaning of sexual intercourse	- pleasure, fun, curiosity and sexual desire, love, excitement, Lat Oo Mu (advancement to have sex) - feel happiness, success, free and pleasurable manhood	- romantic love, future lives, and future hope, social and economic factors - loss of virginity and loss of their lives
Concepts of Masculinity & Femininity	- freer to engage sexual activities - male sexual desire and energetic	- no equal chance in sexual activities - sinful for sexual desire, not strong enough to refuse

4.4.1.1 Cultural construction of youth sexuality

As the beliefs, notions, ideas related to youth sexuality mainly came from their peers and older people, they were significantly influenced by traditional and cultural norms. This created a big difference between young men and young women even in the same social situation. In Myanmar women are socialized to be naïve, innocent and sexually inactive good women, so all the young women in this study had very limited knowledge about sexual matters and sexual relationships.

All the young women interviewed said that their mothers and older women contributed ideas concerning sexual matters such as staying away from the opposite sex during menstruation, the probability of becoming pregnant by touching the opposite sex during the menstrual period and not to sit or play with the opposite sex. In addition to this, all the young women had very few opportunities to learn about sex as students or in work time.

On the other hand, most of the young men got some notions and ideas about sex from their peers, older males and media personality because they have had more chance to learn about sex and sexual matters. All the young men interviewed could discuss about sex and sexual meanings as compared with young women. Therefore, sexual meanings for the youth in this study were different between the young men and young women.

4.4.1.2 Meanings of Sex

The interviewed youth reported that sexual meanings were different between sexual relationship without intercourse and those with sexual intercourse. Because the young women had very limited exposure and chance to know about sex and sexual matters they were reluctant to talk about the meaning of sex.

They said that they talked about handsome boys and nice movie stars (Myanmar, Korean and Hong Kong) with their peers and they never discussed about sexual matters with them. Older females in Myanmar keep in mind that they should not discuss about sex and males.

May, an 18 years old woman said “My mother told me not to be interested in boys and don’t think about them.”

All the young women in this study revealed that they would be looked down on and blamed by their mothers and older females if they were curious about sexual organs and sexual matters so they avoided to discuss these matters with them.

Pe, a 20 years old woman revealed "My mother always blames me as sexy girl when I talk about boys with my friends at home"

All the young men interviewed were exposed to sexual matters by their peers, older males and also from pornographic materials. They all admitted that they felt free to be curious about sex and sex organs by discussing with their peers and older males and their parents could let them know about it as the nature of males.

Ky, a 24 years old man said: " I used to spend my times by sitting at the tear shop, watching pornographic and other movies, talking about girls with my friends"*

They all wanted to report their peers and older males about their first sexual exposure, and seeing pornographic material. One young man mentioned that he got first sexual exposure by seeing the shadows of his parents having sex in the bed next to him. One revealed that he got a strange feeling at the age of 12 and something was coming out from his penis while playing as a couple with his female friend.

4.4.1.3 Meanings of sexual intercourse

The meanings of sexual intercourse for the young men and women were also different.

Sexual meanings for the young women

All the young women interviewed reported that they all had very strong and special feelings and emotions towards their their boyfriends. These feelings were concerned with love, dependency and safety, hope to be a good partner for life, commitment to get married and a strong and long relationship until getting married.

Pe, 24 years old woman said "He is nice and kind to me and he will marry me so I gave my body to him".*

Most of the young women in this study mentioned that they had sexual intercourse with only their boyfriends for love and excitement. Therefore, they could keeping a strong relationship, and so the men would not change to another girlfriend,

so the men would not join commercial sex, sympathy for their boyfriends' desire and the hope of getting married.

Most of the young women reported that they were excited when their boyfriends asked them to have sex. They felt excited but tried to refuse the first time later however, they followed their boyfriends' demand. Some of them admitted that they had sex with their boyfriends because they loved each other.

TT, a 19 years old woman admitted "I don't try to refuse to have sex anymore with my boyfriend because I love him and believe him to get married me"

The young women working in night clubs said that they had different meanings towards their boyfriends compared with the casual sex partners of their work. They said that the relationship with their casual sex partners was only for the exchange of money for their body and sex.

Sexual meanings of the young men

All the young men in this study had different meanings of sexual intercourse with different categories of sex partners. All the young men interviewed reported that they had sexual intercourse with their steady sex partners (girlfriends) for love, excitement, deep love associated with Lat Oo Mu (want to persuade the girlfriend to not change to another boys), trust building, sympathy to girl friends because they are clean and not experienced concerning with sex and possible marriage.

Ki, a 22 years old man said: "I want to have sex with her because she will hesitate to leave me after having sex with me".*

Some young men admitted that they had special feelings for their sexual partners such as happy to talk and get together with, having a very faithful and ideal female partner, having sex because of love, worries about the strong relationship, pregnancy and social complications for their girlfriends, jealousy and committed to get married.

Some young men expressed that they felt safer having sex with their steady girlfriends because they were free from the chance of getting infections when compared with their casual sex partners. They never mentioned about the commitment to get married or to be faithful to their steady girlfriends. Only three of the eleven young men mentioned that they had to be faithful to their girlfriends and had to

sympathize as the weaker sex and because of sisterhood according to the Myanmar culture.

All the young men reported that they had casual sex with commercial sex partners for happiness, fun, curiosity and to fulfill their male's desire. They were all conscious about the transmission of infection and emphasized the commercial sex workers were the source of infections. They did not have sympathy or feeling of sisterhood feeling to commercial sex workers.

A 24 years old man said: *"it is because of my desire and I cannot control by myself so I have sex with them. I don't need to think up to get married or prolong relationship"*. another 24 years men said: *"Commercial sex is only to fulfill my desire and ejaculate."*

The majority of young men in this study were conscious of their dignity and worried about problems within their family and social environment from the consequences of having commercial sex. In addition to this, one young man admitted that he continued to have sex with casual sex partners after getting married.

A 22 years old man said: *"I have no feeling with other girls and CSWs and just only to fulfill my desire. I have to worry with my girlfriend to get pregnancy and also worry about my dignity. I also want to possess her as my wife"*.

From the above, it can be concluded that the young women had sexual intercourse with their boyfriends and with casual sex partners for their romantic love, future life, and future hope, social and economic conditions. The meaning for the young men in this study was not serious when compared with the young girls who were concerned love, desire, maleness, group happiness and their sexual pleasure with both steady and casual partners.

4.4.1.4 Concepts of Masculinity and Femininity

The interviewed youth had definite concept about the differences between male and female depending on their ideology and physical characteristics. Table (3) presents the different ideas and opinions of the youth interviewed of maleness and femaleness. The information obtained from the youth can be divided into physical and ideological concepts of masculinity and femininity. The youth knew that typical male appearances included short hair, muscular, no prominent breasts, good masculine

physique, strength and male genitals. On the other hand, they said that females needed to have nice hair, a feminine face with full breasts and appear physically weak and have a vagina.

All the young women interviewed agreed that the chance to choose their partners and sexual behaviors was not equal to that of men. They all reported that they were culturally and traditionally bounded as good, naïve girls for the family, and virgins and faithful women for their fiancés and their future husbands. They were socialized as dependent on their father, brothers and future husbands however; in reality they all had to go out to work to support their families.

All the young women in this study were torn between aims of traditional socialization, and the struggle of their real lifestyles. They could not manage to face the real situation with their limited skills and had to create the new interests, new ideas and new strategies to overcome the practicalities of their real lives.

Table 4: Masculinity and Femininity

Masculinity	Femininity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More chance to go out • Opportunities to choose partners • Less negative social consequences • Rarely to get bad reputations • aggressive, pleasurable for sexual matters, proud of multiple sex and right to have multiple sex partners • adulthood, joining with male peers, right to talk about sex and girls • manhood, joining with male peers, sisterhood to weak sex (female), loose social norms for males, no chance to loss the life • let males to join commercial sex for maleness, kindness to girlfriends • free to go out, free to join commercial sex • male sexual desire and energetic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less chance to go out • No or less opportunities to choose partners • Serious negative social consequences of sexual practices • Easy to obtain bad reputations • Shy, afraid, good attitude, understanding towards men's desire and demand • neat & tidy, nice looking, clean hands & feet, beautiful, no bad reputation • good girl, no fault, doesn't spend too much money, have to save money for family, good housekeeping • no experience of having boyfriends & sex • weak, have to depend on male partner • should stay under control of parents, cannot go outside alone when it is dark • sinful for sexual desire, not strong enough to refuse

All the young men interviewed said that males have to be brave, aggressive, independent, sexually active and the stronger sex when compared with females. Most young men interviewed mentioned that sexual exposure, sexual behaviors and group activities were the routines for the males. They were all very open and confident to discuss sexual matters within their group or with older males.

They all were socialized as males to be brave, to experience sex, to drink and gamble, and to be independent and strong. Most of the young men admitted that they really liked to engage in activities such as drinking, fighting with each other, gambling, chasing girls and having commercial sex.

21 years old men said: *"Parents let the boys to join commercial sex because of maleness and also boys supported money for the family".*

Only three of the eleven young men in this study mentioned that they were socialized by Myanmar traditional culture to be brave, wise, patient, understanding and sympathize with the weaker sex (female) and show sisterhood. They agreed to be good men only for their girlfriends and they had the same idea as other young men for the casual sex partners.

22 years old male bus conductor said: *"I did not use to take opportunities whenever I got from my girlfriends because I emphasized on the feeling"*

From the data, it can be assumed that all the young women in this study were socialized to traditional way but because they had to survive with limited family and social support, they adopted new lifestyles to overcome life's challenges. The majority of the young men in this study were socialized differently from traditional ways of sympathy and sisterhood because of their unstable family situations and social environment.

Loss of virginity is the loss of women's lives

All the young women interviewed revealed that they were concerned about the loss of their virginity and the loss is to their lives after their first sexual intercourse. Some young women reported that they lost their future and dignity as a good girl after having sex for the first time. After that, they became less serious about their virginity and dignity making it easier for them to have sex with their partners.

Ze, an 18 years old woman said: “My life was lost after having sex with him and after that I followed his demand for many times because my life did not become normal”*

Some young women interviewed reported that they abundant their student lifes and ran away from their families and school after having their first sexual experience. Four young women in this study mentioned that they lost their virginity, which resulted to be faced with social, financial and health complication which were the negative consequences of pregnancy after having sex with their first partners.

While all the young men interviewed reported that they had positive feelings and emotions after the first sexual intercourse. All of them revealed that they felt the happiness, success, free and pleasurable manhood after their first sexual intercourse.

From this information, it can be assumed that sexual meanings were difference between the young men and the young women daring their first experience of sexual intercourse.

4.4.2 Sexual partnership

Table 5: Characteristics of Sexual Partners of Interviewed Youth

Characteristics of Sexual Partners	Young Men	Young Women
▪ Socio-economic Status	Same	Same
▪ Age	Same or younger	Same or older
▪ Gender	Mostly are females but one has male	Males
▪ Numbers of partner at a time	One or more than one	One
▪ Types of sex partners	Steady (girlfriends) and casual	Steady (boyfriends)
▪ Social identity	Working class or colleagues	Working class or colleagues
▪ Relationship	Happy to talk and intended to have sex	Strong relationship and faithful
▪ Places of meeting	Workplaces, leisure places, brothel houses, night clubs and special occasions	Workplaces, leisure places and special occasions
▪ Meanings toward sex partners	Love, persuasion to have sex, happiness, fun, curiosity, fulfill men's desire, scared of infections	Love, excitement, strong relationship and committed to get married
▪ Conditions and chances to change	Opportunistic	Conditional

Generally, the sexual partners of the interviewed respondents shared the same socio-economic background. Most of their partners lived in the same area as the respondents while others stayed in similar conditions nearby. Most of the sexual partners of the young women were older than them and for those of the young men the partners were at the same age or younger.

The young men having sex with men (homosexual males), they all in the group discussion admitted that they had same sex partners (male) and their partners could be either steady boyfriends or casual sex partners. All of them reported that they did not have female sex partners although two of them had had girlfriends in their student time but there was no sexual relationship.

All the young men had female interviewed sex partners except one reported that he had a sex with a male sexual partner (homosexual male) for two times. The sexual

partners for the young men can be categorized into girlfriends and casual partners. All the male respondents except one young man had more than one sexual partner but they also had sexual partnerships with girlfriends and casual sex partners. Two interviewed young men could not remember the identities of their sexual partners because they had had many partners.

The sexual partners of all the young women interviewed were males, and most of them had only one type of sexual partnership, their boyfriends. Another two who work in night clubs sometimes had casual relationship with other men for money. Half of the interviewed female respondents had one sexual partner at a time and others had sexual partners who were their boyfriends.

4.4.2.1 Sexual partners

Only one male respondent reported that he had steady sexual partner who was his girlfriend. The other young men said that they had steady sex partners (their girlfriends) and casual partners who were commercial sex workers and so-called loose or bad girls in their neighborhood.

All the female respondents except two reported that they had steady sex partners who were their boyfriends from the same socioeconomic background. The sex partners of the two young women working in nightclubs were mostly older and of a higher socio-economic situation than them.

The social identity of the sex partners of the studied youth depended on the period of obtaining the sex partners either when they were students or workers. Most sex partners were students when they were students and workers when they were workers.

4.4.2.2 Types of sexual relationship

Sexual relationships differed according to timing and the social identity of the sexual partners. The youth interviewed reported two types of sexual relationships; sexual relationships without sexual intercourse and those with sexual intercourse.

Sexual Relationship without sexual intercourse with boyfriends/ girlfriends when students

All the youth said that most their sexual relationships during their student days included visual contact with each other, communicating by love letters and post-cards, teasing each other, participating in school activities together, going to school within their group, eating together, visiting and chatting, and cheek kissing. Only one young woman reported that she had sexual intercourse her student time at 13 who she was a student. Her boyfriend at the time was not a student and was five years older than her.

Due to school restrictions and teachers' supervision, the youth had very few chances to meet their boyfriends and girlfriends. They all reported that they could only meet each other on the way to and from school. In addition, all the youth had limited chances to go beyond common relationships with their boyfriends and girlfriends because of family control living in their native community.

Therefore, it can be assumed that the majority of the youth in this study had sexual relationship (without sexual intercourse) during their student time and before moving to the studied area.

Sexual relationship in the work places

The young women in this study started to have sexual intercourse with their boyfriends after leaving when they began to work. One female university student admitted that she had sexual intercourse with her boyfriend after finishing secondary school after she had started working. All their sex partners were older than them and all were working youth at either the same workplaces or another one.

22 years old woman said: *"I had sex with him in my store at night duty. We broke our relationship after three years and I changed another boyfriend who was also working in the same factory"*.

All the young men interviewed reported that they had sexual intercourse with girlfriends and causal partners after leaving school when they began work. All the young men admitted that they started to have casual sex with commercial sex workers when they started work.

A 24 years old man said: *“My first sexual exposure was with CSWs who served me herself and I was drunk after joining to my first job. Sometimes, I had three casual sex partners and I had sex whenever I want with the one who want to have sex”*.

The young men of the focus group discussion revealed that they had sexual intercourse with male partners during their working time. Two of them had had girlfriends during their student time but they never engaged sexual intercourse with their girlfriends.

4.4.2.3 Places for meeting and favorable conditions to meet sexual partners

All the young men mentioned that they met their sex partners on the way to and from work, in the work place, but mostly in their leisure time in parks and cinemas, traditional festivals and nightclubs. They reported that they tried to find casual sex partners through their peer networks, the trishaw drivers in the area, and through the pimps or brothels in this area.

All the young men reported that they met their casual sex partners mostly with their peer group with the favorable conditions for doing so being getting together, after drinking, after gambling and during their work and whether if the nature of the work allow it.

All the young women reported that they met with their sex partners, boyfriends, on the way to work, in the workplaces during their work times on their leisure activities during their weekends off, traditional festivals such as the water festival and light festival. Eight young women said they never went to nightclubs and only occasionally to traditional festivals held at night.

The majority of the young women had a chance to meet their sex partners (boyfriends) through their peers and during their work hours out of their family control and supervision. Only two young women had a chance to meet with casual partners in their workplace (nightclubs) for the purpose of exchanging money for sex.

All the young women expressed that they met their sex partners (boyfriends) because of being depressed of having family problems, financial crises and social problems. These conditions are probably reinforced by peer pressure and the partner's

demand for their company. The majority of young women in this study to join with their sexual partners.

Meetings and the conditons for them were usually created by the young by themselves through group activities. For young women these depended on the socio-economic situations, family, and demands by boyfriends.

4.4.2.4 Conditions and chances to change sex partners

The conditions and chances for changing sexual partner differed between the young men and young women. All the young men changed their sexual partners depending on their own decisions, their feelings and some conditions to have both steady and casual sex partners. All the young men changed their sex partners if the opportunity arise and the opportunity was reinforced by the former.

All the young men changed their sex partners when they did not like their girlfriends' mentality and ideas, their partners were not faithful, could not fulfill their desire, or were separated from each other. They changed their partners after any length of time ranging from one day to years depending on their types of sexual relationship and sexual partners. All of them agreed that they did not recognize their feeling to change their sex partners.

All the young men admitted that they could change their sexual partners at anytime such as at drinking sessions with their group, going to nightclubs, going to the parks and under favorable conditions in their work places. All the young women reported that they had limited chance to change sex partners because of Myanmar culture in which women should not have more than one sex partner and women have to be faithful their boyfriends, fiancés and husbands.

All the young women mentioned that they changed their sex partners even though they did not want to. Most of the young women had to change their sex partners because they left alone, the men run away after getting their pregnant, and their partners' families did not approve of the relationship.

One young woman admitted that she changed her sex partner because she did not want him to suffered the consequences of her bad reputation. One reported that she lost her boyfriend when she left school and moved to the studied area to work to support her family. One young woman mentioned that she followed a male friend who

was not her boyfriend while trying to run away from the domestic violence caused by her drunken father and then she had sex with him. Only one young woman who was a university student said that she had no feeling to change when her partner moved from the studied area.

It can be concluded that all the young men changed their partners when opportunity allowed and conditions were favourable. Most of the young women changed their partners because of serious conditions such as social problems, financial and family crises and some of them had no choice because their boyfriends left them.

4.5 Sexual Practices

Sexual practices of the youth can be organized by homosexuality or heterosexuality, nature and various positions, the settings for sexual activity, condom and contraceptive use, and the opinion on unsafe sexual practices.

4.5.1 Nature of sexual act

Table 6: First Sexual exposure and Sexual Acts of Interviewed Youth

Respondents	Young men	Young women
Experiences of first sexual exposure	Masturbation, watching sex movies, pornography, seeing parents' sexual relationship, talking about sex and girls with peers and elders	Watching drama movies
Age of first exposure	15- 19 years of age	13-21 years of age
Place	Guest house, friends' house, brothel house	Guesthouse, Friend's houses, fields
Favorable settings	Peer group activities after getting together, drinking, gambling, no one at home, full privacy, easy to approach to the girls	Special occasions, boyfriends' demand, persuasion by boyfriends by feeding some drugs and alcohol
Types of sex partners	Commercial sex workers, girlfriends and homosexual friend	Boyfriends
Types of sex act	Vaginal, Anal	Vaginal
Meanings to first exposure	Feel good and relax, adulthood	Loss of virginity, loss of lives and future, bad reputations

According to the information obtained from the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, there are heterosexual and homosexual relationships among the youth in this area. The young men in focus group discussions revealed noticeably homosexual relations among them. According to the focus group discussion with homosexual young men, they all engaged homosexual relationship.

Among the youth interviewed, all reported heterosexual relationship except one young man who admitted that he had engaged in a homosexual relation with his homosexual friend for two times. Most of the young men engaged in heterosexual relationship with two types of sexual partners; steady sex partners (girlfriends) and casual sex partners (commercial sex workers and so-called loose or bad girls- KA KA).

One young woman reported that she had heard about a strange relationship between females which was different from normal female friend relationship but she did not know exactly about their sexual relations.

All the young women mentioned they have all had heterosexual relations with their boyfriends and none of them had had homosexual relations. The conclusion in this study is that the youth engage in both homo and heterosexual relations. The young men reported that they engaged in both homosexual and heterosexual relations with steady and casual partners. The young women revealed that they engaged in heterosexual relationship with their boyfriends.

4.5.2 Forms of sex act

The information from the focus group discussion and in-depth interviews revealed that the sexual practices of the youth included vaginal, oral and anal sex. All the young men interviewed agreed that these types of sexual practices were quite familiar to them. They were only conscious that anal sex could be unsafe or dangerous because they could get infections especially HIV/ AIDS.

They all felt safe to have vaginal sex with their steady girlfriends and oral sex with their casual sex partners. Six out of ten young men in this study reported that they were conscious about infections from vaginal sex with casual sex partners. None of them reported oral sex with their girlfriends because they all knew that oral sex was

with casual and male partners. This meant that they never used condoms or protection while having vaginal sex with steady partners and only had oral sex with casual ones.

The sexual practices of the young men mostly included vaginal and oral sex and only one man admitted that he had had of anal sex with his male sex partner (gay). All the young men reported that they knew the nature of sexual practices from their peers, older males, commercial sex workers and pornographic materials.

All the young men felt safe to have vaginal sex with their steady partners (girlfriends) without using condom because they believed that their girlfriends were good girls and only had sex with them.

All the young women interviewed had only had vaginal sex and they had never had anal and oral sex. Three of them had knowledge about oral and anal sex from their peers and sex movies. They had believed these practices were dangerous, unsafe and dirty.

4.5.3 First sexual act

Most of the young men used masturbation and commercial sex for the first sex act but all the girls experienced their first sexual exposure with their boyfriends and masturbation is not common. All the young men were reluctant to talk about masturbation as their first sexual exposure.

They all reported that their first sexual intercourse was with commercial sex workers which was called transforming the junior men into full grown adults. Only one young man reported that his first sex act was with his girlfriend at the age of 19. Later, some of them admitted that they did masturbate for the first act, and this was learned from their peers. One young man mentioned that he was masturbated by his gay friend when he was 15.

All the young women said they did not know about masturbation and their first sex act was with their boyfriends. The youngest age for the first sex act for the young men was at the age of 15 and for the young women at the age of 13. The mean age of for the first sex act for both the young men and women was 17. The age at the first sexual act for the earlier for young women than the young men.

4.5.4 Body positions during sexual activities

Some of the youth, especially the young men in this study, explored a variety of sexual positions with different types of partners. The positions used during sexual activities depended on the sexual partners, and whether they were hetero or homosexual relations and could give rise to different sexual feelings.

Some of the young men having sex with men mentioned that they had anal sex in which the inserter stayed at the back. They reported that this position was easy and safe for them to have sex if someone saw them and it was easy to separate from each other. All the young men revealed that they had sex using male-on-top position with their steady female partners. Some young men interviewed mentioned that they were more likely to have sex in rear-entry position (doggie-style) with their casual female partners because they felt better with this position.

They mentioned that most of the casual partners especially commercial sex workers could be persuaded to have sex in any positions they liked because they paid. However, they did not want their steady partners (girlfriends) to be persuaded to do anything they found unusual because they were good girls.

Two interviewed young men reported that they thought the rear-entry position might be dangerous for the female partners because it could hurt the uterus during intercourse. Some of them admitted that they knew the various positions of sexual practices from their peers, sex movies and pornographic materials.

None of the young women talked about the various sexual positions as they were ashamed to discuss it and only one young woman said she knew about the usual position with the male over the female.

4.5.5 Actual contraceptive use

Most of the young women had knowledge about contraceptives pills, injectables but very few knew about IUDs (Intrauterine Devices). However, none of them mentioned that condoms are one kind of contraceptive. Some of them reported that they took contraceptive pills regularly to prevent pregnancy when they had sex with their boyfriends.

Although some of them reported that they used contraceptives after discussing with youth peer educators, it was not a regular practice. One young woman has taken

morning after pills (emergency contraceptive pills) twice after discussion with female youth peer educators. None of them has used injectables from the clinics and Maternal and Child Health Centers because these services were targeted for married women.

They all mentioned that contraceptives were not easily available for them and that they were reluctant to buy contraceptive pills as they were unmarried. They felt that people would look down on them when they used contraceptives such as pills and injectables.

4.6 Beliefs on STI/ HIV/ AIDS and unintended pregnancy

All the interviewed respondents had already experienced sexual intercourse without using condoms, some of them had had sexually transmitted diseases from commercial sex workers. Infected young men reported that they occasionally use condoms while having sex with casual sex partners after they had had STIs.

4.6.1 Beliefs related to STIs/ HIV & AIDS and unintended pregnancy

There are a variety of youth beliefs related to Sexually Transmitted Diseases, HIV/ AIDS and unintended pregnancy. Understanding about these sexual health problems usually comes from their peers, elders and health education programs and the resulting beliefs lead the youth to engage in safe or unsafe sexual practices.

4.6.1.1 Local definitions of STIs

All the interviewed respondents could describe a variety of STIs according to their knowledge and their experiences. All the young men said that STIs are diseases which happened in their genitalia after having sex with commercial sex workers. They discussed STIs in local terms; syphilis(genital ulcer), Phar Kyoe Ta(diseases from having sex with commercial sex workers) and Gano (hotness during urination with pus coming out from the penis). These symptoms were very common among the young men in the study area.

Some of them reported that this disease could be contracted from sexual intercourse from infected persons and two of them mentioned that this disease was transmitted got from infected and unclean CSWs. Other young men responded that these diseases could be contracted by the CSW scratching the penis with her nail,

incomplete ejaculation, ulcers in the female sex partner and infection from CSWs especially when his body resistance was low.

Most of the young women said that STIs is an ulcers in male genitalia, and pus would coming out of the penis, and would be transmitted from commercial sex workers. They reported that this disease could be transmitted to people at risk such as long distance drivers, married men away from the family and those who had multiple sexual partnerships. Most of the girls did not know the causes of STIs but one woman reported STIs could be caused by germs from the commercial sex workers.

Most of them were not conscious about transmission of STIs from boyfriends to girlfriends. Only one young woman gave her opinion that STIs could be transmitted from the boyfriend who had sex with infected commercial sex workers.

4.6.1.2 Beliefs on prevention of STIs

The majority of the respondents knew that using condoms could prevent transmission of these diseases and that infection could be prevented by having sex with steady partners and using traditional ways. They got this knowledge about condom use and steady sex partner from group discussion at Adolescent RH programs in the studied area.

Knowledge of using traditional ways to prevent STIs came from their peers and elders. Most of the young men reported that using condom was the safest way to prevent STIs while three young men revealed their knowledge about traditional ways by cleaning the penis with alcohol and Myanmar tobacco leaves, having sex with clean & more expensive sex workers (clubs in downtown Yangon, not from this area), taking penicillin 5 L or indigenous medicine immediately after having sex with commercial sex workers.

4.6.2 Definition of HIV/ AIDS

All the interviewed youth reported that HIV/ AIDS was a disease in which the body's immune system become weak and deteriorated. Most of them already knew that it was an incurable and terrible disease.

Most of the interviewed respondents know that HIV/ AIDS was a disease transmitted by sexual intercourse, blood transfusion, taking injection with unclean

syringes and transmission from mother to child. Although they knew that HIV/ AIDS is a sexually transmitted disease,. most of them did not know AIDS was caused by HIV. Only one female university student could explain the connection.

Most of the young men were conscious about HIV/AIDS from commercial sex but they did not think about it while having sex with their girlfriends. Some of them used condoms to prevent AIDS when they had sex with so-called unclean CSWs who were not beautiful, had dark skin and were smelly but they never used condoms with their girlfriends.

All the young men in this study believed that a womanizers, who had multiple sex partners, those who practiced frequent sexual intercourse, those who had sex without any protection (condoms) and those who have sex with infected partners could be infected with HIV/ AIDS.

All the interviewed young women except one, who was working in a nightclub, knew about HIV/ AIDS but they all knew about it. They believed that they are not at risk from this disease because they were not CSWs and only had sex with their boyfriends. Therefore, they believed that they could not contract HIV/AIDS especially since they trusted their boyfriends to be free from diseases.

The young women in this study revealed that the people at risk from HIV/AIDS were CSWs, those who had multiple sex partners, those who inserted foreign bodies into their penis, bad girls, jobless & bully men, drug addicts, very thin people and those with had a big penises.

Beliefs on prevention of HIV/ AIDS

All the respondents believed that using condom properly could prevent this disease but not when the condom was torn because of the forceful sexual intercourse.

Most of the youth in this study knew that HIV/ AIDS could be prevented by condom use, not having multiple sexual partners, infrequent sexual intercourse, checking by applying indigenous medicine powder over female genitalia, to be careful to use sharp utensils, not joining commercial sex, not using drugs and unclean syringe.

4.6.3 Beliefs related to unintended pregnancy

Although the youth had average knowledge about pregnancy prevention, such as taking contraceptives, injectables, safe period method, vaginal douching and using traditional medicines, the knowledge could not be applicable during their sexual practices. This could be confirmed by four out of the ten interviewed young women having had an unintended pregnancy with their boyfriends.

The young women in this study were conscious that pregnancy could bring a lot of social, financial and health problems for their whole life. The interviewed young women reported that pregnancy result by having sex during menstruation, putting semen into the vagina, sex on the last day of menstruation, strong sexual desire and having sex seven days before and after menstruation.

Most of the young men were not conscious about pregnancy except two who did not want their girlfriends to become pregnant. One young man reported that pregnancy was women's business and not the concern of men. Women had to prevent themselves from getting pregnant by taking contraceptives and the men never thought about using condoms to prevent it.

Some young men reported that they worried their girlfriends becoming pregnant so they gave them morning after pills after discussing the subject with their peers and YPEs. Other young men mentioned that pregnancy could be prevented by taking traditional medicine with Army Rum (Alcohol), contraceptives pills and injectables, controlling his mind and desire, sisterhood to female partners, take care of his and his girlfriend's dignity.

4.6.4 Beliefs on condom use

Although all the interviewed respondents already knew that use of condom could prevention of the sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/ AIDS, none of them were not in the habit of using condom regularly.

All the young men in this study believed that they should use condoms with so-called unclean and CSWs those who seemed to have STIs and they never thought to use condoms with their steady partners (girlfriends). They were conscious to use condoms to prevent infections from CSWs and never used condoms with their girlfriends to prevent infections from them.

Four out of ten young men sometimes used condoms while having commercial sex and the rest never used condoms with either their steady sex partners or casual partners. All of them believed that condoms are good to prevent diseases but did not promote towards a good for feeling during the sexual intercourse.

Some young men reported that they never used condoms because they never had commercial sex and just had sex with their girlfriends. They did not need to use condoms with their girlfriends as they trusted that they were free from infections. One young man mentioned that he did not need to use condoms as he had sex with his only one steady partner (his girlfriend) and condom should be used by those who had multiple sex partners.

Although all the interviewed young women had sexual intercourse with their boyfriends, they never thought that they should use condoms. They reported that they did not need to use condom because they were not CSWs and they had sex only with their boyfriends and not with other men. They all thought that they would be looked down and stigmatized by their boyfriends and other people if they tried to buy, keep and use condoms.

Furthermore, they believed that because, they did not have casual sex partners but only had steady partners (their boyfriends) they were not at-risk from sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/ AIDS. Therefore, they confirmed that condom use was not concerned with them.

From this data, it can be concluded that although they were aware of STIs and HIV/AIDS and had some knowledge about them, only four young men used condoms with their casual sex partners but not regularly and others never used condoms at all. All the young women in this study never used condoms since they believed that they were not CSWs and only had sex with their boyfriends. From this information, it can be assumed that all the youth in this study were engaging in unsafe sexual practices and young women especially were the at-risk group because they were not aware they were at-risk.

4.7 Unsafe sexual practices

As mentioned earlier, the interviewed youth in this study were sexually active although they had limited proper sexual and reproductive health knowledge. All the

sexual practices reported by the youth were unsafe since condoms were not used consistently.

Although the youth in this study already knew that condoms use was the only and the best way to prevent sexually transmitted infections, none of them used condom regularly in their various types of sexual practices. They were not conscious about the prevention of pregnancy by using condoms causing the young women to suffer social, financial and health complications.

Key informants such as general practitioners working in this area, factory supervisors, community members and youth peer educators reported that the young working people in this area were engaging in sexual practices most of which were unsafe.

The indicators of unsafe sexual practices were; increasing rate of sexually transmitted diseases (measured by the increasing numbers of youth clients suffering from STIs visiting private clinics), reported teenage pregnancy, reported induced abortion, which could be measured by the complications needed to undertake hospital management, reported and observed love affairs, and reported never, irregular or intermittent condom use among the youth in this study.

4.7.1 Unsafe sexual practices – no condom

Although the interviewed youth had knowledge about condoms and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, none of them ever used condoms.

Young men's unsafe sexual practices – no condom

Young men interviewed have never used condom with their steady partners or casual partners because they did not like the sensation of caused by the condoms. They felt not good, hot and itching during intercourse. One interviewed young man revealed that he did not like the slippery sensation of handling the condom so he never tried to use it.

Some of them used condom irregularly with casual sex partners depending on the appearances, price and place. They mostly use condoms with casual sex partners who exchange money for sex, have a dirty complexion, while body smell or mouth smell, have suspicious features of infection such as darkened eyes and those who were thin.

They never used condoms with casual partners who were fair complexioned, beautiful, fashionable and those who worked in the nightclubs of downtown Yangon. Most of them believed that these beautiful girls working in downtown Yangon nightclubs were clean and free from infections. They believed they were safe because these women were more expensive than those of the study area.

All the young men in this study were really conscious that homosexual relations were unsafe and dangerous for them without using condom as all of them prejudged that homosexuality was the source of AIDS. Although most of the young men were conscious about homosexual relationship, all the male homosexuals (young men having sex with men) in focus group discussion revealed that they used condom irregularly with their casual male partners.

The young men having sex with men mentioned that they felt a hot and tingling sensation when they used condom during intercourse. However, they reported that their concern about the dangers of HIV/ AIDS for their partners and also themselves make them this to negotiate condom use.

Most of the young men mentioned that for their heterosexual relationships with their girlfriends were safe sexual practice and sexual relationships with the casual partners were unsafe so that they were aware of protecting themselves. However, they had different practices with different casual partners depending on the complexion, tidiness, cleanliness, body structure, body smell, mouth smell, vaginal smell and amount of paid.

None of the young men had thought of or used any protection when having sex with their girlfriends. But they were all conscious of infections and used condoms with their casual partners, however, they never used condoms regularly. Some young men in this study revealed their experiences with sexually transmitted diseases after having sex with casual sex partners.

The majority of the young men reported that they were safe while having sex with their girlfriends who were good girls and whose only sexual experience with them and not with other people. One young man reported his experience after getting a sexually transmitted disease after sexual intercourse with his girlfriend at the first date after two weeks of their falling in love with each other.

Young women's unsafe sexual practices – no male condom use with their partners

None of the young women interviewed used condom while having sex with their boyfriends. They all believed that they were not commercial sex workers so they were not at risk of infections. They all reported that condoms should be used only for commercial sex workers, by men who had multiple sex partners those staying away from their families, and married couples to prevent pregnancy.

They had negative attitudes towards condom use although most of them knew that condoms could prevent sexually transmitted infections including HIV/ AIDS. All of them agreed that they should not use condoms because they were unmarried and had sex only with their boyfriends. Most of them reported that they trusted their boyfriends and they also wanted their boyfriends to trust them so condoms would be a great barrier to build trust.

The women worried that their boyfriends would be suspicious of them having previous sexual experience but they never thought of their boyfriends' previous sexual experiences which could affect them. Therefore, all the interviewed young women never tried to use condoms while having sex with their boyfriends. They all worried about getting pregnant and the irresponsibility of their boyfriends if they were pregnant so they all tried to protect themselves from getting pregnant by taking some contraceptives and traditional medicines. They consulted to their peers, close friends, older females such as traditional birth attendants and traditional drug store keepers.

Ti* a 19 years old young woman said: *"I don't want to ask my boyfriend to use condom. If I told him to use it, he would be suspicious of me experienced of previous exposure or it seemed not to trust him"*

Only two girls who worked in nightclubs admitted that they tried to negotiate with their causal partners to use condoms when they paid for sex. However, one young woman reported that how and whether to negotiate depended on the characteristics of their partners who were higher social class than her. Some of her partners looked very smart and had a good personality so she hesitated to ask them to use condoms so she had sex with them without using them.

Li, 20 year old young woman working in night club said: *"I hesitated to ask my partners (A Ko Gyi) to use condom since he had good personality and I afraid of him"*

From this information, it can be concluded that the young women never thought of themselves at risk of infections, just worried about pregnancy and its complications and they blindly trusted their boyfriends. These attitudes of the young women led them to unsafe sexual practices since they never used condoms with their boyfriends.

For casual partners, night club women hesitated to negotiate since their partners came from a higher social class. Although they wanted to use condoms, they could not argue with their customers leading the young women to unsafe sexual practices.

4.7.2 Coercive or forced sex

Young women are socialized to be naïve and sexually inactive. So, it was very difficult for them to express their affection so all the young women had to follow their boyfriends leading a favorable setting for the men to take advantages of them.

All the young women interviewed experienced to the first sexual act by dating with boyfriends, while their boyfriends were drunk, following their boyfriends' demand, and during special occasions such as the water festival, pagoda festivals and social events when they were out of their house the whole day and sometimes at night. Two young women admitted that they had their first sex with their boyfriends while they were intoxicated by alcohol and drugs mixed with soft drinks which were given them by their boyfriends.

Zi*an 18 year old girls said: *"My boyfriend had sex with me after feeding some drugs in soft drink and I did not know very well how it happened. He promised that he would get married me according to our Islami tradition".*

One interviewed young woman had her first sexual intercourse with her boyfriend after running away from her drunken father who blamed and beat her because she had a boyfriend. The other one engaged her first sex act when she was forced by her boyfriend saying he was commitment to get married, would transferring to another girl or have commercial sex.

Ki* a 24 years old woman said: *"I loved him and he told me to get married so I had sex with him. But he run away from me after getting pregnancy".*

Most of the young women engaged into sexual intercourse because of their boyfriends' demand or with social factors. From this information it can be concluded that the sex act for the young men was opportunistic because they intended to have

sex with the young women to satisfy to themselves or because of peer pressure. All the young women in this study were unintentionally exposed to the first sex act and all of them were entrapped in their boyfriends demands as they were emotionally and mentally weak to argue against their demands.

4.7.3 Group sex activities

All the young men in this study ever had first sexual intercourse with commercial sex workers through their peer network however, none of their peers talked about condom use in every sexual intercourse. All the young men admitted that they never seen the way of condom using in the sex movies and pornographic materials so they had no intention to use condom during their first sexual intercourse.

All the young men reported that they used to join group sex activities with their peer groups after drinking and getting together. They revealed that they were most liked to go to commercial sex establishment in their peer groups because they felt safe emotionally and physically. One young man mentioned that he was reluctant to go to brothels alone but became brave when his peers went there. One admitted that having commercial sex was only an idea for him but he was happy to go with his peers.

They all admitted that they never used condoms in their group sex. One young man reported that although he was already conscious about condom use, he was reluctant to use condoms within the peer group for fear of becoming unique in the group. All of his peers refused to use condom because they were notorious that he did not use condom after getting infection.

“I wanted to use condom after getting infection. But, I was reluctant to ask my friends because the whole group could not agree with me. I was the only one person wanted to use it and my friends did not want to use it so I did not ask them to use even I had an idea. I went to the clinic secretly without let them to know about it” (Min, 22 years old)

From this information it can be concluded that all the youth never used condom regularly because there is no information and encouragement to use condom regularly from their peers and pornographic materials. In addition to this, the sense of the youth to belong to their peer and also peer pressure not to use condom, and setting of sex act

which is happened unintentionally and accidentally, leading them to engage unsafe and unprotected sex.

4.8 Youth lifestyles, gender differences in sexuality and cultural beliefs related to STIs/HIV/ AIDS and unintended pregnancy prevention underlying unsafe sex

4.8.1 Lifestyles and networks underlying unsafe sex

All the interviewed respondents were engaging unsafe sex since they are having sex with any types of partners without using condom properly and regularly. The first explanation of unsafe sexual practices would be related to the youth lifestyles and networks which were influenced by the socio-economic and socio-cultural characteristics.

It was more likely that socio-economic factors forced the youth to work outside their family control and join with their peers to develop the peer networks for their new interests and experiences. Most of the interviewed respondents came from the unstable families and could not follow the traditional family control of the youth.

In addition to this, most of them moved from other places to the study area. Therefore, most of them did not receive community support and network to reach the health education and health care service packages. These provoked the youth to entrap into unsafe sexual practices resulting in health and social complications.

Most of the youth in this study exposed to the outside world at younger age (younger than 18, school going age) and most of them were free to go out and join with their peers to perform leisure activities.

Most of the young men used to join commercial sex in a group after drinking, watching pornographic movies and getting together and most of them rarely used condom properly and regularly, leading them to engage into unsafe sex. In addition to this, the nature of their jobs (long working hours, freedom in karaoke lounge & night clubs, working in night shifts) permitted them to join sexual activities frequently and social relationship in the working places was more open and permitted to engage in sexual activities.

Most of the young women exposed to outside world to work would also join with their peers to perform leisure activities in their free times. This introduced social relationship with males in the workplaces and also at leisure places leading them to intimate relationships. In addition to this, some favorable settings encourage these intimate relationships into sexual relationship with males although they did not know about the sexual matters, condom and contraceptive use, and how to protect themselves from the infections and pregnancy.

These suggests that changing lifestyle of the studied youth transform the traditional way of them in this study area due to unstable family structures, expose to outside world at young age to work for their economic advancement, exposure to modernization, multimedia communication and peer group pressure.

In regards to these changes in youth lifestyles, it can encourage the youth to introduce new interests and develop youth networks to join leisure and sexual activities without proper knowledge of how to protect themselves from infections because the youth networks and multimedia did not give knowledge how to use condom properly.

According to a case study of Jasmine 20 years old young women, works as waitress in night club, experienced with social and financial crisis when she was 13. Her father died of respiratory disease and she tried to work to support her family by working in Government Rice Mill Factory. At that time she met a friend who worked in a night club and she joined this club with her friend. This was her first job as an entertainment girl in club and message parlor.

After that, she rented a small apartment and stayed with her friends. Most of her sexual partners were concerned with commercial purpose so they all are the customers from the club and message parlor. She had no special feeling to have sex with these partners and just only for financial purpose.

The other young woman Lotus 21 years old migrant workers, moved from Phra Pradaeng to work because no one took care of her family when her parents passed away. She used to spend leisure times with her friends and also with her boyfriend who fell in love with 5 months ago. She fell in love with her boyfriend when she followed her friend dating with boyfriend. She said that she could not refuse when her boyfriend asked her to have sex because of excitement, touching and love.

4.8.2 Gender differences in sexual partnerships and meanings

Sexual partnerships:

Although most of the interviewed respondents had more than one sexual partner in their lives, there were considerable differences in the sexual partnerships between the young men and young women in this study. All interviewed young men viewed their casual sex partners negatively as bad girls and source of infections while they had multiple sex partners both steady and casual ones. This suggests that the young men never thought to respect or sympathize these partners and just positioned very importance on self satisfaction and pleasure.

Case studies on interviewed young men revealed that 22 years old first year university student working as KTV operator in Karaoke lounge and had many sexual partners. He used to join commercial sex with a group of friends and rarely to go alone. He spends his leisure times with girlfriends and watching movies and also brought his girlfriends to his friend's house and have sex.

His sexual partners were his colleagues, girlfriends and also commercial sex workers. He has no feeling with other girls but worried about pregnancy with his girlfriends and also about his dignity. He gave some contraceptives to his girlfriend.

The opportunities to choose and change their sexual partners were also different between young men and young women. All the young men could change their causal sexual partners whatever they liked and they could standardize their steady partners who will be faithful, had no previous boyfriend or sex partner, good attitude and were willing to follow their demands.

A case study of Rose, 19 years old young women engaged into unsafe sexual practices in a special event (Water festival) during which her boyfriend brought her to his house. There was no one in his house and her boyfriend also drunk. She followed him as she already knew to ask her to have sex there because she loved him.

She had two sexual partners and the first one was 30 years old bus sparer who gave the money whenever she wanted so she was psychologically dependent and after that he left her alone. The second one is trishaw driver whose family does not like her. This forced her to stay together with her boyfriend without any intention.

Young women had very limited chance to choose their sexual partners. Their sexual partners were really related with love, emotional attachment, dependency for their lives and all were conditional. Some young women were working in night clubs did not have chance to choose their casual sex partners as young men because it was really concerned with their economy for exchanging money with sex.

This suggests that the young women in this study were subordinated by the socially bounded male and female's roles. It could be unsafe for the young women whose boyfriends had both types of sex partners when they were not using condom with any sex partner.

Sexual meanings:

Case studies revealed the gender difference in sexual meanings among the studied youth which are assumed to force them to engage unsafe sex. Dahlia, 18 years old female factory worker was raped by her boyfriend at his house after feeding some drugs in soft drink. She asked her boyfriend to marry but he refused and then she aborted and was hospitalized. After five days of abortion, her boyfriend came to me to have sex. She followed his desire because of love and also intended to get married.

Another case study of 22 years old male bus conductor, used to date with his girlfriend in the parks and pagodas and then bring her to have sex in comfortable place such as quiet place in the park, guest house and his friend's houses. He already planned to have sex with his girlfriend when they dated. He used to persuade his girlfriends to have sex by touching her hand, kissing and then having sex. He never used condom when he had sex with his girlfriends.

The sexual meanings were significantly different between the young men and young women because the sexual knowledge came from their peers and social environment and also were considerably influenced by the traditional and cultural norms which were constructed by the traditional patriarchal society.

This suggests the traditional role of being males towards the sexual meanings of the young men and young women differently and the males have right to be sexually active and more needs to have sex as compared with the young women. This also

proves that the females have to follow and fulfill their partners' desire (male partners) as a result of persuasion by males' demand in general.

4.8.3 Cultural beliefs on STIs, HIV/ AIDS and unintended pregnancy

Although most of the interviewed youth experienced of STIs and unintended pregnancy, most of them were not aware of at-risk themselves. All the interviewed respondents believed that sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/ AIDS were really concerned with commercial sex, so-called bad or loose girl, those who had multiple sex partners.

Most of the beliefs of the youth concerning with sexually transmitted diseases came from their peers while some sexual and reproductive knowledge came from the group discussions of Department of Health and Non-governmental organization. Minority of them received proper knowledge from these sources but some of them had unreliable knowledge from their peers and older peoples.

Some interviewed young women experienced of unintended pregnancy since they had limited knowledge about safe period and contraceptives to prevent pregnancy. Most of them believed that contraceptives were really concerned with commercial sex and married couples. They all reluctant to take contraceptives and condom to protect themselves since they had very limited knowledge about them.

In addition to this, the young unmarried women were restricted to accept contraceptives and condom use socially and culturally since these were assumed to be concerned with married and so-called bad girls. Therefore, most of the young women were trapped to sexual intercourse without any precaution and preparation leading to unsafe sexual practices.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

This qualitative study explores youth lifestyles; gender differences in sexual meanings and sexual partnership; cultural beliefs on STIs, HIV/ AIDS; and unintended pregnancy and condom use. It also set out to explore and describe the various sexual practices among selected youth in a peri-urban area of Myanmar. It also studied the socio-economic context that generates the lifestyles initiating sexual exposure, perceptions on sexual partners, and meanings, and beliefs related to sexual health problems, resulting from unsafe sexual practices.

All the informants reported work in factories and private business, most of them had dropped out from middle school and only three of them were studying in the University of Distant Education. All the informants came from unstable and low income families, and they all moved to the study area from slum areas of Yangon and other provinces for housing, economic and family crises, the relatively low living costs and for employment opportunities.

Most of the respondents stayed with unstable families (absence of one of the parents, staying with their grandparents, relatives and adopted mothers) which created serious family conflicts, and social and economic problems. These made the youth find their own way to solve these problems leading them to go outside to work, to spend their time with their peers and group. The exposure to the outside world led to new interests and experiences even if under family control.

Most of the young women went out to work to contribute to family expenses. The need to help with family expenses was reinforced by the burden of irresponsible older male siblings and the responsibility for younger siblings. Most of the young men interviewed worked outside the home for their own expenses and independence. Unlike the young women and they could go out and join with their peer group without restrictions to do so.

Most of the interviewed respondents were unhappy to move to the study area because they had difficulties adapting to the new situation and environment, staying away from their families and moving away from their old friends. Most of the youth tried to adapt to the new situation by joining new peer groups. With these group they develop new interests and ways to deal with problems. This intend led to work time and leisure time activities.

The lifestyles of the youth in this study turned around their working environment, leisure activities and peer group relationships. The working environment was found to be favorable for the youth to develop social relationships with their peers (males and females) creating peer networks to join leisure activities within their group. Most of the youth in this study spend their leisure time outside their home with their peers. Young men join with their groups in empty houses, tea shops, beer stations, corners of the street, public parks, cinemas, karaoke lounges and nightclubs leading them to sexual activities.

Most of the young women joined their group in their own houses, friend's houses, pagodas, public parks and cinemas and these activities also led to sexual activities. They were introduced to sexual activities by their boyfriends through dating and on some special occasions such as traditional festivals and gatherings with male and female friends together with their boyfriends.

In addition to this, peer pressure and group identity were very important factors for the youth in joining a job, leisure activities and sexual activities. Most of the young men to join with their peer group for drinking, gambling, getting together and having commercial sex. Most of the group activities became sexual activities.

Most of the young women were influenced by their peer groups to join the common leisure activities, and some of the young women were influenced by the peers to engage in sexual activities by dating with boyfriends through their female friends. These leisure activities led to sexual activities for the young women when conditions following their boyfriends urging without any prior intention to do so.

It was found that there was gender difference in sexual exposure. Young men could be exposed by peers, older males and pornographic materials while young women had sexual exposure through their boyfriends at the time of their first sexual

intercourse. The study also revealed that the age of first sexual intercourse was as early as 13 for the young women and 15 for the young men.

The earliest sexual acts for most of the young men were masturbation and commercial sex through their peer networks. Masturbation was not common for the young women. There was, however, the intention to have sex either alone with their partners or as group visit to commercial sex establishment. All the young women in this study were exposed to the first sex act unintentionally and all of them give into their boyfriends' demands as they were emotionally and mentally weak to refuse.

There were differences in feelings about the first sexual act for the young men and the young women. Most of the young men reported that they felt great success, felt free, felt good, satisfied with their manhood, willing to get the same feeling once more and felt relax.

All the young women said that they did not get any pleasure or satisfaction from their first sex act, were of becoming pregnant, scared of the social and health complications of pregnancy, worried about their boyfriends leaving them and the impact of losing their virginity on their future husbands.

All the sexual partners of the interviewed youth came from the same socio-economic background and they met with their sexual partners in their work places or through leisure activities. Most of the young men met their causal partners intentionally with their group in their work places and leisure places while most of the young women met their sex partners by accidental encounters.

Most of the young men had steady and causal sex partners. The number of their sexual partners ranged from one to many and the duration of their relationship ranged from one night to years depending on the types of relationship and partners. One young man had only one steady sex partner (girlfriend) and was committed getting married. All of them change their partners when they wanted to.

Most of the young women had only one steady sex partners (boyfriends) and they all hoped to have a strong and prolonged relationship, and a committed to get married. However, they had to change their partners because their boyfriends left them after having sex, if they become pregnant, or after a long relationship leading the young women to deal with a bad image resulting from social and health problems. Two young women in this study had casual sex partners for money and they changed their

partners for their livelihood. However, they also had steady sex partners (boyfriends) and hoped to get married within them.

The young women had sexual intercourse with their boyfriends because of their love, hope for the future, and future hope, social and economic factors. The meaning for the young men in this study was mostly concerned with love, desire, maleness, group happiness and pleasure to have sex with both steady and casual partners.

All the interviewed young women agreed that they did not have equal chances with the men to choose their partners and in their sexual behaviors. They all reported that they were culturally and traditionally bounded to be good, naïve girls, virgin and faithful women to their fiancés and future husbands. They had no chance to openly discuss about sexual matters with their elders and peers because of traditional norms and values.

All the young men revealed that males had to be brave, aggressive, independent, sexually active and the stronger sex when compared with females. They all were socialized as males who had to be brave, learn about sex, drinking and gambling, and to be independent and strong enough for their future lives.

Most of the young women in this study mentioned that they lost their virginity, future lives and faced social, financial and health complications as the consequences of pregnancy after having sex with their first partners. All the interviewed young men reported that of sexual intercourse had positive meanings such as happiness, success, freedom and pleasurable manhood after their first sexual intercourse.

Since none of the interviewed respondents had proper knowledge about STIs, HIV/AIDS and pregnancy, most of them were not aware to protect themselves from these problems. There is different between young women and young men to be unaware how to protect themselves and using condoms. Most of young men were conscious about preventing sexually transmitted diseases by using condoms when having sex with some commercial sex partners.

Most of the young women were unaware of the risk to contract sexually transmitted diseases as they thought that they were safe to have sex with their boyfriends. They trusted their boyfriends and they knew that STIs and condom use were concerned with commercial sex workers, married couples and those who had multiple sex partners.

All the young women were reluctant to use condoms because they judged that condoms should not and need not be used for sex with their boyfriends and should only be used with bad girls (commercial sex workers).

However, they all have engaged in various sexual practices such as heterosexual and homosexual relationship; vaginal, anal and oral sex; and various positions of without using condom properly, regularly and consistently. In addition to this, condom were not be always available in the favorable settings for sexual activities such as guest houses, parks, or brothels and were difficult to get at night.

Although most of the youth in this study had experienced sexually transmitted diseases, or had had unintended pregnancy with its complications, most of them still engaged in unsafe sexual practices because of peer pressure, their own sexual meanings with various sexual partners, cultural beliefs on STIs, HIV/AIDS, pregnancy prevention and condom use.

Among these factors, beliefs and perceptions on condom use with different sexual partners in various settings for sexual activities are the important factor to promoting unsafe sexual practices among the youth.

5.2 Discussion

The conceptual framework in this study is taken partly from the Ruth Dixon Mueller analytical framework in which sexual meanings and partnerships and sexual practices are culturally constructed, particularly in terms of gender differences. This study reveals how youth lifestyles and networks, cultural beliefs on STI/HIV/AIDS, unintended pregnancy prevention and condom use influences unsafe sexual practices.

It was found that Myanmar youth culture was changing rapidly because of globalization and cultural diffusion through youth networks. Even though one generation ahead of the Myanmar youth of today thinks that sexual activity is a secret. The youth of today are becoming more willing and open not only to discuss the issue but to break past practices.

5.2.1 Gender differences in youth sexuality

Meanings of virginity

The social construction of sexuality relates to the process by which sexual thoughts, behaviors, and conditions are interpreted and attributed cultural meaning (Muller, 1993; Otner and Whitehead, 1981; Vance, 1991). For example, Virginity is a social product which means that young women control their sexual desire and keep their private organs only for their partners and future husbands. So this is why losing virginity for a lot of girls may mean the loss of their future. On the other hand, virginity is not really concerned with manhood.

In this study, most of the young women were concerned about the loss of their virginity which meant loss of their future and their dignity. They all interpreted the loss of virginity as the end of their world so that there was nothing special beyond that. They all felt guilty to give their virginity to their boyfriends.

Young men revealed that they wanted their girlfriends to be virgins, they had negative attitudes towards young women who had experienced previous sexual activities and who had had multiple sexual partners (especially commercial sex workers). However, they never thought about men's virginity and they believed that they had a right to engage in premarital and extra-marital sex for manhood, curiosity and fun.

Therefore, virginity is the a social product which determines if a woman is good or bad. This tends is contrary to ideas about the male's role in which men do not need to help their virginity.

Concepts of Masculinity and Femininity

Dixon Muller (1993) pointed out that sexuality had different meanings to people in different contexts. In some cultures, the idea of sexuality is influenced by concepts of masculinity and femininity. The meaning of being a "real" men is associated with virility and potency as well as honor, bravery (active and aggressive) and responsibility. While the meaning of a "good" women is tied to chastity and modesty (not to be aggressive in sexual expression).

Sexual meanings for the youth in this study were significantly different between young men and young women because the sexual knowledge came from their peers and social environment. These were influenced by traditional and cultural norms constructed by the traditional patriarchal society.

The young men received sexual knowledge from their peers, older males and pornographic materials. They could also discuss sex and sexual matters openly. The society permits them to learn and to be curious about sex as the nature of males so that they could enjoy sexual practices so as to acquire maleness, pleasure and make fun in a group or alone.

The young women intended to be dependent physically, financially and psychologically for their future lives concerning with their sex partners. All of them hesitated to talk about sex. They are culturally and socially bounded to be naïve good girls not interested about sex so they have negative attitudes to sex.

This suggests the continuation of traditional role of being males especially about sexual meanings for the young men and young women with the males having the right to be sexually active and having a greater for sex needs to have sex when compared with young women. This also proves that the females have in general, to follow and fulfill their partners' desires(male partners) as a result of persuasion by males.

Sexual partnerships

Ruth Dixon-Mueller also mentioned that sexuality is culturally transposed to become a social product. In the other words, the natural function of sexuality was captured by hierarchical social relationships within the society (Dixon-Mueller cited in Grupo C, 1981). This tends to create a gender difference in the opportunity and choice to change sexual partners due to the sexual double standard of the hierarchical society.

In this study, opportunities to choose and change sexual partners were different between young men and young women. All the young men could change their causal sexual partners (commercial or girlfriends) whatever they liked and they could stereotype their steady partners (girlfriends) as having to be faithful, never having had previous boyfriends, sex partner, having good attitudes and willing to follow the men's demands.

Young women had very limited opportunities to choose their sexual partners. Their sexual partners were associated with love, emotional attachment, dependency for their lives and all were conditional. Two young women who were working in nightclubs were unable to choose their casual sex partners like the young men because their encounters were based on the exchange of sex and money to support their financial commitments.

All young men viewed their casual sex partners (especially commercial sex workers) negatively as bad girls and as a source of infections. But they still had multiple steady and casual sex partners. This suggests that the young men never thought to respect or sympathize with these partners and only place importance on the self satisfaction and pleasure. This suggests that the young women in this study were subordinated by socially bounded male and female roles.

5.2.2 Youth lifestyles underlying unsafe sex

Janell L(1996) revealed that peer pressure more strongly influences the sexual behaviors of the youth than other behaviors (cited in Brook G, 1989, p 152). Another study mentioned that most of the youth employed outside the traditional family as a result of economic needs experience changes in their lifestyles. As a result, the role of the parents declined and peer influence became stronger (Karl L, 2001). This study also revealed that although most of the sexual practices were initiated and encouraged by peers, the information from peers was not enough to have safe sex.

The impact of economic needs led the youth in this study to work outside the traditional family to create new interests and strategies to work with their lives. Most of the interviewed youth had had sexually transmitted diseases and/or unwanted pregnancy. All the respondents reported that they were engaging in sexual practices and without using condom properly, these were likely to be unsafe.

The young men engaged in group sex with their casual sex partners. Group sex meant that three or four young men lined up to have sex with one casual sex partner and none used condom. They said that group sex is frequently associated with drinking, watching pornographic movies and gambling.

Between the age of 14 and 16, most of the young people tried to find ways to have intimate relationship with others resulting in increased frequency of dating.

Those who have early dating experiences are more prone to engage in premarital sexual practices even though they are young. The youth sexual behavior is a quick solution to their problems related to loneliness, family crises and awkward feelings (Janell L and Paul R, p145).

All the female respondents engaged in their first sexual intercourse at a young age (13-15) and most of them had sexual intercourse because of peer pressure, persuasion by boyfriends, trust between boyfriends and girlfriends and economic dependency on their boyfriends.

It is significant that most informants mentioned that they had had multiple sexual partners throughout their lives without proper knowledge from sex education. Most of the interviewed respondents also reported that they had sex with various types of sexual partners without using condoms or used them irregularly.

5.2.3 Sexual practices

Homosexuality

Lupton states that society define sexual orientation as either normal or abnormal. Normal sexual orientation is heterosexual, thus, homosexual and bisexual are considered as abnormal sexual orientations (Lupton, 1994, p. 24). However, homosexuality is very common in some countries and homosexual clubs and subculture have arisen (Janell L and Paul R, p249).

Although homosexuality is not uncommon in the studied population and most of the youth knew about it, they had negative attitudes towards homosexual men because of their sexual behavior. Most of the youth agreed with condom use in anal sex with male partners (males having sex with males) because such partners were stigmatized as a source of infection.

Love and sex

Feminist theorists believe that social, economic and political separations by gender is more prone to produce forced sex with women as it is one form of men's domination to women (Janell L, p 571). Most of the young men in this study reported they engaged in coercive sex with their girlfriends by gradually changing the patterns

of approaching the young women from persuasion to force by using the words love, giving a commitment to get married, by going to commercial sex if the girlfriends refuse, and by giving alcohol and drugs.

One qualitative study in Vietnam mentioned that a number of youth believed that love could not exist and strengthen without sex. Most of them thought that sexual relationships might increase the likelihood of marriage (Khuat T Hong, 1998). Most of the young women engaged into sex with their boyfriends with the meanings of love, excitement and the hope of getting married.

It can be assumed, therefore, that most of the young women had sex because of love and the hope of the stronger relationships to their boyfriends while the young men tried to persuade their girlfriends by various ways. Male dominations in society is, therefore, not only economic and political but also sexual.

Negotiation to use condom

Since all the young men interviewed mentioned that they did not like to use condom with any types of sexual partners, it seem unlikely that they would accept negotiation by their casual sex partners to use condoms. They would not think about safe sex practices with their steady partners (girlfriends) by using condoms. Condom use for contraceptive purpose was not a concern for them.

Communication about sexuality is very difficult for people especially for young women who are socialized to be ashamed and scared to talk about sex (Janell L, p 227). It is very difficult for the interviewed young women to negotiate the use condoms with their boyfriends as they are socialized to be naïve and not to talk about sex openly.

All the young women in this study were not supposed to negotiate condom use with their steady sex partners (boyfriends) because they were worried about misinterpretations by their boyfriends that they were bad or loose girls and had had previous sexual exposure. In addition to this, young men also stereotyped their steady sex partners (girlfriends) to be naïve and lackng knowledge about sexual matters including the use of condoms.

These factors suggested that the young men followed males' role to persuade and then force female partners to have sex so leading the young women to have a greater

chances of unsafe sex. Those who negotiated to use condoms would be assumed to be sexually well-experienced or sexually active girls by the traditionally social norms and values.

Condom and prostitution

In Myanmar, the 100% condom use program is associated with the prevalence of HIV/ AIDS and STI campaigns. Condom promotion was initiated with marginalized groups such as prostitutes, truck drivers, seafarers and men living apart from the families. Therefore, condom use is bounded as only for marginalized groups.

Although all the interviewed respondents knew that condoms can prevent sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/ AIDS, most of them did not use them regularly and properly since they all judged that condom were only for commercial sex. There were also different attitude towards condom use between young women and young men according to social norms, values and the youth's perceptions.

Most of the young men interviewed revealed that condoms should be used for having sex with their casual sex partners and stigmatized their female casual partners as the sources of STIS. The young women interviewed were not supposed to use condoms with their boyfriends because they were afraid of being stigmatized as bad girls by buying, keeping and using them.

This suggests that gender differences in social norms and values concerning condom use leads the youth to engage in unsafe sexual practices which mostly endanger the sexual and reproductive health of the young women.

5.2.4 Beliefs on STIs, HIV/ AIDS, unintended pregnancy prevention and unsafe sex

Fearfulness of STIs does not influence the sexual activities, premarital and otherwise of the youth. They were all conscious about HIV/ AIDS which was identified to be among homosexual males and intravenous drug users (Janell L cited in Jedlicka, 1987, p 496). Therefore, although most of the interviewed youth had had STIs and unintended pregnancy, most of them were not aware of the risk to themselves. All the interviewed respondents believed that sexually transmitted

diseases including HIV/ AIDS were concerned with commercial sex, so-called bad or loose girl and those who had multiple sex partners.

Most of the beliefs of the youth concerning with sexually transmitted diseases came from their peers while some sexual and reproductive knowledge came from group discussions led by the Department of Health and Non-governmental organization. Some of them received proper information from these sources and some of them had unreliable knowledge from their peers and older people.

Some interviewed young women had an unintended pregnancy because they had limited knowledge about safe period and contraceptives to prevent pregnancy. Most of them believed that contraceptives were really concerned with commercial sex and married couples. They were all reluctant to take contraceptives and condom to protect themselves from unsafe sex since they had information about STIs.

In addition to this, the young unmarried women were restricted socially and culturally to accept contraceptives and condom use since these were assumed to be concerned with married and so-called bad girls. Therefore, most of the young women were trapped into sexual intercourse without any precaution and preparation, leading to unsafe sexual practices.

5.3 Conclusion

An understanding of youth and unsafe sexual practices will be a major concern for the general population and the future of the whole country because the youth population is a large portion of it.

Although the Department of Health and Non-Governmental Organizations are conducting Adolescent Reproductive Health Programs, the sexual practice of youth will remain a major concern because of the changing and varying of youth lifestyles, the multiplicity of youth sexuality and beliefs on STI, HIV/ AIDS and unintended pregnancy prevention and condom use. This is a sensitive issue but still need to be understood so that program coordinators can have a better understanding of the intricacies of unsafe sexual practices related to sexual and reproductive health problems.

Sensitive ways are needed to impart the delicate ways to impart information to the sexually active and general youth population. At least, this means modifying the

approaches to the youth according to their nature and needs, and breaking down the traditional and cultural barriers that prevent the youth from openly getting proper knowledge and adequate life skill trainings. Such program about health and lifeskills are urgently needed.

The aim of the study was to explore the youth's lifestyles, gender differences in youth sexuality, and cultural barriers limiting the sexual knowledge of the youth. These were assumed create the various unsafe sexual practices leading sexual and reproductive health problems.

It was found that the youth in this study were varied in their sexuality, sexual practices and outcomes problems. It was found, in addition, that there were differences in these between the young men and the young women. All the youth were at risk from engaging in unsafe sexual practices due to their lifestyles revolving round their work place and peer networks, the influence of alcohol and multimedia, sexual partnerships, sexual meanings and practices, beliefs about STIs, HIV/AIDS and unintended pregnancy. These in turn were influenced by the socio-cultural and socio-economic characteristics.

In addition to this, the traditional socialization of gender differences provided the young women with limited information about sex and negotiation power to have safe sex. This led them to face social, economic and health problems as complications of these unsafe sexual practices.

This study intended to understand the real picture of the youth related to unsafe sex. It was also intended as a step towards highly structured research that will elaborate more details about youth concerning their lifestyles, sexuality and cultural beliefs on prevention of sexual and reproductive health problems; and gender differences on these issues. These need to be addressed in future youth programs and campaigns concerning sexual and reproductive health, and life skill programs.

CHAPTER VI

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study emphasizes the fact of the need for youth programs to be conducted for the out-school working single youth so they can receive appropriate information and knowledge about unsafe sexual practices, and the sexual and reproductive health, and social problems as its negative outcomes. This need should be effectively conducted to protect the youth from these problems.

Moreover, an integrated approach which would need to be included, concerns for gender differences awareness, empowerment of young women related to sexual matters, sex education and sexuality awareness. Such information should be made available in school, workplaces and leisure places, in order to overcome the traditional and cultural beliefs, about sexual and reproductive health issues.

Such a program needs to be conducted from pre-adolescences until people are adult, in school is important to maintain the continuation of this program along with the development of the youth until they are full grown mature adults.

6.1 General Recommendations

The following are suggested:

- Although adolescent reproductive health program are conducted in the study area by the the Department of Health and Non-Governmental Organization, knowledge about sexuality and sex issues among the respondents is still limited. Therefore, sex education programs should be modified, based on the needs of the particular group of youth.
- Information from the informants, peers and key-informants should be analyzed and programs should be designed to promote community participation concerning sex education and knowledge about sexuality, and they should fit within the social and cultural context of the youth.
- Since sex education programs in school curriculum are limited, most of the informant especially young women, dropped-out of school was adapt to before taking the program and were, therefore, exposure to the outside world and working places

without knowledge about sex and sexuality. Therefore, sex education program should be in the school curriculum to ensure that youth would be knowledgeable about sexuality, sexual and reproductive health risks, self-confident, self-aware, and empowered to make decisions and to negotiate to have safe sex.

- Most of the informants reported that their first sexual intercourse occurred after they started to work, and only a few while they were students. Even those who reached secondary school had limited knowledge about sexuality and sexual health. It was apparent from the interviewees so that sex education and youth programs should be designated to cover in-school, out-of-school working youth.

- The collaboration of Department of Education and the Department of Health is needed to set up a specific curricula covering sexuality, sexual and reproductive health, and life skills which should focus on the young students protecting themselves from unsafe sexual practices and its complications.

- This program has to be developed through the collaboration among various sectors (education, health, labor departments and private sectors). This will partly fulfill the opportunity for the youth to receive sexual knowledge and information when they leave out of the school and join to the workplaces.

- As sexuality is sensitive issue for the youth, most of them are reluctant to explore sexual matters and problems. However, they mostly receive sexual knowledge and information from their peers and they are willing to explore their experiences and feelings with them. Therefore, peer education programs should be launched to listen to and seek advice from the youth concerning sexuality and sexual matters. This program is needed more for the young women who have very limited opportunities to openly explore their sexual issues and experiences.

- Recent peer education program of the Department of Health and the Non-Governmental Organizations, should intervene in various groups such as out-of-school, in-school and working youth to strengthen their sexual knowledge. This program should overcome constraints such as judgmental ideas about the advantages and disadvantages of youth sexual activities and also find ways of approaching the working youth in their work places in working hours when the owners are not cooperated. Access to factory should be negotiate with the factor owners and business people so as to implement integrated projects for the youth.

- As information concerning sexuality issues is sensitive, the informants used to explore their experiences and feelings with those they trusted the most. Most of the informants liked to seek supports concerning sexuality and the negative consequences of sexual and reproductive health issues from peers and close friends. The informants could discuss freely about these issues with their peers, prompt solutions would be arrived at. Peer group education is performed by Myanmar Red Cross Society in the studied area so that information obtained was provided to strengthen the design of the youth programs based on Participatory Learning Process.

- As the young women did not know how to protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections including HIV/ AIDS and unintended pregnancy, sex education talks about human development, menstruation, safe period and contraceptives including side-effects, should be included in the adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health programs.

- The findings revealed the different sexual practices which are vaginal, oral and anal sex among the youth. The youth sexual and reproductive programs should be non-judgemental between the relationship of different sexual practices and treatment and prevention program for the youth.

- Although STI and HIV/ AIDS campaigns are conducted by the Department of Health and Non-Governmental Organizations, the respondents' knowledge and awareness concerning these diseases was limited. Therefore, these campaigns were need to be specific and targeted to different youth groups and the whole population by various types of educational materials such as multimedia, signposts, billboards, traditional shows and some special events in local traditional festivals. Similarly, IEC materials need to be more precisely targeted to youth group, and distributed through youth peers to these groups.

- Since most of the reproductive health and birth spacing services targeted the married women of reproductive age (MWRA), unmarried young women could not access these services. These reproductive health services should be implemented and designed to be easily reached by the youth, especially young women, and the youth should be encourage to use these services. In addition to this, information about reproductive health services should be distributed to all the youth population so that

young men particularly be aware of these services and male participation in reproductive health services.

- A 100% condom use campaign is in operation all over the country although the collaboration of the Department of Health, the local NGOs and the international NGOs, these campaigns mainly target to the so-called high risk groups such as truck drivers, commercial sex workers, seamen and laborers absent from the families. According to the information from the interviewed respondents, they were not aware of themselves at-risks because they were not included in these high-risk groups, the condom campaigns should be strengthened to cover all the general youth population by giving precise knowledge to them as well as the population. These campaigns should try to avoid judgmental knowledge and information to given to high and low risk groups.

- The women and youth health education programs should educate the young women about sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy and their risks. The programs should emphasize the effectiveness and safeties of condom use, and encourage people to use them. These program need to be realistic and non-judgmental that condom use concerns with bad girls, commercial sex and those who have loose or bad characters.

- Women's empowerment programs should be conducted for the young women to make them aware of gender inequality and encourage them to be aware of themselves as at-risk peoples, the Department of Health, the Department of Education, the Labor Department and the Women Associations should collaborate with each other to implement an integrated program for young women to help build their self-confidence, self-awareness and self-protective skills.

- The information from the male respondents shows negative views towards their female sex partners, especially commercial sex workers and so-called bad or loose girls. They want their steady sex partners or wives to be clean, virgin, or without previous sexual exposure and naïve. This view is constructed from traditional cultural norms and values. Traditional cultural institutions should move these negative concepts to the positive ones in the traditions such as sisterhood, sympathy and respect females, to ensure that stigmatization and misconception would be avoided. Community participation should be strengthened to support and encourage young women to protect themselves from unsafe sexual practices and their complications.

- The Women Welfare Association, the Department of Health and other Women Organizations should collaborate to improve the women's welfare and protection against social and health problems all over the country. Improvement should include power of negotiation and encouragement of safe sexual practices among the youth.

- Health and Education programs should break the cultural beliefs about condom use such as the sensation and the feeling of condom during sexual intercourse, misconceptions about condom use such as these concerning commercial sex, and sinful for good women. Misperceptions related to STI transmission, also should be addressed as well as unreasonable beliefs and fears of STI, HIV/AIDS, pregnancy and its complications.

- Some informants accepted that couple being faithful to each other, and abstinence were ways not to infected with STIs, HIV/AIDS. This message was interpreted to mean that STI, HIV/AIDS infected people had multiple sex partners and engaged in unsafe sex. However, people who had only one sex partner could be infected with STIs when condom was not used when having sex with partner who was already infected.

- Social mobilization, community participation and volunteer spirit need to be strengthened among the youth for the youth programs to be effective throughout the country. The youth program showed people to feel a sense of responsibility when socializing and be equipped the youth to safe sex practice. Components of the program must include life skill training, counseling skills, negotiation skills and self-confident to engage safe sex practices. This will encourage healthier and safer life for the youth and create a more community based adolescent and youth program all over the country.

- According to the sexuality elements of Ruth Dixon-Mueller analytical framework, homosexual practices are included as well as heterosexual ones because homosexual practices are not uncommon among youth, even though stigmatized and hidden as abnormal sexual behavior of gays. As reported by the respondents, a variety of sex acts such as forced sex, rape, coercive sex and the nature of sex acts namely vaginal, oral and anal sex, should be addressed because most of the youth especially the young women were reluctant to explore and share their experiences. The Women Welfare Association and the Youth Peer Organization should implement youth

programs for young women in which they should be encouraged and empowered to explore their experiences and problems. The program should also guide them how to tackle these issues and prevent loss of confidence and loss of self-esteem among other young women.

- As counseling services are still limited and not popular among the youth, it is difficult to access enough information about sexual matters. So they consult their peers, therefore, counseling services should be easily accessible for the youth so as to speak out and seek advices. Confidentiality and privacy is need to be taken in these services.

- A model of family participation should be developed for the youth sexuality, sexual and reproductive health problems through the participatory learning process among the youth, and advocacy workshops and meetings with the parents, teachers, school authorities, health authorities, local authorities and also people from private business sectors.

- Youth friendly services, radio talks, telephone hotline services, newsletters, counseling by peers, youth leaders and health care providers, and also referral networks should be accessible among the youth.

- Strengthen the capacities of the youth peer educators and networks and also training of the new blood youth leaders should be emphasized so as to provide youth education campaigns and also refresher training on experiences of the youth leaders to improve their skills. Vocational training for the youth who experienced the complications of sexual matters should also be addressed for the youth to keep them with full confidence and to stand independently throughout their life.

6.2 Recommendations for Further Studies

- This study was undertaken mainly focused on the out-of school working youth so that further studies should be performed more widely to cover the different youth groups of various social context, in order to gain a fully understanding of the sexuality, sexual and reproductive risks and needs among the youth.

- The findings revealed the sexual diversities of the youth, heterosexual and homosexual. Although previous research tended to miss this diversity did not exist in Myanmar due to notion abnormality assumption on other form of sexual behaviors

other than heterosexual. Study on the diversities of the youth sexuality is considered to be addressed to explain these diversities which are socially and culturally pre-judged.

- The findings revealed that most of the youth engaged in sexual practices at younger age and are different with gender. Research on the sexuality and sexual and reproductive health risk-related practices of the youth is obviously necessary to explain the sexuality in terms of sexual partnership and sexual meanings, which are socially and culturally bounded.

- Some studies need to address the sexuality and cultural beliefs on sexual and reproductive health risks which are leading to unsafe sexual practices. Understanding the underlying factors and nature of this sexual practices will provide deeper information for the youth programs to develop appropriate measures.

- The findings revealed to be influenced by the social cultural context. Further study should be addressed on the adult perception on Adolescent and Youth Reproductive and Sexual Health focusing on youth sexuality.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Asian Population Studies Series No.149, Report and Recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting on Adolescents: Implications of Population Trends, Environment, and Development, 1997.
- Asian Population Studies Series No. 156: Adolescent Reproductive Health in the Asian and Pacific Region Summary, 2000.
- Baumer, Eric P et al, Community Effect on Youth Sexual Activity, Journal of Marriage & the Family, Vol 63, Issue 2, May 2001.
- Beesey, Allan, Sexual and Reproductive Health for Youth in Asia and Pacific: Policy Analysis, ed. Pimpawun B et al, Center for Health Policy Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mahidol University, 2004.
- Bhakta B. Gubhaju, Adolescent Reproductive Health in Asia, Outlook volume 16, No 3. Dec 1998.
- Bonmongkon Pimpawun. et al, Thai Adolescent Sexuality and Reproductive Health: implications for Developing Adolescents' Health Programs in Thailand, cited in WHO, Thailand 2000.
- Brown, Ann Denise, Shireen J. Jejeebhoy, Iqbal Shah and Kathryn M. Yount Sexual Relations among Young People in Developing Countries: Evidence from WHO case studies (Geneva, Department of Reproductive Health and Research, World Health Organization), 2001.
- Caplan, Pat, 1987, The Cultural Construction of Sexuality, Routledge:London & New York.
- Carroll Janell I, Sexuality and Gender, Herper Collins College Publishers, 1996.
- Degne Karl L, Reproductive Health Matters, Vol 9, No 17, May 2001.
- Department of Population (Myanmar)& UNFPA: Detailed Analysis on Fertility and Reproductive Health Survey, Yangon, July 2001.
- Department of Health (Myanmar) cited in UNICEF and Population Council, Awareness of risk behavior and reproductive health issues among 15 to 19 year olds out of school young people, Sept 2000.
- Ford N and Kittisuksathit S, Youth Sexuality: Sexual Awareness, lifestyles and

- Related Health Service Needs of Young, Single, Factory Workers in Thailand, Institute of Population and Social Research, Mahidol University Thailand, 1996.
- Gender Statistics in Myanmar: Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs, 2001.
- Herbert Blumer, Symbolic Interactionism, The Major Theories, Pg 311, University of California Press Ltd. London, England, 1998.
- Hettiarachchy and Schensul, Free Trade Zone communities in Sri Lanka, 2001.
- Hong, Khuat Thu, 1998. Study on Sexuality in Vietnam: The Known and Unknown Issues. Hanoi: The Population Council.
- Josina Z Machel, Unsafe sexual behavior among schoolgirls in Mozambique: a matter of gender and class, Reproductive Health Matter, Vol 9, No 17, May 2001.
- Limanonda Bhassorn: Gender Issues in Reproductive Health and Promoting Male Responsibility, www.unescap.org, Feb 2002.
- Lorber, Judith: Gender Construction, 1991, p 9, Sage Publication: London
- Lupton, Deborah, 1994, Medicine as Culture –Illness, Disease and the Body in Western Societies, Sage Publication: London.
- Macleod, Cartriona, The causes of Teenage Pregnancy: Review of South Africa Research, South Africa Journal of Psychology, Vol 29, Issue 2, Mar 99.
- Mehryar Ali et al, Reproductive Health among Youth in Ghana, International Family Planning Perspectives, vol 29 number 1 2003.
- Ministry of Health & UNFPA: A Reproductive Health Needs Assessment in Myanmar, 1999.
- Mueller, Ruth Dixon. The sexuality connection in Reproductive Health. In Zeidenstein, S. and Moore K. (eds), 1996.
- Nilar Tin, Adolescent Reproductive Health Needs In Myanmar, 2003
- Serena Nanda, Theory in Cultural Anthropology, Chapter 2, Cultural Anthropology, 4th Ed, City University of New York.
- Sharful I. K. Sexuality and Sexual Behaviors of Male STI patients in Dhaka City, Bangladesh, 1997.
- Soonthorndhada A, Adolescent role behavior, expectations and adaptations: in Y. A. Bencha., & et al (eds), Changing Roles and Statuses at Women in Thailand.

- Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, 1992.
- Steinberg, D., Lurance, Part 3, Psychosocial development during adolescence, Adolescence, Vaianas Jane, Beth Kaufman & James R. Belser, USA, 4th ed, 1996.
- Than Nu Shwe et al, Socioeconomic background and behavior of adolescent pregnancy, 2001.
- UNFPA Myanmar: Behavioral Change Communication Master Plan – Preliminary Draft, April 2003.
- UNICEF Myanmar: Children and Women in Myanmar Situation Assessment and Analysis (April 2001).
- WHO, Report of a WHO/UNFPA/UNICEF study group on programming for adolescent health, Technical Report Series, No.886, Geneva: WHO, 1999.
- WHO, Sexual Relations among Young People in Developing Countries, Department of Reproductive Health and Research Family and Community Health, WHO Geneva, 2001.
- Zhenzhen Sheng et al, Sexual Behavior and contraceptive use among unmarried, young women migrant workers in five cities in China, , Reproductive Health Matters, Vol 9 No 17, May 2001.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

Observation Guidelines

Peer Identity and peer pressure

Which kinds of activities do the youth do in-group?

How do they perform these activities?

What do the youth do after their group activities?

Does it lead to unsafe sexual practices?

Are these activities do the youth do because of peer pressure or their friends? (from their conversation and observing their relationship)

Living arrangement & working condition

Where do the youth stay? Who do they stay with?

Do they have freedom to stay in this type of living arrangement?

Do the youth go out or go back home anytime? Could they bring their friends inside their house?

Where do the youth work?

How is their working condition (is it too long or heavy, relationship among the colleagues and with their supervisors)?

Leisure activities and places

How do the youth spend their leisure times? Whom do they spend their leisure times with?

What do they do? Name the activities observed.

Where do they spend their leisure times (park, karaoke bar, restaurants, movies/ video palour and in someone's house)?

Do these leisure activities lead to unsafe sex?

Alcohol, drug consumption and gambling

Do the youth drink, take drugs and do gambling?

What kinds of drinks and drugs do they use?

Which occasion do they use them?

What do they do after doing them?

Focus Group Discussion Guidelines

Peer Identity and peer pressure

- Which kinds of activities do the youth do in-group?
- How do they perform these activities?
- What do the youth do after their group activities?
- Does it lead to unsafe sexual practices?
- Are these activities do the youth do because of peer pressure or their friends?

Living arrangement & working condition

- Where do the youth stay? Who do they stay with?
- Do they have freedom to stay in this type of living arrangement?
- Do the youth go out or go back home anytime? Could they bring their friends inside their house?
- Where do the youth work?
- How is their working condition (is it too long or heavy, relationship among the colleagues and with their supervisors)?

Leisure activities and places

- How do the youth spend their leisure times? Whom do they spend their leisure times with?
- What do they do? Name the activities they discussed.
- Where do they spend their leisure times (park, karaoke bar, restaurants, movies/ video palour and in someone's house)?
- Do these leisure activities lead to unsafe sex?

Alcohol, drug consumption and gambling

- Do the youth drink, take drugs and do gambling?
- What kinds of drinks and drugs do they use?
- Which occasion do they use them?
- What do they do after doing them?

Guidelines for In-Depth Interviews

Peer identity and peer pressure

What kinds of activities that youth cannot do without their friends? Why don't you do without your friends?

How often do you involve in these activities? How do you perform these activities?

What do you do after these group activities? (Engaging sex or not, Do these activities lead to sexual activities?)

Do you describe more detail about them?

Who do you consult when you have a problem regarding health, money family, work, boyfriend/ girlfriend and feel lonely and disappointed?

Are there any activities do the youth do because of their peer/ friends' pressure?

What are they? How do they lead to unsafe sex?

Living Arrangement

Why did you move to here? How do the youth feel when they have to stay in this kinds of living arrangement?

Where do you stay? Who do you stay with?

How much freedom do you have in this type of house you stay?

Can you go out or go back home anytime? Could you bring your friends inside your house?

How the youth cope with their negative feelings/ emotion when they are staying in this living arrangement?

Working Condition

Where do you work? How do the youth feel when they have to work in this working condition?

How the youth cope with their negative feelings/ emotion when they are working in this condition

Leisure activities and places

How do you spend your leisure time? Whom do you spend your leisure time with?

What do you do? Name the all activities they do.

Where do you spend your leisure time and with whom?

Why do you spend your leisure time in these places and with those people?

Are there activities being planned ahead of these leisure time or not?

Are there activities involve/ lead to sexual contact/ acts/ unsafe sex? How do the youth do?

Alcohol, Drugs Consumption and Gambling

Do the youth drink, take drugs and do gambling?

How often do the youth drink, take drugs and gambling?

Why do they use them? What occasion do they use?

How do you feel during and after using them?

How do these activities lead to sexual context, acts and unsafe sex?

Sexual Partnerships

How many sexual partners do you have? (At present and past)

What types of sexual partnerships do you have with all of your boyfriends/ girlfriends or commercial sex workers for boys? (exchange for money, casual, girlfriends/ boyfriends)

How long was your relationship with same partner?

What are the characteristics of each of your partner? (Education, occupation, income, marital status, religion)(safe/unsafe, clean/ unclean, trustable or not, high/ low cost in terms of sex workers)

What are the relationships with your partners in terms of intimacy, love, occupation and financial matter, desire, types of sexual practices, types of relationship, level of trust, long commitment/ causal)

How do you choose your partners? Do you have chance to choose your partners?

Do you think that men and women have equal chance to choose sexual partners?

What are the reasons and conditions of changing one partner?

Sexual Meanings

What does sex mean with men and women with particular persons and relationship?

How do you define sex?

Why do the youth have sex?

Beliefs on STI/ HIV/ AIDS and unintended pregnancy prevention

What are STI/ HIV/ AIDS and unintended pregnancy? How can these diseases occur?

What types of person can get these diseases?

How do you get these diseases? How can you prevent them? Which kinds of method can prevent them?

What are the outcomes of these diseases? How can these diseases be cured?

Condom use

Who should condom is used with? Which types of relationship should condom is used?

Have you ever used condom? How often do you use condom?

Do you have chance to use condom freely? If not, why?

Which kinds of partners do you use condom with? Why?

Which condition do you use condom?

Who should negotiate/ initiate to use condom?

Who should buy/ keep the condom?

How do you feel if you use condom? How is your partner's opinion?

What are the difficulties do you have while using condom?

How do you know about various use of condom (continuous and persistent or intermittent use)?

Why have you never used condom?

Unsafe Sex

What kinds of sexual practices are unsafe sex?

How do you define unsafe sex? What are the unsafe sexual practices from your own idea?

Why do you think of unsafe sex? How common are they among the youth and your friends?

Why do they do it? Name them.

In what context do they do it? Which situation do they do it? With whom do they do it?

BIOGRAPHY

NAME	Ohnmar Aung
DATE OF BIRTH	May 19, 1968
PLACE OF BIRTH	Yangon, Union of Myanmar
INSTITUTION ATTENDED	Institute of Medicine (1), Yangon Myanmar M.B.,B.S (1994) Health Social Science International Program Mahidol University 2003 – 2005 M.A.H.S.S.I.P
FELLOWSHIP/RESEARCHGRANT	Rockefeller Foundation
PRESENT POSITION	Development and Training Manager Marie Stopes International Myanmar Myanmar