Beyond the facts

Addressing gender-based violence through comprehensive sexuality education in schools in Ethiopia

Le Mat, M.L.J.

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CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSING CULTURE AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN CSE

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Tensions that arise with increasing educational initiatives and research on sexuality are being increasingly reported. Development and modernisation are on the one hand celebrated characteristics by young people, inspiring an ideal of free and liberal sexual practices; yet at the same time are viewed to be at odds with a traditional cultural identity (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Parkes, Heslop, Januario, et al., 2016; Lalor, 2004; Spronk, 2009). For instance, Lalor (2004) argues that in sub-Saharan Africa, there is widespread (though contested) belief that modernisation has led to a dramatic increase in child sexual abuse; and Leclerc-Madlala (2004) reveals how ideals of modernity and cosmopolitanism are believed to lead to transactional sex in South Africa. Spronk (2009) also describes how for young urban professionals in Nairobi, sexuality is centrally placed in their positioning as modern subjects. However, for them, 'proper morality' is strongly connected to cultural heritage and notions of 'Africanness'. Without doubt, development efforts, including educational programmes for the promotion of sexual health affect notions of culture, modernity, and tradition, as well as what is 'proper' (see e.g. Bhana, 2015; Chilisa, 2005; Heslop, Parkes, Januario, Sabaa, Oando, and Hess, 2015).

Over the past two decades, research has paid growing attention to culture in relation to education programmes on sexuality and gender-based violence. Some of this research has been inspired by concerns that cultural barriers, mostly referring to tradition, negatively affect the promotion of SRHR (see e.g. Chandra-Mouli, Lane, and Wong, 2015; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016). At the same time, post-colonial and feminist theorists have pointed out that conceptualising culture as a barrier to sexual health offers narrow and simplified views of postcolonial and developing contexts (Chilisa, 2005; Khau, 2012; Mohanty, 1991; Tamale, 2011). Sexual health research has been little considerate of contextual interpretations of what sexual health means (Chilisa, 2005), and lacks a socio-

historical approach to gender and sexuality issues in sub-Saharan African societies (Tamale, 2011). They argue that the 'modern' seems to be indicative of the types of knowledges, understandings, and information as developed in the West, and dominate interpretations of what 'awareness' or 'sexual knowledge' should entail. In similar vein, several studies have highlighted how 'culture' is often looked at to explain high prevalence of gender-based violence (Bhana, 2015; Kedir and Admasachew, 2010; Meyer, 2008). However, little is known about how those directly involved with gender-based violence in education, i.e. teachers and students, view the relationship between culture and gender-based violence, and what an educational response should look like.

Against this backdrop, this study examines how students and teachers interpret the relations between culture, gender-based violence, and how CSE should discuss culture in relation to gender-based violence in education in Ethiopia. Some have examined how educational programmes such as CSE include discussions on culture (see e.g. Browes, 2015; Geary, 2007, Mukoro, 2017), but not in relation to gender-based violence. Therefore, to address this gap in research, the study draws on interview and FGD data collected in two separate fieldwork trips to Ethiopia in schools with CSE programmes, where in both cases participants strikingly often referred to 'culture' as explanatory factor for gender-based violence. It is revealed how notions of culture and desired cultural change are highly gendered and influenced by notions of what is 'modern', affecting the vulnerability of young women as well as the effectiveness of CSE to address gender-based violence. The paper specifically addresses the implications for sexuality education programmes as to successfully address gender-based violence while paying attention to culture.

6.2 CULTURE AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

In light of growing attention for SRHR, gender-based violence is receiving increasing consideration internationally. In trying to explain high prevalence of gender-based violence, Kedir and Admasachew (2010) reveal how their sample of gender experts typically 'blame' culture for persisting intimate partner violence in Ethiopia. The authors highlight culture is often used as an excuse not to intervene or to remain silent about violent behaviour, even if participants think this is not a legitimate excuse (see also Bhana, 2015; Meyer, 2008). Arguably, 'culture-blaming' reflects a narrative adopted by the general population including young people, parents, and teachers, though with different interpretations of the legitimacy of its explanation for violence. For instance, teachers in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, use culture for legitimising gender-based violence – referring to the dominant position of men according to Zulu culture and in fact, expressing discontent about increased attention to women's rights that may threaten their superior positions as men (Bhana, de Lange, and Mitchell, 2009). For some teachers, their attachment to traditional culture is a form of

nostalgia that is threatened by more modern values of in this case gender equality and women's rights (DePalma and Francis, 2014).

The distinction between traditional and modern values has become a common conceptualisation of debates about the relationship between culture, cultural change, and gender-based violence, as comes forward from the analysis in this paper as well. However, research has shown that this dichotomy is more complex. For instance, young women position themselves *between* notions of tradition and modernity in relation to their sexual relationships, rather than on the one side or the other, and their positioning may vary on context and time (Parkes, Heslop, Januario et al., 2016). Furthermore, the common belief that modernity leads to a decrease in gender-based violence has been contested (see Parkes, Heslop, Januario et al., 2016). In fact, much of the literature concludes that structural factors affecting gender-based violence, such as social, political and economic inequalities, are typically overlooked or simplified by static notions of culture, modernity, or tradition (Bhana et al., 2009; Kedir and Admasachew, 2010; Shih, Worth, Travaglia, and Kelly-Hanku, 2017).

Patriarchy is central in understanding the linkages between culture and gender-based violence (Winter, Thompson, and Jeffreys, 2002). Explaining gender-based violence ought to include a discussion of the imbalance of power in gendered relations (Leach and Humphreys 2007), often supported by patriarchal structures in societies that favour male dominance and male sexual entitlement. Indeed, since in patriarchal societies, men have mostly controlled powerful positions, cultures may have likewise been shaped and influenced by men more dominantly than women. However, the fact that cultures have been shaped in social and historical processes, also means they can be re-imagined and re-defined (Connell, 2002; 2012a). In line with concerns that static representations of culture may disregard complexities of contemporary communities (Parkes, Heslop, Januario et al. 2016; Shih et al. 2017; Spronk 2009), this study engages with culture as a fluid, socially constructed notion, that may vary dependent on context and time. Culture is not understood as uniform across a country or stable over time, but as continuously in interaction and relation with people and other cultures. Likewise, 'modernity' or 'tradition' do not refer to uniform entities but to socially constructed concepts that interact with each other and their wider social, economic, and political contexts. Within the thematic scope of this study, modernity is understood as economic and social development achieved by means of formal education and economic activity, reflected in individuals' lifestyles, beliefs, and practices. Tradition refers to long-established customs or beliefs that have been passed on from the one generation to the next, often based on religious beliefs, indigenous knowledge, or customary law and practice.

Finally, gender relations and their implications for SRHR likewise interact with notions of culture. For instance, ideals of female purity and decency are part of the belief systems supporting the practice of FGM/C among African migrants in Europe (Alhassan, Barrett, Brown, and Kwah, 2016), where the practice served as an act of affirming a

particular (African) cultural identity. In another study in South Africa, virginity was likewise associated to decency and morally good behaviour of women, which was not expected for men (Harrison, 2008). A focus on virginity testing seemed to revive with 'neo-traditionalist and cultural' approaches to HIV prevention (Harrison, 2008), indicating the close interlinkages between culture, sexual health, and gender relations. Such gendered ideals of decency are reinforced in schools as well. For instance, a study in Kenya, Ghana, and Mozambique reveals that discourses in schools, families and religious institutions emphasising female chastity may lead to sexual coercion (Heslop et al., 2015). Likewise, Dunne (2007) highlights that schools are gendered institutions where young men and women are socialised through gendered violence. In light of the interactions between gender and culture, this paper analyses how notions of decency, referring to practices that show morality and respectability, most typically by emphasising the importance of female virginity and sexual abstinence and innocence, underpin (cultural) values and practices that form root causes of gender-based violence. In fact, it will be argued that addressing and questioning ideals of decency in CSE could be an important entry point to addressing gender-based violence.

6.3 THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN CSE

CSE has been one of the many types of programmes that are implemented in developing contexts for young people to become better knowledgeable of SRHR. CSE is premised on ideals of young people's agency, self-determination, and right to make informed decisions (Hague et al., 2018). Among positive health outcomes reported to result from CSE are delayed age of first sexual experience and increase in condom use (Kirby, 2008). It has also been argued that CSE takes a comprehensive stance on wider societal issues such as 'harmful traditional practices', gender-based violence, and addresses issues of gender and sexual diversity (Braeken and Cardinal, 2008). As such, CSE has the potential to also shape attitudes and values related to these issues, and to develop skills that go beyond maintaining one's health. Non-health outcomes that may result from CSE include better learning, less violence, greater respect, understanding, and improved gender relations (UNESCO, 2018a).

While some of these positive outcomes have clearly been shown in research, the contested nature of CSE in relation to culture has been less scrutinised. In sexual health programmes, 'culture' often tends to be understood as a threat to successfully implementing comprehensive programmes (Chandra-Mouli et al., 2015; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016). This barrier is mostly associated with persisting forms of gender inequality, and prevalence of 'harmful traditional practices'. However, research has shown that a focus on culture in SRHR educational programmes wrongly assume a narrow causal pathway between culture and behaviour (Geary, 2007; Shih et al., 2017). Re-instilling 'good' cultural practices does not address root causes of problems leading to HIV, which are more deeply embedded in social

and economic structures (Shih et al., 2017). In line with post-colonial critiques, education programmes that conceptualise culture merely as barrier or cause for certain behaviours, are thus at risk of adopting a 'developmentalist' approach (Lewis, 2002) to sexuality education where the 'modern' is indicative of the types of knowledges of what SRHR should entail .

It has also been argued that educational programmes could use culture as an entry point to nurture responsible, ethical, and healthy behaviour (Geary, 2007). In such fashion, education plays a pivotal role in establishing a critical relationship between individuals and their cultural, social, and economic context (Geary, 2007; Parkes, Heslop, Januario et al, 2016), and, we argue, in examining gender relations within that cultural, social and economic context. In the same vein, Mukoro (2017) proposes that a 'culturally sensitive sexuality education' should instead of trying to 'resolve' issues of cultural diversity in sexuality education, sensitise and expose students to conflicting values, rather than obscure clashes. A mono-cultural sexuality education in which contents, approach, and expected outcomes are defined by a single sexual culture risks obscuring cultural differences and alienating students who identify with different sexual cultures or ideals (Mukoro, 2017). In what follows, this paper will bring further nuance to debates about the linkages between culture, CSE, and gender-based violence by unpacking how teachers and students interpret culture as a cause for gender-based violence and analysing how CSE can include discussions on this.

6.4 CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Education is considered an important means of addressing gender inequalities in Ethiopia. According to UNESCO statistics, Ethiopian primary and secondary schools have nearly achieved gender parity (GPI being 0.91 and 0.96 respectively), yet gender parity in tertiary education is lagging behind (GPI 0.48) according to the latest statistics of 2015 (UNESCO, 2018b). Many girls face child marriages (41% marry under 18 according to UNFPA, 2012), FGM/C (74% according to UNICEF, 2013), domestic violence, and fewer work opportunities than men (UN-HABITAT, 2008). Teenage pregnancies are a growing concern, with 10% pregnancies between 15-19 year averagely in the country (CSA and ICF, 2017). Gender inequality and highly patriarchal structures in Ethiopian society are among the root causes of unmet SRHR needs (Pankhurst, 2014). Among the major problems facing young women in the areas of study, as came forward through the data as well, were prostitution, often resulting from migration, job seeking, and economic challenges (Van Blerk, 2008), and family pressure (Hoot, Tadesse, and Abdella, 2006; Van Blerk, 2008; WHO, 2002).

Reliable statistical data on prevalence of gender-based violence in schools are difficult to retrieve, and Ethiopia is no exception. Numbers that do give an indication about the scope of the problem are not always consistent. For instance, Ethiopia's prevalence rate of intimate partner violence is one of the highest among countries included in the WHO Multi Country Study of Violence Against Women, and 71% of ever-partnered women (15+ years

old) reported to have experienced physical or sexual violence (WHO, 2005). Likewise, one doctoral study on sexual violence in secondary schools in the East of Ethiopia, reports that 70% of the young men and 68% of the young women had respectively offended or become a victim of sexual violence (Bekele, 2012). A more recent study on violence against children however reports that in Ethiopia, 26.3% of women older than 15 have experienced intimate partner violence, and, relying on national survey data, 12.9% of adolescent girls (aged 15-19) have experienced sexual violence (Know Violence in Childhood, 2017). What should be noted is that the numbers of adolescent girls who have experienced sexual violence are among the top 20 highest percentages of the total of 168 countries included in this overview. So even if these percentages suggest a dramatic decrease of violence over time – they remain relatively high compared to other countries. At the same time, these statistics indicate the need to triangulate several data sets for more reliable statistical information on prevalence.

SRH for young people is a policy priority for Ethiopia – and many actors are involved as part of a development agenda. CSE is one of the many types of programmes that are implemented in Ethiopia for young people to become better knowledgeable and aware of their SRH, widely supported by UN-agencies, European governments, and numerous Ethiopian NGOs, CSOs and Charities Organisations. Ethiopia's 2009 Charities Proclamation though, has restricted organisations supported by foreign funds in working on rights and advocacy. SRH education and programmes in Ethiopia are thus in the main focused on promoting health, in which rights are implicit, omitting the final R for 'rights' from SRHR.

The CSE programme in this study is a computer-based programme developed in the Netherlands and further specified in Ethiopia to make the programme context-specific (e.g. a lesson on 'harmful traditional practices' was added and language on rights was adapted). The programme aims to empower young people to make their own decisions by giving factual information about sexuality. It finds its roots in gender and rights-based approaches, in line with international guidance documents such as the 'It's All One' curriculum (International Sexuality and HIV Curriculum Working Group, 2009), and the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education (ITGSE) (UNESCO, 2018a). It is an extra-curricular programme that consists of 16 lessons, one focusing on gender-based violence. The sessions take place in mixed-sex classes, and in each school a small sub-selection of students participate in the programme depending on their interest, availability, and in some schools, overall performance. In the schools of study, the programme is offered to students between grade seven and ten.

The CSE programme was selected as a case study when it was in the first phase of piloting and implementation in Ethiopian schools, coordinated by the Ethiopian partner NGO that also helped facilitate this research. Within this context, the CSE programme was seen as a promising initiative that could address gender-based violence and broader gender

and sexual health concerns. However, at national level there was no discussion of integrating the programme into the formal curriculum. Teachers struggled with implementing the programme within the given allocated time frameworks and expressed need for additional training. Furthermore, young people at times felt the programme communicated gender-biased messages and was not always inclusive of all diversities of young people's needs and realties (Le Mat, 2017). Despite these challenges, young people and teachers who had participated in/facilitated the CSE programme, were overall positive about its approach; it not only led to better knowledge about gender equality and SRH, but was also considered to decrease gendered bullying, improve social skills such as empathy, and enhance learning outcomes. As such, many teachers, students, and NGO stakeholders recommended the programme expands in reach, if not fully integrated into the national curriculum.

6.5 METHODS

This paper draws on data from two consecutive fieldwork trips to Ethiopia, which investigated how CSE can address gender-based violence in education. The first fieldwork trip (April-May 2013) engaged with teachers and students in one school in Addis Ababa, and the second (April-May 2014) in schools in Oromia region. In total, the paper makes use of data gathered in six schools and one out of school youth centre[15]. All education centres provided the same extra-curricular CSE programme, which was implemented by an Ethiopian NGO, in collaboration with Dutch expert organisations on SRHR. Five schools and the out of school youth centre were located in towns in Oromia region (Southwest Shewa Zone). The sixth school was located in Addis Ababa, in the merchant centre of the city, where many migrants from rural areas of the country reside. The schools in Oromia were located in towns with between 10.000 and 40.000 inhabitants. The schools hosted students from the town as well as surrounding villages as the schools were close to main roads. This location made the schools also accessible for NGOs to collaborate for education programmes such as CSE. In all school contexts, poverty is one of the major concerns for students' families.

In total, 57 interviews and nine FGDs were held with 68 students and 37 teachers (see Table 6 for an overview), as those directly concerned with the CSE programme and addressing gender-based violence in education. Students were between 14 and 20 years old and were in grade seven to grade ten (with the exception of students in the out-of-school youth centre). Teachers in Oromia region were all CSE teachers, and in Addis Ababa a broader selection of teachers was included, in addition to all CSE teachers in the school. When possible, interviews were held in English but sometimes an interpreter was used to

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[15] The out of school youth centre is referred to as 'school' in the results section, for anonymity reasons

translate the interviews or FGDs. Interviews were held mostly individually, but when students preferred, they were conducted as duo- or group-interviews with their close friends. Interviews took between 30-40 minutes. FGDs lasted one to one and a half hour and consisted of between three to six participants. FGDs were conducted according to age group: students and teachers were not mixed. Seven FGDs with students were held in six of the seven education centres. One of the students' FGDs were mixed-sex, and six single-sex. The two FGDs with teachers were held in the school in Addis Ababa.

TABLE 6. NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN INTERVIEWS AND FGDS

	Addis Ababa		Oromia region (combined)[16]			Total (N=105)
	Interviews	FGDs	Interviews	FGDs		
Young women	9	5 (1 FGD)	8	11 (2 FGDs)	5 (1 Mixed FGD: 1 female, 4 males)	34
Young men	6	5 (1 FGD)	7	12 (2 FGDs)		34
Female teachers	6	3 (1 FGD)	10	/		19
Male teachers	6	5 (1 FGD)	9	/		18[17]
Total	27	18	34	28		105[18]

Schools and the out-of-school-youth centre were purposively selected by the researcher in collaboration with the Ethiopian partner NGO. Selection was based on presence of the CSE programme in the school and availability and interest to participate from school (or youth centre) management and CSE teachers. All participants were approached in person for participation. Student participants were first approached by their CSE teacher who is usually known to be a trusted teacher in the school. Even though the CSE teacher was informed about the aims to include a sample of students with diverse background, there may be a bias in information due to the teachers' selection as well as student self-selection. Interviews and FGDs with students and teachers were held in the CSE classroom, which was considered to be the space were students and teachers would feel

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[16] While the issues at stake in each school and each town may differ contextually, for clarity of data presentation, interviews in all towns in Oromia region are combined in this Table.

[17] The total is not be the cumulative of all numbers in the row, because two participants participated in both an interview and an FGD. They are not counted twice in this cell.

[18] The total is not be the cumulative of all numbers in the column, because two participants participated in both an interview and an FGD. They are not counted twice in this cell.

most comfortable to speak freely and in privacy. In addition to FGDs and interviews, ethnographic notes were taken, and conversations were held with Ethiopian SRH experts and Dutch nationals working on SRH in Ethiopia to further contextualize emerging findings.

Interview and FGD design and conduction were developed by the first author of this paper and further validated in collaboration with the Ethiopian partner NGO. Topics during interviews and FGDs were causes of gender-based violence, how CSE should address these causes, its relevance in doing so, and its challenges. Before starting the interview or FGD, anonymity and confidentiality was assured, and participants' verbal consent was asked for their participation in this research. The participants' permission was asked to record the conversations and they were free to switch off the recorder in case they felt uncomfortable or to withdraw from the study. All data were stored anonymously in a protected off-line drive. Ethical procedure was approved by the Authors' University ethics board.

Recordings of the interviews and FGDs were transcribed and coded in two analytical phases. A pre-defined code list was developed based on literature review and used for the first coding phase. The list included codes such as *causes of gender-based violence*, *addressing gender-based violence*, *challenges in addressing gender-based violence,* and *relevance of CSE*. Initial analysis found that 'culture' was often mentioned in all of these code categories. The second step in the analysis therefore involved to unpack further how culture was conceptualised in relation to gender-based violence and CSE, and to expand the code list. All excerpts that were coded as *culture* were listed and further coded and organised manually to unravel recurring categories of analysis and linkages between concepts. The analysis process was geared towards identifying common interpretations of culture as a cause for gender-based violence and how this is addressed in CSE. Hence, the paper focuses on presenting commonly shared interpretations but, when relevant, differences between categories of participants are highlighted.

6.6 FINDINGS

6.6.1 INTERPRETATIONS OF CULTURE AS A CAUSE FOR GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

6.6.1.1 MODERNITY, TRADITION, 'GOOD' AND 'BAD' CULTURE

Students and teachers typically referred to culture as one of the main causes of gender-based violence. In what follows, our analysis highlights how elements of traditional as well as modern cultures are associated to causing gender-based violence. For instance, modern culture was thought of as a result of globalisation and influences from abroad, which inspires young people to follow overly sexualised ideals portrayed in popular media. Participants stated this could possibly lead to sexual coercion and other forms of gender-based violence.

Traditional culture was thought to lead to gender-based violence and gender inequality more broadly by valuing men more than women:

> *[Gender inequality] is there because of, first it's a traditional culture. This is the main cause, [in] all traditional cultures. Because of in the past, there is a misunderstanding that is the inferiority and superiority of males and females. That way is the females only working in house and [giving birth to] the babies. That is the only works of the girls. That is the traditional culture.* [Addis Ababa, school1, Student4, male]

Participants discussed that such traditional culture lead to inequalities in gender roles, limited opportunities for women, and caused misogynist language and sexual coercion.

In order to better understand the linkages between culture and gender-based violence, it is first important to analyse more closely what participants meant by 'modern' and 'traditional' cultures. Modern culture typically referred to economic and social development, exposure to and interaction with the 'globalised' world (i.e. films, foods, and people from other (developed) countries), wealth, being educated, liberal values about women's roles in society, and gender equality. Traditional culture on the other hand referred to folkloric Ethiopian dancing and music, traditional (Ethiopian) clothing, eating together, respecting parents and elders, taboos around sexuality, practicing religion, 'harmful traditional practices' such as FGM/C, abduction, and child marriage, and gender inequality more broadly.

Interestingly, students and teachers typically divided their culture into a 'bad' and 'good' binary. They considered education essential to become knowledgeable about this:

> *Now, I understand more about my culture, that there are bad cultures that bring bad influence, and good ones that need to be appreciated. I protect myself from bad cultures.* [Town1, School1, Student4, female, FGD]

Some students, mostly in the school in Addis Ababa, added that the 'bad' culture was changing as Ethiopia is moving on towards a developed country, but that the inheritance of this 'bad' culture remained visible in gender discrimination or harassments in school, sports classes, and poor academic performance of young women. They thought these forms of inequalities to be more prevalent in the (less-developed) rural areas than in urban Addis Ababa, even though young women in the school in Addis Ababa experienced gender discrimination and violence (Le Mat, 2016).

In the context of sexual and gender relations, both traditional and modern cultures were thought to have 'bad' and 'good' sides (for an analytical summary, see Figure 1). The 'good' sides of modernity related to exposure to international interactions, new (scientific)

knowledges, access to education and increased attention for women's rights. 'Bad' sides of modernity were associated with overly liberal standards about sexual activity, pre-marital sex, young women's clothing, divorce, prostitution, and sexually explicit media. For traditional culture, 'good' sides were folkloric Ethiopian dancing and music, eating together, and practicing religion. In participants' views, religion was separated from 'bad' traditions such as FGM/C. This reflects that FGM/C in Ethiopia is mostly seen as a traditional practice, and not necessarily religious, even though in some regions of the country religious leaders do strongly support the practice (Pankhurst, 2014; Østebø and Østebø, 2014). 'Bad' traditional culture furthermore referred to 'harmful traditional practices' such as abduction and child marriage, being ashamed to speak about sexuality, young women being disadvantaged in society, including in education, and gender inequality more broadly.

	'Bad' Culture	'Good' Culture
Modernity	Overly liberal standards about e.g. sexual activity and young women's clothing; Pre-marital sex; Divorce; Prostitution; Sexually explicit media.	Economic and social development; Exposure to and interaction with the outside world; Access to scientific knowledge; Openness to speak about sexuality; Being educated; Women's rights; Women's participation in labour market; Gender equality.
Tradition	Male superiority; Few education/employment opportunities for women; 'Harmful traditional practices', e.g. FGM/C and child marriage; Shame around sexuality; Gender inequality.	Folkloric Ethiopian dancing and music; Traditional (Ethiopian) clothing; Eating together; Respecting parents and elders; Practicing religion (Christianity, Islam).

FIGURE 1. ANALYTICAL SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS' COMMON CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF 'GOOD' AND 'BAD' MODERN AND TRADITIONAL CULTURE IN ETHIOPIA

It should be noted that, contrary to an understanding of culture as fluid, socially constructed in a particular context and time, participants often expressed fixed ideas about what is 'traditional', 'modern', 'good' or 'bad'. This would suggest there is very little interaction between 'traditional' or 'modern' values for instance, and that these are static notions. In fact, as will be revealed throughout the remaining of this paper, categorical understandings of culture were predominant in ideas about how gender-based violence should be addressed, including in the CSE programme.

6.6.1.2 GENDER EQUALITY AS A REFLECTION OF MODERNITY?

Gender equality was at the core of understandings of teachers and young people about the role of culture in addressing gender-based violence and promoting social and economic development more broadly. The majority of the participants agreed to the idea of promoting gender equality in their society. Some teachers and students held the opinion that promoting gender equality is not necessary anymore as the country had already developed the adequate non-discriminatory legal frameworks. However, the fact that participants agreed with the idea of gender equality, did not always mean their acts were in line with these ideals, as revealed in other studies in the same schools (Altinyelken and Le Mat, 2018; Le Mat, 2016; 2017)

Analysis of the various FGDs reveals agreement among participants that gender equality was defined as: being able to do the same things (for young women as compared to young men), walking, talking and dressing freely without having to worry about other people's comments, sharing burdens in household tasks, and getting the same opportunities to and within education and the labour market. Interestingly, gender equality was often immediately related to notions of culture, tradition, and modernity. For instance, in an FGD, female teachers mentioned how symbolic meanings in their society, such as *elilta* (a form of ululation to express happiness), illustrated how girls and boys were treated and valued differently right from their day of birth:

> *Teacher7: For instance, during the birth time, in the culture, (…) the backward society thinks that whenever a man is born, [one has to] do elilta more than six times. When it is a woman (…)*
> *Teacher8: (…) When a woman [gives birth to] a baby boy, the time of elilta is seven times. But when [she gives birth to a] girl, the elilta is only five times.* [Addis Ababa, school1, FGD, Teachers7,8, female]

Clearly, not only the notion of (traditional) culture is relevant here, but by referring to 'backward society', these teachers demonstrated, in line with other interviews (see section 4.2.2), how gender inequality is associated with the uneducated segments of society and lack of development, as opposed to the urban 'modern'.

As much as modernity seemed to be conflated with development and 'good' cultures that provide the same opportunities to women as to men, modernity was equally associated with threats. These threats mainly concerned Ethiopian culture and identity, but interestingly were also considered to pose limitations to addressing gender-based violence. One teacher observed:

> *[Young people] see different kinds of films, different kinds of programmes from outside [our country], they know more about different kinds of things. (…) But sometimes globalisation it has*

own negative impact. First, it pushes our culture sometimes, in some ways. So that culture, that's why they do different kinds of sexual violence. They get these things from globalisation. [Addis Ababa, School1, FGD, Teacher8, female]

Globalisation, in this case referring to exposure to foreign (sexually explicit) films and music, was seen as a factor that influences and inspires young people to become sexually active at a younger age, for young men to have many girlfriends at the same time, and for young women to make use of their sexuality to live a more 'cosmopolitan' lifestyle in the form of transactional sex. This is reflective of tensions highlighted in other studies as well – where modernisation is on the one hand celebrated by young people, inspiring an ideal of free and liberal sexual practices; yet at the same time viewed to be at odds with a traditional cultural identity (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Parkes, Heslop, Januario et al., 2016; Lalor, 2004; Spronk, 2009). Our following findings furthermore reveal that interpretations of the link of modernity and sexuality were highly gendered, where especially young women were more vulnerable to negative prejudices.

While these issues came up in all schools, sex as a 'pursuit of modernity' (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003) emerged in particular in the urban school setting in Addis Ababa, where notions of modernity and globalisation were associated to attracting young women to sex work and transactional sex. For instance, when discussing the meaning of gender equality and the causes of gender-based violence during interviews and FGDs with teachers, many teachers immediately emphasised that in the vicinity of the school (*sabategna*, *piaza*, and the regional bus station *autobistera*) prostitution was highly prevalent. According to teachers, this in turn had its effects on behaviour of their students, in particular female students:

> *Our students are the neighbour of those prostitutes, so they can observe a lot of different things while those prostitutes are acting towards individuals to get money. So, they keep this in mind, they come to school, they act like those prostitutes.* [Addis Ababa, School1, teacher17, male]

> *I don't think that money is the only thing to get them into. They take it as a modernisation. When they are participating in such activities, they feel they are modern, they are trendy, [like] their peers, their friends, and they behave in a wrong way. Naturally, they are not like that. But they are exposed to the time, the time is automatically changing. They are exposed to pornography, they are exposed to foreign films, movies.* [Addis Ababa, School1, Teacher2, male, FGD]

The interpretations of why their students would 'act like prostitutes' was diverse among teachers. In an FGD with female teachers, the issue was approached with a lot of emotion and sympathy, and explanations included poverty, sex for survival (see also Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Heslop et al., 2015), family background, vulnerability to peer pressure, and being

forced into (abusive) sexual relationships. For many male teachers and SRH experts, however, prostitution was clearly motivated by ideals of modernity, yet they added that this is not the students' 'natural' behaviour (see also Altinyelken and Le Mat, 2018).

It is striking to see how 'bad' influence of modernity affected understandings of young women's freedoms and sexual relationships more than young men's. This extended to ideas of young women's dress and style. Teachers and students had observed how some young women in the school changed their looks. They typically associated young women showing more skin in the ways they dress, wearing jewellery, artificial ('European') hair, and make-up, with the desire to be modern. Some argued that the clothing, hair style or make-up of some female students were 'too inviting', by which they were to be held responsible for any sexualised acts they 'call upon themselves'. These sexualised acts extended to teacher-student relationships. Many students and teachers shared how they knew of or were personally approached by either a teacher or a student, for sex in exchange for books, money, or good grades (see also Le Mat, 2016). In some cases, this led to school drop out of female students if she was approached by a teacher who expected her to be interested in grades or books in exchange for sex against her will. Hence it is ironic that modernity, associated with gender equality and completing education, in this case, through very sexualised encounters and expectations, was equally considered to lead young women to drop out of their education or severely limit their engagement with learning.

6.6.2 PROMOTING 'GOOD MODERNITY' IN CSE

Participants saw education, and especially CSE as an opportunity to change understandings of gender roles and relations that pose limitations to young women, and as such as a means to achieve development. It was considered essential for students to get 'the right knowledge' about gender and sexual health. This notion of 'right' information generally referred to modern scientific, factual information, as opposed to traditional 'myths' present in Ethiopian society. In the CSE programme, 'myths' refer to beliefs that preserve practices such as FGM/C, child marriage and virginity-testing. These practices or beliefs are rooted in patriarchal traditions that consider such traditions essential to instil good moral behaviour and obedience in young women. By providing factual information, the CSE programme aims to discourage these traditional practices or contest 'myths' by emphasising the dangers to young women's health and futures of these beliefs and practices. Teachers and students expected that providing scientific information would lead young people and communities to make right decisions (i.e. abstinence-until-marriage; girl participation in school and labour market), which in turn would lead to future family wealth or broader country development. The following sections present illustrations of how educating young people about 'facts' and 'myths' were thought to address cultural causes of gender-based violence, reflecting on the limitations of this approach; and highlight the underpinning ideals of decency that were

prominent in conceptualisations of 'good' and 'bad' cultures, yet prescribed certain restrictive behaviours to young women that were reinforced in CSE lessons. It will reveal how root causes of gender-based violence cannot be addressed by contesting culture alone, and underlying assumptions about gender relations and decency need to be better dealt with.

6.6.2.1 MYTHS, FACTS, AND GOING 'THE RIGHT WAY'

Opposing traditional 'myths' with the right information was considered important especially in the towns in Oromia region, where teachers and students expressed discrepancy between the messages that are present in the community and what is learned in the CSE classroom. For instance, one belief held is that young women who have developed big breasts have had sexual intercourse, which is considered shameful outside marriage suggesting indecency, and often a trigger for bullying. By opposing this 'myth' with scientific 'facts', students learned to see this from another perspective, in this case decreasing gendered bullying. This aspect of the programme was appreciated especially by young women, as it relieved them from certain speculative prejudices such as the relation between breast-size and virginity. At the same time however, values underlying female virginity and sexual innocence were not questioned, supporting ideals of female chastity.

Changing 'traditional' notions and providing new perspectives to cultural beliefs also led to increased confusion and tensions. This was particularly the case with teaching about virginity. CSE taught the fact that both girls and boys can be virgins, as it means not having had sexual intercourse, and that virginity cannot be tested. Teachers felt challenged in fully explaining this:

> *Virginity is confusion for them, they know a different thing previously. The information [that virginity cannot be tested] is confusing and a surprise to them. (…) our culture… it takes time to change their minds. Because they believe that virginity is for only for girls. So, it takes time to convince, for teachers it's difficult.* [Town4, School2, Teacher2, female]

First, because of these conflicting messages, teachers expressed a need for more evidence and information on virginity. Second, this 'factual' information was not discussed in light of underlying values in society, where virginity is associated with virtues of decency, moral behaviour, and being respectful towards elders. This discrepancy between the 'factual' information and the generally accepted underlying implications in society led to confusion for students. Students reported not to understand the definition of virginity and male students reported an overemphasis on young women's virginity, lack of guidance and clarity on what virginity means for men and on how men can lose their virginity. This thus indicates that the scientific information in the CSE programme was not sufficient; students wanted to discuss the implications and meanings of virginity in relation to their identity as young

women or young men. Furthermore, the scientific discussion of the definition of virginity might not necessarily disrupt ideals of decency and female sexual innocence, reinforcing restrictive notions of 'proper' female behaviour.

In the school in Addis Ababa, teachers and students felt that education, including CSE, should be better tailored towards the specific realities and experiences of young people in their school environments – particularly issues that were associated with globalisation and cultural change. This included discussing the influence of pornography, Western media, the prevalence of prostitution, and symbolic meanings of how to dress and when/what kind of sexual relationships are appropriate (it should be noted that these questions were also relevant in Oromia region, yet les emphasised). In an FGD, teachers concluded that their teaching should include more emphasis on nurturing individual responsibility and consciousness:

> *Teacher5: We cannot stop the effect of globalisation. Nobody can stop it. We cannot stop [students] watch these unnecessary things. (…) We can, for example, in our school we block the pornographic parts, we block Facebook and some, we have internet connection here. We only have Google for some useful information. But we cannot stop it completely. The very thing is, the very serious thing is, to limit them, to block them. Not to go to these areas. Or, we have to allow them to watch, but consciously.*
> *Teacher2: We have to do that side by side. We need to teach them not to do that, and also, we need to avoid the accessibility of these bad things. For example, pornography is accessible in every small shop.*
> *Teacher1: We may block Facebook or pornographies, but they may get at the website using different links. We can't stop by this matter. We [should] teach them to go in the right way. The option is up to them. This is the responsibility what they are expected to grow.* [Addis Ababa, School1, Teachers1,2,5, male, FGD]

As becomes evident from the above quote, teachers not always felt clear or well prepared as to what their roles are in addressing 'bad' influences in the classroom. Much attention was focussed on instilling morals of responsibility and decency, contributing to students going in 'the right way' and becoming 'good' Ethiopian citizens, a discourse that was reflected in all schools in the study. However, teaching about cultural change remained pragmatic instruction, meaning methodically replacing 'bad' with 'good' cultures, and 'myths' with 'facts'. Such pragmatism contained little reflection about expressions and positions of power underlying inequalities and vulnerabilities, which could help in re-imagining gender and power orders in a society (Connell, 2002; 2012a).

6.6.2.2 Beyond science: shame, silence, and decency

In addition to the ways the CSE programme aims to promote 'good' cultures by providing scientific information and instilling good moral behaviour, the programme encourages openness to speak about sexuality, which was also viewed as an indicator of a positive, modern culture. Interestingly, teachers and students constructed values of openness and self-confidence in speaking about personal matters as markers of class and development, which, in their understanding, reflected values of modern European societies. The fact that the CSE programme was developed in Western Europe possibly may have strengthened this perception (see also Tamale, 2011). In contrast, in the reflections of students and teachers, shame and silence were typically seen as a sign of 'underdevelopment', 'bad' traditional culture or for 'those of the countryside'. For example, in an interview with two students who talked about their female peers who come from remote villages in the countryside, they hinted at the impression that especially lower classes viewed sexuality-related issues as shameful, yet education has taught them the 'right' knowledge and skills to openly discuss sexuality-related matters:

> *Student3: It's very difficult, because, if [girls from the countryside go] to their mother, the parents think the menstruation [is] shameful, so I don't think they discuss.*
> *Student2: Yeah, they don't [talk about it], even your best friend does not want to share [her questions with] you, because she thinks it's very shameful. (…) They will hate themselves about this. Some, as I say, from hundred girls, maybe one can tell you about her life-experience, about menstruation and also about another thing, but they don't feel free as it is, they don't have the confidence to talk about it.* [Town3, School2, Students 2,3, female]

This quote illustrates that on the one hand, in line with what other studies found (Bhana et al., 2009; Parkes et al., 2013; Shih et al., 2017), structural factors such as social and economic status, in addition to culture and gender relations, influence understandings of sexuality and means to maintain sexual health. On the other hand, these young women highlighted a general tendency of attributing causes for inequalities to uneducated segments of society, most typically from the countryside. Interestingly, analysis also showed that students and teachers from the school in Addis Ababa perceived those outside of Addis Ababa as less educated and less knowledgeable about gender equality, similar to how participants in these rural towns in turn perceived their peers from the more remote areas or lower classes. As such, 'openness' to speak about sexuality became a marker of modernity and development, rather than a reflection of underpinning values in society related to decency, which particularly affected young women.

Nevertheless, shame to speak about sexuality affected young women in both rural and urban areas, albeit in different ways. Teachers in towns in Oromia articulated that

students needed to be educated with scientific knowledge because of their assumed innocence and lack of knowledge about sexuality, due to shame. In contrast, teachers in Addis Ababa held the opinion that students 'already know everything' about sexuality, due to the high prevalence of prostitution around the school (even though shame was also seen to affect women's abilities to speak out about gender-based violence). Young women in Addis Ababa were also thought to have higher levels of responsibility to protect themselves from violence because they had access to information and education about gender equality. In relation to teacher-student sexual relationships, one teacher commented:

> *And even the characteristic of the females themselves, from the culture also: they are too shy, and they are too afraid to defend themselves if they are asked in such a way. They don't have the intention to report the issue to the concerned body also. (…) Also, there are co-curricular activities [such as CSE that works on gender issues], but not all girls are participating. Most of the girls are not interested to act here. So, that also brought misunderstanding, or it affected them not to defend themselves when they are [faced with] such kind of silly [advances from male teachers].* [Addis Ababa, School1, Teacher3, male, FGD]

Interpreting these notions of shame, silence, and decency in relation to gender-based violence, it thus seems that young women have to carefully balance between 'modern' identities of speaking openly about sexuality, reporting harassment, being self-confident and participating in CSE, while keeping up ideals of decency that do not speak about, 'invite', or pursue sexual relationships. Ideals of decency are thus not only underlying causes of gender-based violence (Alhassan et al., 2016; Heslop et al., 2015), but our data furthermore revealed the complexities of simultaneously maintaining and challenging such ideals, particularly of female chastity, in a context of cultural change.

These notions of shame and decency should be interpreted within a context where CSE often discouraged and dismissed pre-marital sex as amoral and rude behaviour, particularly for young women (see Le Mat, 2017). Consequently, being a 'good student' implied avoiding impressions of sexual desire, especially for young women as discourses of female chastity were articulated by dismissing discourses of female sexual desire (see also Heslop et al., 2015). As a consequence, young women were not always able to share their concerns or questions in CSE due to fear for bullying and community judgement to be regarded as rude (see also Kebede et al., 2014; Le Mat, 2017). This extended to not reporting cases of gender-based violence, of which students in both urban Addis Ababa and towns in Oromia region said it would be shameful. This suggests that promotion of gender equality in CSE needs to go beyond categorical understandings of tradition/modernity that do not address deeper underlying causes of gender-based violence, but should also disrupt ideals of

decency. Unavoidably, this entails discussions of the role of patriarchy and power relations in society that have shaped and uphold ideals of female chastity.

Finally, while much of the controversial nature of CSE was justified by claiming the scientific nature of the knowledge in the programme and the focus on instilling values of decency and responsibility, it are particularly the social, emotional, and non-scientific elements that are less emphasised but create tensions that cannot be ignored, such as the implications of new definitions of virginity on being a 'good' man or woman. In other words, the 'modern' or 'scientific' knowledge take a form of being static truths opposed to traditional 'myths' that need to be tackled, which would open up the road to modernity and development. However, these messages tend to bypass the social and cultural meanings behind traditional and modern knowledges and behaviours. Furthermore, while messages of gender equality are integrated and underpinning the programme, these conflict with social conceptions of female chastity that inform values attached to 'traditional values' related to virginity, pre-marital sex, and speaking about sexuality. These conflicts are not always addressed or re-negotiated due to a focus on 'scientific' knowledge instead of encouraging dialogue on cultural meanings, changes, and gender relations. Hence, in recognizing the fluid nature of culture, it is important for CSE to encourage dialogue between multiple (scientific, traditional, and gendered) meanings of sexuality and relationships, moving away from a mono-cultural sexuality education (see Mukoro, 2017).

6.7 CONCLUSION

This paper engaged with the views of students and teachers on the relation between gender-based violence and culture, and the role of CSE in addressing culture as a cause for gender-based violence. Our analysis has found that teachers and students conceive of the relation between culture and gender-based violence along two axes: modernity and tradition; and 'good' and 'bad' culture. Participants viewed both modernity and tradition to have elements of 'good' and 'bad' culture, and typically considered gender-based violence could be addressed by opposing and replacing 'bad' traditions with 'good' modern cultures. In contrast to literature that discusses tradition to be a form of nostalgia among teachers (DePalma and Francis, 2014), in our sample expressions of unequal gender relations considered traditional were dismissed as backward, harmful towards young women, and limiting the social and economic development of the country.

Pragmatism of methodically replacing 'bad' traditions with 'good' modern culture was clearly reflected in the CSE programme that opposed traditional community 'myths' with modern scientific facts. As such, CSE made meaning of culture as binaries of modernity/tradition and 'good'/'bad' culture, treating culture as static entities and 'good' modernity as a neutral developmental goal. This not only misrepresents the complexity of contemporary communities (Parkes, Heslop, Januario, et al., 2016), but also perpetuates

inequalities. For instance, those who are educated positioned themselves as such by labelling uneducated segments of society, or those living in rural areas and of lower socio-economic status as 'backward'. Hence, the association of 'modern' culture with development and being educated, can act as dividing mechanism to distance the urban from the rural, or the poor from the middle-class, whereas gender-based violence exists within and beyond socio-economic structures. Furthermore, the extra-curricular programme thus strengthens imperialist notions that 'bad' traditions can be addressed with development (Chilisa, 2005; Tamale, 2011). At the same time, participants typically projected causes for gender-based violence as something 'outside' of themselves or 'other' (e.g. the less educated, the 'bad' other person, culture, or country). This included practices considered 'bad' modernity, such as transactional sex, revealing the tension between CSE's promotion of modern culture as neutral developmental goal, yet understanding elements of this same culture as a cause to gender-based violence.

Within these categorical understandings of 'good, 'bad' and 'modern' and 'traditional' culture, notions of female decency rooted in patriarchy were rarely discussed. Ideals of female decency were re-emphasised in promoting 'good' modernity yet posed limitations to young women's emancipation and to addressing gender-based violence. For instance, bullying, fear of judgement and lack of discussions around different meanings of virginity, pre-marital sex, and female sexual freedoms more generally, limit young women in their expressions of desire (or discontent) and force them into a framework of decency. Those young women who do cross this line are perceived as wanting to pursue modernity, taking cosmopolitanism too far, or as 'overacting prostitutes'. Thus, opposing the 'bad' to the 'good' in educational programmes does not encourage the necessary critical thinking skills, levels of self-reflection, and ethical responsibilities to address root causes of violence and inequalities (see also Geary, 2007; Parkes, Heslop, Januario, et al., 2016). Moreover, static representations of culture and backwardness risk essentialising gender inequalities as (traditional) culture and as such CSE risks perpetuating 'developmentalist' approaches to education that assumes modern knowledges to be neutral means to address SRHR and gender inequalities. Therefore, CSE urgently ought to make efforts to better engage with socio-cultural, economic, and gendered meanings behind for instance virginity, premarital sex, transactional sexual relationships and sex work, avoiding binary understandings of 'modernity' and 'tradition'. This should include discussions of gender relations, patriarchy, and questioning ideals of decency underpinning practices that perpetuate gender-based violence could be an important entry point.

Culture is thus not so much a 'factor' that can hamper or strengthen the delivery of CSE, but rather a changing reality that needs to be integrated and addressed in teaching on sexuality and gender relations. Without doubt, this goes beyond the curriculum and teacher training of CSE alone but extends to the wider school and education system. At national

level, this thus means there are important gains to be made in addressing gender-based violence in education, including in the formal curriculum, broader school management, and national teacher training. Education policies should encourage integration of discussions of cultural change and gender relations into all these elements of training and education management. While the findings of this study are specific to the Ethiopian context, they may extend to other countries in sub-Sahara Africa, as other research suggest similar relations between culture, gender relations, and CSE (e.g. Bhana, 2015; Parkes, Heslop, Januario, et al., 2016). Likewise, at the international level, critical efforts are needed to re-think how 'culture' can be discussed in educational programmes and trainings addressing gender-based violence. Findings of this study suggest entry points can be to question ideals of decency underpinning gender-based violence, and to encourage establishing a critical relationship between individuals and their cultural context. Global guidance documents such as UNTESCO's technical guidance on sexuality education (2018a) can play important roles in advancing how culture can be addressed in educational programmes such as CSE.