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## Sources of Premarital Sex Knowledge among Seventh Day Adventist Youth in Gachuba Ward, Nyamira County, Kenya

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### **Abstract:**

*The focus of this study was to find out sources of knowledge on youth's premarital sex awareness among Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) youth in Gachuba Ward, Nyamira County Kenya. Both the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White formed the source of premarital sex information for the SDA youth. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and targeted two hundred and thirty five youth, ten first-church elders, four hundred and six parents and three district pastors. Using stratified sampling and purposive sampling techniques the researcher based the study on seventy eight respondents comprising of at least 30% of the total population. Questionnaires for youth were used to collect data. The researcher used the test-re- test method to assess reliability and validity of the instruments during the pretesting study before actual administration in the study. The researcher fulfilled the logistical and ethical considerations in research before embarking in data collection. The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques. Qualitative data was categorized into various themes and was presented in narrative form. The findings were presented in tables, percentages and frequency distribution. Statistical data in tables were supplemented with explanations. Study findings indicated that 57% of the youth received information on premarital sex from parents whereby only 19.2% had received the information regularly. The conclusion out of the above statement is that only a few youths received information on premarital sex from their parents. In the absence of this information therefore, youth were likely to get wrong or misleading premarital sex information from peers and Internet.*

**Keywords:** Knowledge, adolescents, seventh day Adventist, Nyamira, premarital sex

### **1. Introduction**

Western countries are said to have a rich knowledge base on premarital sex among the general youth that is supported by both empirical and theoretical research (Kangara, 2007; Caltabiano, Gianpiero and Rosina, 2006; Cooksey and Dooms, 2010). Researchers from other parts of the world have therefore been able to build upon and support their studies based on what already exists. The youth acquire knowledge on premarital sex from various sources among them parents, society, school, the Bible, church teachings, peers and Internet. Discussion is the basic means through which information on sexual ideals, principle expectations and knowledge can effectively be shared between parents, guardians and adolescents. Parental guidance plays a fundamental role in shaping premarital sex knowledge among the youth (Kekovole, Kiragu, Muruli, Josiah and Johns, 1997).

According to DiClemente, Wingood, Crosby, Cobb, Harrington and Davis (2001) improved parent-child communication results in heightened awareness and the resultant reduction in risky premarital sex behaviors among adolescents. Though research shows that young people prefer to get sexuality information from their parents, the actual scenario is that not many of them have this advantage (Kekovole, et al., 1997; Hutchison and Cooney, 1998). In Tanzania, a study found out that majority of the respondents who had not communicated with parents on sex related matters had more incidences of early sexual activity (Mmbaga, Leonard and Germana, 2012). According to Coleman and Glenn (2009) free discussions with children about relationships, intimacy, and sexual matters can help to nurture healthy growth as well as development.

In Kenya most adolescents wish to discuss with their age mates rather than with their parents because of the attitude that their parents are not knowledgeable about the subject matter (Kekovole, et al., 1997). A study by Gyan and Basel (2013) found out that young people who had cordial relationship with their parents had less premarital sex experience as compared with those having poor relationship.

According to Bandura (1986) learning takes place through observing people's behaviour, attitude, and the subsequent behaviours. It was during socialization when youth learnt about behavioural norms that help them fit into the society. According to Boit, Njoki and Chang'ach (2012), majority of the African communities were endowed with tales, riddles, wise sayings, poems and songs. They were an essential aspect of education, for everyone to know since they were learnt within the family circle at home. Stories dealt with many aspects of life with moral lessons to be learnt. The society therefore plays a role in influencing sex role, promoting character development and developing a sense of responsibility (Maina, 2013).

School is recognized as an important socializing agent. Its programmes are structured, can easily be replicated and are sustainable. Schools therefore are the best institutions through which many young people of different socio-economic backgrounds can be reached (Kirby, 2011). Educators have requisite skills necessary in shaping the minds of youth so as to appreciate comprehensive sexual health. They further help them understand the need to make discussion around sex and sexuality more tolerable in the society (Olusheyi and Kanthula, 2010).

The role of Guidance and Counseling in creating awareness on premarital sex in schools cannot be ignored. As Lutomia and Sikolia (2002) agree, many girls who involved themselves in premarital sex activities and got pregnant were expelled from school. They ended up with regrets and sense of guilt. In view of this Ventura, Mathew and Curtin (1998) add that young people who receive counseling on sex in their schools or through community-based programme are more likely to avoid unwanted pregnancies and other related risky sexual activities. In the American schools Sex education is almost universal. The American syllabus contains such topics as abstinence and basic information on HIV and other STIs (Landry, Jacqueline, Darroch and Jenny, 2004). In a study by Lindberg, Ku and Sonenstein (2000) more than 95 per cent youth between 15 and 19 year had received instruction on sex education. In Kenya, as Wanyonyi (2014); Duflo, Pascaline and Michael (2007) states the Government has made similar attempts to integrate different aspects of sexual reproductive health in the Christian Religion Education curriculum.

The creation account in Book of Genesis provides guidance on sexuality and gender roles which can be summarized as: chastity, abstinence, and fidelity (Heimbach, 2004). Moreover in Genesis 1:31 sex was one of those things that God declared to be 'very good'. God intended sexual intimacy to be exclusively for man and woman within the setting of a marriage relationship. While studying on the preferred sources of premarital sex information, Iliyasu, Abubakar, Galadanci, Babam and Aliyu (2012) found out that youth preferred to receive information on premarital sex and reproductive health from peers and religious leader. However Moore and Rosenthal (2007) point out that sexual information emanating from peers can be limited, incomplete or wrong. Consequently such information should be supplemented by the church, school and parental sources.

The Internet and web-based information is pivotal in determining youth sexual behavior. According to Coleman (2009) adolescents get more of their sexual education from media sources such as television shows, songs, movies, video games and from fellow adolescents. As a result children are likely to get wrong information and misleading premarital sex devoid of sexual values which parents would want to convey. As Coleman (2009) adds there is need to control exposure of children to media by providing appropriate alternatives of teaching them about sexual issues.

The Church has programs aimed at promoting sexual abstinence among youth, such as seminars, Bible conferences, youth outreach programmes, among others. Despite these programmes conducted by the Church, cases of premarital sex among Seventh- Day youth in Nyamira Conference, Nyamira County have continued to rise. It was against this background this study was carried out with a view to find out the best approach to curb the menace.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Study Area

This study was carried out in Gachuba Ward, Nyamira County, Kenya. Respondents were drawn from Girango, Rigena, and Miriri locations. The Gachuba Ward is located between Tombe Tea Factory and Keroka town. This made the study area an appropriate place that takes care of both urban and rural setting. The infrastructure of the area also contributed positively in that it eased communication and made it possible to reach the respondents.

### 2.2. Research Design and Sampling Strategy

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. By using descriptive research, the researcher was able to begin with well-defined SDA teachings on abstinence in order to present a more detailed picture of the relationship between SDA church belief and youth moral behaviour. By employing this type of research the researcher was able to examine SDA church teachings that could influence premarital sex attitude and behaviour among the youth. The target population of the study was youth between the age of 13 and 35 years from six (6) SDA churches in Gachuba Ward, Nyamira County.

The study was limited to a sample of seventy eight respondents comprising of at least 33% of the total youth population. The respondents were youth present in church during the time of study excluding those who were absent. The researcher used purposeful sampling to determine the study population. This was because of familiarity of the area and cases of premarital sex had been reported in the churches. The sample size was determined by simple random sampling. First the respondents were obtained using a ratio according to the number of respondents. Then, the researcher gave numerical numbers to the present participants and every third participant was selected. The researcher used questionnaires and interview guides to collect primary data. The researcher used the Likert Scale in designing research questionnaires for all respondents. The youth's questionnaires contained both structured and unstructured questions in line with the study objectives with questions which were easily understood.

The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques. Qualitative data was categorized into various themes and presented in narrative form while quantitative data was analysed using percentages. Data were analyzed using the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Statistics version 20. It allows for thorough examination of data in terms of distribution, frequencies, means and correlations. The study findings were therefore presented in tables, graphs and percentages. Statistical data in tables were supplemented with explanations. Conclusions were arrived at and recommendations for the study were made.

### 3. Results and Discussion

In order to get data that support the study, the researcher sought to get information on gender of respondents, age, name of church of respondents, baptismal status, age at baptism (where applicable), number of years respective respondents have been in church, whether parents are also church members or not, highest academic qualification as shown in Table 1

#### 3.1. General Characteristics of the Respondents

Item	No. of respondents	%
Gender of the participants		
Male	40	51.3
Female	38	48.7
Age of the participants		
13-17	38	48.7
18-22	31	39.7
23-27	7	9.0
28-35	2	2.6
Baptismal status		
Baptized	62	79
Not baptized	15	19.2
Re-baptized	1	1.3
Age at Baptism		
10-14	37	47.4
15-19	22	28.2
20-24	4	5.1
Not Applicable	15	19.2
Number of years in SDA church		
0-1	3	3.8
2-5	16	20.5
6-9	20	25.6
10+	39	50.0
Highest academic qualification		
Primary	11	14.1
Secondary	58	74.4
University/college	9	11.5
Parents member SDA church		
Father	2	2.6
Mother	23	29.5
Both Father and Mother	46	59.0
None	2	2.6
Other	5	6.4
<b>Base</b>	<b>78.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 1: General characteristics of respondents

Table 1 presents general information of the respondents. Most of the respondents 51.3% were male while female respondents were 48.7%. In terms of their age, 48.7% of the respondents were between ages thirteen and seventeen while 39.7% were between ages eighteen and twenty two. Only 9.0% and 2.6% were between ages 23-27 and more than twenty eight years old respectively. The baptismal status of the respondents shows that most of the respondents 79% were baptized into the SDA faith. Only 19.2 % were not yet baptized while a mere 1.3% had been re-baptized. Of those baptized, 47.4% were baptized when they were between ages 10-14 while 28.2% were baptized when they were between ages 15-19. Only 5.1% of the respondents were baptized at between age 20 and 24. Data indicated that 50% of the respondents had been members of the SDA church for more than ten years while 25.6 % had stayed between 6-9 years, 20.5% between 2-5 years and 3.8% for less than one year. Information on the level of education showed that 74.4% of the respondents had secondary education, 14.1% primary, 11.5% college or university. The results further indicated that 59% of the respondents indicated that both of their parents were members of the SDA church, 29.5 % only mother, only 2.6% father, 6.4 % others and 2.6% none of the parents.

### 3.2. Sources of the SDA Teachings on Premarital Sex

The Seventh-day Adventist Church youth got knowledge and or would prefer to get knowledge on premarital sex from particular sources. Study findings indicated sources from where youth first heard message on premarital sex. Similarly, they showed the preferred source of knowledge on premarital sex as shown on Figure 1

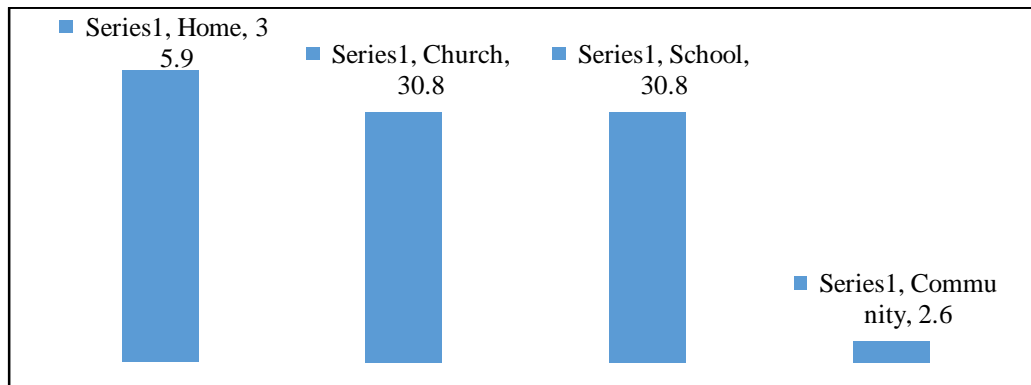


Figure 1: Initial source of information on premarital sex

From Figure 4.1, study findings show that a greater percentage (35.9%) of the respondents had heard the message on abstinence from their respective homes while another 30.8% of the participants showed that they first heard the message on abstinence from the church and or from the school with a paltry 2.6% of the respondents having first heard the message on abstinence from the community. The finding agree with Fraser and Tobin (1998) in their book 'International Handbook of Teachers and Teaching' stating that parents are the first teachers and home is the first school. The findings are also in line with White (2010) who underscores the fact that children and youth in a protected christian home are more likely to be safeguarded against worldly evil influences. Generally, according to Thorton and Camburn (1987) in Ochieng' (2013), young people whose mothers had a premarital pregnancy, had divorced, married at a young age, had a positive attitude towards adolescents sexual activities were more likely to have multiple sexual paertners than their peers.

Apart from home as a source of information, 30.8% of the participants showed that they first heard the message on abstinence from the church that is in line with the findings by Moore, Berkley-Patton, Bohn, Hawes and Bowe-Thompson (2015) that youth viewed church is the basis for communicating premarital sex information. However the findings differ from those of a study by Rosenbaum and Weathersbee (2013), that were the main source of information on premarital sexis peers and the school . However, despite going to church on Sunday, majority of the respondents had had sex before marriage. Moreover, according to Namitondo (2014) several SDA youth in Zambia engaged in premarital sex behaviors citing peer pressure and modernitation as the reasons for their lack of Christian morals.

It was only 2.6% of the respondents who pointed out that they first heard the message on abstinence from the community and this is in line with Maina (2013) who said that the society plays a role in influencing sex role, promoting character development and developing a sense of responsibility. According to Dada (2015), pre-marital sex is a social problem in every society of the world which causes social problems including teenage pregnancy, abortion, contracting STIs and other health related problems in the society. The study findings however indicate that society was ranked the least source from where respondents heard the message on premarital sex first.

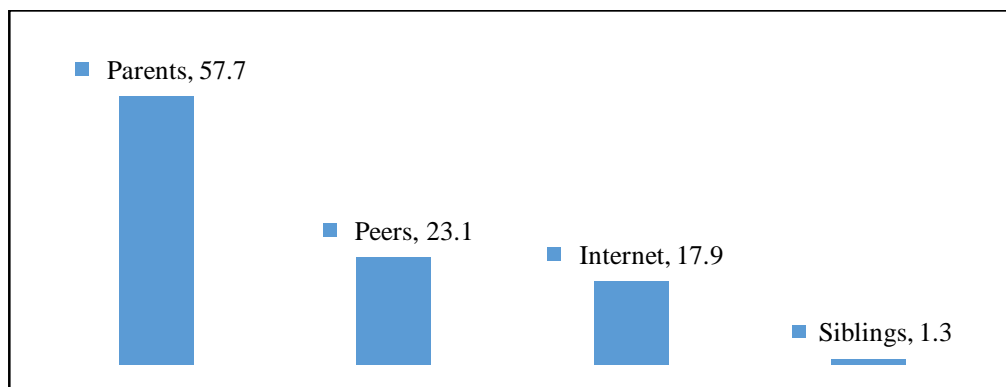


Figure 2: Preferred Source of Information on Premarital Sex

Figure 2 shows that when further asked on their preferred sources of information on premarital sex, 57.7% of the respondents reported that they would prefer to getting information on premarital sex from their parents while 23.1%, 17.9% and 1.3% would prefer to get information on premarital sex from peers, Internet and from their siblings respectively. Parents therefore play a key role on their

children's premarital sexual behaviour. They are the primary socializers of their children and consequently their unique position strongly influence premarital sex attitude and behaviour among the youth.

A study by Cheryl, Vesely, Oman, Tolma, Rodine, Marshall and Fluhr (2007) on 'Parental Communication and Youth Sexual Behavior' found out that youth whose parents engaged with their children on standards of sexual conduct would easily abstain than those whose parents never. Moreover the National Guidelines Task Force (1996) shows that 38% of the respondents wanted to discuss sexual matters with their parents. Indeed out of the 405 parents of the study, 58% felt that their adolescent youth wanted to discuss with them on sex related issues. These results also concur with a study by Martino, Marc, Rosalie, David and Mark (2008) which found out that children who had good conversations with their parents about sex were more likely to postpone sexual contact, have less sexual partners, and use condoms and other birth control methods when they had sexual contact.

In spite of the fact that 57.7% of the respondents reported to have preferred to receive information on premarital sex from their parents, only 19.2% of the respondents indicated that their parents discussed sexual related matters with them on a regular basis. It was 38.5% of the respondents who indicated that they either never discussed this subject or would do so occasionally, meaning that parents were not doing enough. This could be attributed to the fact that these are school going children and therefore only available during the weekends or school holiday for those in boarding schools. These results are similar to that of Katola (1995) which revealed that some of the Akamba parents and the church leaders had not been able to consciously carry out this primary obligation and responsibility.

The study findings showed that 23.1% and 17.9% of the respondents would prefer to get information on premarital sex from peers and Internet respectively. According to Kirby and Lepore (2007) sexual behaviour is one of those areas through which young people can easily be influenced by their best friends as well as peers. Peers and romantic associates influence affect the sexual attitudes and behaviors of the youth. Also and being popular among peers with positive sexual attitudes, having permissive attitudes about school and church were regarded to influence early onset of sexual activities among young people. However Moore and Rosenthal (2007) point out that sexual information emanating from youth themselves can be limited and misleading if not supplemented with other sources of information.

A study by the Kaiser Family Foundation. *Generation RX.com (2001)* among the 15 to 17-year-old youth also found out that 51 % of the female respondents and thirty-three per cent of the male respondents sought sexual health information online. Forty four percent of the youth between 15 and 24 years browsed the Internet for information on pregnancy, birth control, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections. Eighty two percent and eighty eight percent of the young women and men respectively cited confidentiality as the reason for going online.

The role of parents, church and school is paramount in disseminating premarital sex among the youth. In their study among the Vietnamese High School students, Watanabe, Saruta and Kato (2014) sought to establish the source of sexual knowledge for the youth. The study found out that 58.3% of the females respondents would prefer such information to come from parents, 51.7% of both male and female would want to get it from school and 52.5% of both gender would prefer getting it from TV and magazines. Not more than 10% of both male and female respondents selected the Internet as the best source of information on sex.

Frequency	No. of respondents	%
Regularly	15	19.2
Occasionally	30	38.5
Never	30	38.5
Not applicable	3	3.8
<b>Base</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2: Frequency of discussion on sex related matters with parents

Table 2 indicates various responses on how frequent parents discuss sex related matters with their children. It is indicated that a greater proportion 38.5% either never discussed this subject or would do so occasionally while 19.2% discussed sex related matters with their children on a regular basis. The other responses were 38.5% for Never and 3.8% for Not Applicable.

Item	Always		Occasionally		Never	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Youth seminars approach	18	23.1	41	52.6	19	24.4
Youth Bible Conferences approach	10	12.8	34	43.6	34	43.6
Camp meetings approach	42	53.8	25	32.1	11	14.1
Family life Education program approach	9	11.5	30	38.5	39	50.0
<b>Base</b>			<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>		

Table 3: Approaches for Disseminating information on Premarital Sex

Table 3 shows the various approaches for dissemination of premarital sex information used by the SDA Church to create awareness on sexual abstinence and moral purity. There were four different approaches and three different responses. The first approach youth seminars in which 23% of the respondents indicated Always, 52.6% indicated Occasionally and 24.4% indicated Never. The second approach youth Bible conference whereby 12.8% indicated Always, 43.6% Occasionally and 43.6% indicated Never. The third approach was camp meetings (*Ebigutu*) in which 53.8% of the respondents indicated Always, 32.1% Occasionally and 14.1% Never. The fourth and last approach was Family life education program with 11.5% of the respondents indicating Always, 38.5%

Occasionally and 50% Never. The above information reveal that the degree at which premarital sex message is disseminated is very minimal. Apart from the camp meetings 53.8% of the respondents indicating always, the rest of the responses were below 30%. It should also be noted that camp meetings were conducted only once a year. Therefore, there is need to use the rest of the approaches as frequent as possible, in order to equip youth with information on premarital sex.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on study findings it is concluded that youth would prefer to get sex knowledge from parents. Church and school were the second and third most preferred sources on premarital sex among the youth. However besides lacking time to discuss premarital issues with their children, parents were skeptical since they believed that disseminating such information would imply approval of sexual activity. When there wasn't a reliable source of premarital sex information, young people depended on their peers and Internet. Consequently there were chances of receiving inadequate or misleading information on premarital sex and were therefore likely to bear the negative consequences that come with unsafe and unprotected sexual activities.

#### 5. Recommendation

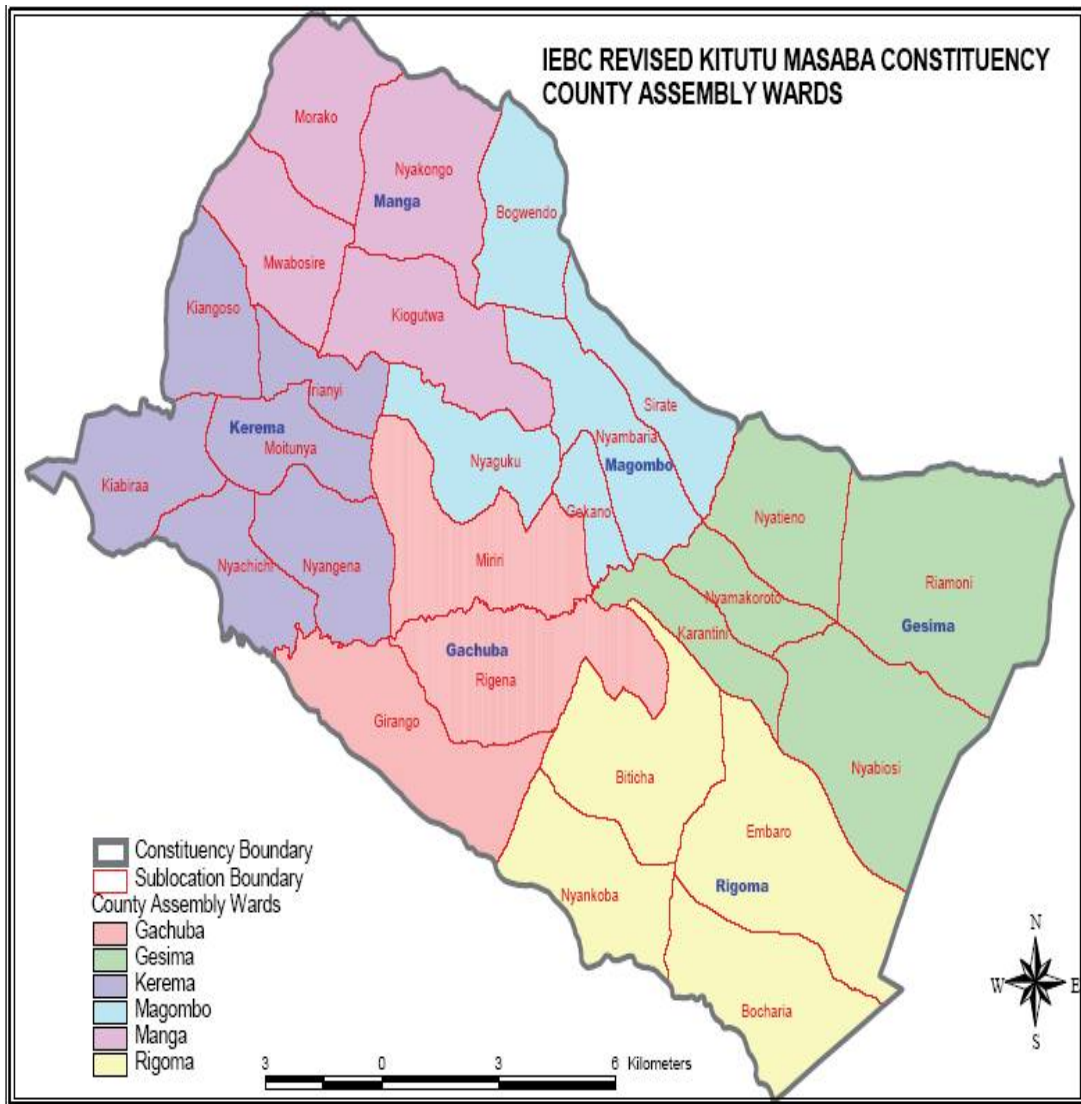
The study recommends that parents should be encouraged to provide lessons on pre-marital sex at home. The study found that only 35.9% of the respondents first received information on pre-marital sex from parents although 57.7% of the respondents preferred to get information on pre-marital sex from parents. This is a matter of great concern because the home should be the first place where children receive their education. The study also recommends that The Church needs to organize more youth programmes where information on premarital sex is shared. The camp meetings come once a year and the period is short for the required training. A continuous youth programme in every church will be of great importance in communicating information on premarital sex.

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**Appendix 3: Map of Kitutu Masaba Constituency showing Gachuba Ward**



Source: Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, Kenya