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# Traditional unyago training in Tanzania - a step to adolescence or a leap to motherhood

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2017 Laurea





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Laurea-ammattikorkeakoulu

Traditional unyago training in Tanzania  
- a step to adolescence or a leap to motherhood

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Sosionomikoulutus  
Opinnäytetyö  
Lokakuu, 2017

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The working life partner of the thesis was a Finnish non-governmental organization called LiiKe - Sports & Development. They have conducted development projects in the Mtwara Region in Tanzania for over a decade. The aim of the thesis was to conduct a qualitative research in English, which LiiKe can utilize in their upcoming development projects. The need for the research arose from the big problem of adolescent pregnancies in the Mtwara Region which LiiKe wants to intervene by easing the problem. The research examined the local traditional "unyago" training and its effects on girls' lives. The research question was: what kind of influence unyago has on girls' initiation of sexual activities? The theory of unyago, girls' sexual development and sexual education, and the time of adolescence and adolescent pregnancies construct the theoretical framework of the thesis. The data was gathered by interviewing 28 girls who had undergone unyago, 12 of them were pregnant. The means of collecting the data were semi-structured interview and a survey. A content analysis was used to analyse the data. Content analysis generated three main themes from the data. The themes were: a general content of unyago, sexual awakening and criticism.

The informants were aware of the young girls being sexually active and the problem of adolescent pregnancies. The common opinion was that the training consists of important and useful information but the sexual content should be removed. The informants told that some unyago trainings have the sexual content which teaches the girls how a woman can please a man sexually. This sexual content was perceived to be harmful to the children and the cause of young girls initiating sexual relationships. However, most of the informants had not learned anything about sex in unyago, or become more interested about it personally, so the possible relation between the unyago training and the girls' initiation of sexual relationships cannot be confirmed. Other unyago trainers are encouraging girls to start practicing sexual relationships after unyago, and others tell them to abstain from sex. Clearly most of the informants hadn't had any teaching about contraceptives. Based on this study I suggest that the contents of different forms of unyago should be uniformed and the contents should correspond and meet the development stage of the children. The sexual education in general should be improved, so every girl would have the opportunity to get continuous and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education which would consider the development stage of the child.

Keywords: Unyago, Adolescent pregnancy, Sexuality, Adolescent, Sexual education

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Vuosi 2017

Sivumäärä 54

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Opinnäytetyön tilaaja oli Liikunnan Kehitysyhteistyö LiiKe ry, joka on toiminut Etelä-Tansaniassa, Mtwaran maakunnassa jo yli vuosikymmen ajan tehden kehitysyhteistyötä paikallisen yhteisön hyväksi. Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli tuottaa laadullinen tutkimus englannin kielellä, jota LiiKe voi myöhemmin hyödyntää tulevissa kehitysyhteistyö hankkeissaan. Tarve tutkimukselle nousee teiniraskauksista, jotka ovat suuri ongelma Mtwaran maakunnassa ja tähän ongelmaan LiiKe haluaa puuttua. Tutkimus tutki perinteisen paikalliseen kulttuuriin kuuluvan, tyttölapsille suunnatun, aikuiselämään valmistavan ”unyago”-koulutuksen vaikutuksia lasten elämään. Tutkimusongelmana oli, millainen vaikutus unyago-koulutuksella on tyttöjen seksuaaliseen aktiivisuuteen? Teoria unyago-koulutuksesta, tyttöjen seksuaalisesta kehityksestä ja seksuaalikasvatuksesta, sekä teini-iän ajasta ja teiniraskauksista muodostavat opinnäytetyön teoreettisen viitekehyksen. Tutkimuksen aineisto kerättiin haastattelemalla 28 unyago-koulutuksen käynnyttä tyttöä, heistä 12 oli raskaana. Haastattelumenetelminä käytettiin puolistrukturoitua haastattelua ja lomakehaastattelua. Aineisto käsiteltiin sisällönanalyysillä. Aineistosta nousi sisällön analyysillä kolme pääteemaa: unyagon yleinen sisältö, seksuaalinen herääminen ja kritiikki.

Haastateltavat olivat tietoisia nuorten tyttöjen seksuaalisesta aktiivisuudesta ja teiniraskauksista. Haastateltavat kertoivat, että joissain unyago-koulutuksissa on seksuaalinen sisältö, jossa nuoret tytöt oppivat miten nainen voi tyydyttää miehen seksuaaliset tarpeet. Yleinen mielipide oli, että koulutuksessa on tärkeää ja hyödyllistä sisältöä, mutta seksuaalinen sisältö tulisi irrottaa siitä. Tämän seksuaalisen sisällön katsottiin olevan lapsille haitallista ja johtavan tyttöjen lisääntyneeseen kiinnostukseen aloittaa seksuaaliset suhteet. Useimmat haastateltavista eivät kuitenkaan henkilökohtaisesti olleet oppineet seksistä mitään, tai tulleet kiinnostuneemmiksi siitä unyagon aikana, joten varmaa yhteyttä unyagon ja tyttöjen seksuaalisten suhteiden aloittamisen välillä ei voida todeta. Toiset unyago-opettajat näyttävät tytöille vihreää valoa seksuaalisten suhteiden aloittamiseen, ja toiset neuvovat pidättäytymään seksistä. Selvästi suurin osa haastateltavista ei ollut saanut unyago-koulutuksessa tietoa ehkäisymenetelmistä. Tämän tutkimuksen perusteella ehdotan, että unyago-koulutuksien sisältö tulisi muuttaa yhtenäiseksi ja sisällön tulisi vastata lasten kehitystasoon. Alueen seksuaalikasvatusta tulisi parantaa, jotta kaikilla tytöillä olisi mahdollisuus saada kehitykseensä nähden sopivaa, jatkuvaa ja kokonaisvaltaista seksuaali- ja lisääntymisterveys kasvatusta.

Asiasanat: Unyago, Teiniraskaus, Seksuaalisuus, Teini-ikäinen, Seksuaalikasvatus

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## 1 Introduction

The working life partner of the thesis is a Finnish non-governmental organization called LiiKe - Sports & Development. It was established in 2001 and ever since it has done development work in Southern Tanzania together with its counterpart organization Sports Development Aid Tanzania (SDA). Their main working field is the Mtwara Region where they have had activity for over 15 years now. The main goal of the organizations is to improve the quality of life of children and youth through sport and health education. LiiKe pursues quality education for all children and youth in Tanzania. The working life representative for this study is LiiKe's executive director Ari Koivu.

The thesis takes place in Mtwara Region, located in South-East Tanzania as figure 1 (Ministry of Finance 2011) illustrates. Tanzania is one of the countries with the highest adolescent fertility rate in the world, and the Mtwara Region is one of the regions contributing the most to this rate. In rural Mtwara, the adolescent pregnancy rate is over 30 percent and it's the highest in the whole country (Halley 2015, 143). My working life partner LiiKe aims to decrease the high rate of adolescent pregnancy in the Mtwara region since adolescent pregnancy is dangerous for the mother's health and leads to school drop outs, among other negative consequences. LiiKe is interested in the reasons behind adolescent pregnancies. In the Mtwara Region, a traditional initiation ritual "unyago" is broadly practiced. Bangser (2010, 7) describes unyago as "a rite of passage for young girls into social roles and sexuality". It is regarded as a particularly sexualized social occasion and claimed to be one of the focal cause of the adolescent pregnancy problem in the region. (Bangser 2010, 7.) This thesis is a qualitative research examining unyago's possible relation to girls' sexual activity. The language of the thesis is English so LiiKe can utilize it when formulating new development projects.



Figure 1: Map of Tanzania (Ministry of Finance 2011)

The Mtwara Region is situated roughly 550 km south from the city of Dar es Salaam (Halley 2012, 88). The land area is 17 000 km<sup>2</sup> (National Bureau of Statistics 2011) and in 2012, the population of the Mtwara Region was 1 270 854 people (2012 Population and Housing Census). The region has been isolated economically and geographically from the rest of the country for a long time (Halley 2012, 124). The isolation and the deficiency of investments by the government shows in the health statistics. In the rural Mtwara, the life expectancy was 42 years in the year 2002. This was 26 years lower than in the Arusha Region in the Northern Tanzania. (Halley 2015, 146.) Mtwara is known for its cashew cultivation (Seppälä & Koda 1998, 10). Although they produce a lot of cashew-nuts, the farmers can't get sufficient income from that industry (Bangser 2010, 5). Mtwara started developing in the beginning of this century, due

to the discovery of its natural gas and oil resources (Halley 2015, 146). The government invested in the accessibility of the region by building a turmeric road from Dar es Salaam to Mtwara. Other areas of development have been the influx of people, economic investments and more reliable electricity. (Halley 2012, 117 - 118.) The development of Mtwara was strong and fast, but nowadays it has slowed down. While visiting Mtwara last winter, I saw myself that many of the businesses established during the time of development have closed their doors.

Education and gender equality produce welfare and creates new opportunities for individuals, and contributes towards development of the society. Education has positive effects on girl's life in many aspects. Education helps her to earn good income, take care of her and her family's health, and avoid diseases like as HIV and AIDS. (Department for International Development 2005, 2.) Girls' low performance in secondary-level education has been identified as a major problem by the Regional Government of Mtwara. In 2015, LiKe and SDA (2015) conducted a survey to headmasters in eight secondary schools in the Mtwara Region. As we can see from the table 1, 334 girls were enrolled to the schools but only 31 (9 %) of them graduated.

School	Started	Finished	Pass Rate
NALIENDELE	36	9	25 %
SINO	55	12	22 %
MIKINDANI	17	2	12 %
MITENGO	21	2	10 %
MANGAMBA	13	1	8 %
NANYAMBA	80	3	4 %
NANGURUWE	80	2	3 %
MAYANGA	32	0	0 %
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>9 %</b>

Table 1: Statistics of girls' pass rates in the target schools (LiKe & SDA 2015)

One of the main causes for girls' poor school success is the adolescent pregnancy. In Tanzania, 28 % of the women aged between 20 and 24 have given birth before the age of 18 (Loaiza & Liang 2013, 17). Adolescent fertility rate is 128, meaning that 128 girls (aged 15 - 19 years) out of 1000 are giving birth in Tanzania. The rate is one of the highest in the world. (UNICEF 2011b.; WHO 2015.) Mtwara has one of the highest rates of adolescent pregnancies in the



whole Tanzania (Bangser 2010, 3). Halley (2012, 94) notes, that according to the National Bureau of Statistics in 2008, 33.7 percent of adolescent girls in rural Mtwara had begun childbearing as compared to 23.2 percent nationally. According to a research conducted by Paralegal Mtwara, as much as 10% of the girls get pregnant while being still in secondary school. This is in line with perceptions given by the girls and headmasters in LiiKe's and SDA's research (2015), although the accurate information is difficult for them to get. Due to the pregnancies, many young girls are dropping out of schools and that affects negatively their life.

Mtwara is a region where a traditional initiation ritual unyago is still widely practiced. Other ethnic areas of Tanzania are practicing other forms of unyagos, but unyago in Mtwara is perceived to be a particularly sexualized social occasion. In unyago, young girls learn how to treat a man sexually and how to take care of a household. The data about adolescent pregnancy rates in Mtwara invoke concerns, and accusations against the unyago tradition. Critics assert that unyago is one of the focal causes of the pregnancy problem by giving detailed knowledge to the youth about sexual activities. (Halley 2012, 115 - 116.) It might give the idea for the girls that the examples they have learned in unyago are the way forward. Therefore, the girls won't be educated through secondary school since they get pregnant or get married at young age. (LiiKe & SDA 2015.) In LiiKe's and SDA's (2015) discussions with girls and teachers, many stated that one of the significant reasons for adolescent pregnancies is the unyago training. Some educational officers in Mtwara have been so upset about the low school performances in the region that they wish to ban unyago completely. Unyago divides opinions for those who see it as an old-fashioned and counterproductive practice and for those who value it as a tradition which teaches important cultural knowledge to the youth. (LiiKe & SDA 2015.)

There is clearly a demand for more research about the connections between unyago and the adolescent pregnancies. My working life partner LiiKe wants to find out more about the effects of unyago on girls' life, told by the girls themselves. This thesis corresponds to this need by providing a qualitative research about the adolescent girls' perceptions of unyago tradition and its possible effects to adolescent girls' sexual activity - and on adolescent pregnancies. The research question is: what kind of influence unyago has on adolescent girls' initiation of sexual activities?

The theoretical framework of the thesis is based on the theory about unyago training, human's sexual development and adolescence. These chapters aim to provide a good general understanding of the factors related to the research topic. After reading the theoretical framework, the reader should be able to empathize with the girls to whom the study topic

concerns. In the first chapter, the previous research about unyago is reviewed and the tradition is explained and viewed from different aspects. Next, the theory of human's sexual development and sexual education is covered. This theory helps to understand the whole discussion around the study topic. The last theory chapter defines adolescence and explains the issue of adolescent pregnancy and its effects.

## 2 Unyago

In Tanzania, there are traditional rites of passage from childhood to adolescence for both boys and girls. The rite for boys is called jando and the rite for girls is called unyago. The word unyago is used generally for all adolescent initiation rituals and it's not a specific word in Swahili. Unyago used to be practiced more across Tanzania. Almost all of the ethnic groups in Tanzania were practicing some version of unyago until the late 1950s. (Halley 2012, 165.) Even if unyago has lost its value in many regions, it continues to be broadly practiced in the Mtwara Region.

As the background theory, unyago in general is focused. I won't go too deep into the different phases of it because a detailed description of the rituals is not that relevant for this study. In this chapter, the previous studies of unyago are presented and after this, a general overview of the unyago training is given so the reader can understand what unyago is about.

### 2.1 Previous studies

Only limited amount of information on the traditional initiation ritual unyago was found. Megan Halley has made her PhD dissertation about the practice of unyago in rural Mtwara and how the girls are negotiating their sexuality. Halley's dissertation has contributed significantly to my research by providing detailed information about the context of unyago in the Mtwara Region. Her research together with my own experience provide an insight to adolescent girls' life in Mtwara.

Linda Helgesson has studied the equality of boys' and girls' basic educational opportunities. She interviewed girls, boys, teachers, parents / guardians and other community members in two districts in Tanzania for her research. From those interviews emerged that in some cases unyago can have a linkage to school drop outs and marriages (Helgesson 2001, 21). It was stated that some girls lose their motivation in school after unyago, because they get more interested in appearance, boyfriends and marriage. Some parents send their daughters to marriage after unyago and that is why they quit school. (Helgesson 2001, 49.)

The girls in Helgesson's research saw unyago as a positive practice, because after the ceremony they are treated as adults and with respect by the community. Negative aspects such as

the harsh punishments during the rituals and losing interest in school after the training were also addressed. Some of the girls felt uncomfortable about unyago being so sexualized. Respondents said that girls are encouraged to look for men after unyago and start practicing sexual relationships. It was said that in unyago the girls are taught that sex can lead to pregnancies but not how to prevent them. (Helgesson 2001, 49 - 50.)

Peter Batho has conducted a research about the relationships between teenage pregnancies, unyago and education level in the Mtwara Region. He found strong correlations between the variables. The girls with only primary school education and out of the secondary education were the most likely to get pregnant. The suggested reasons to this were that the girls are not taking part in activities which keep them busy and they don't earn income. (Batho 2012, 33 - 34.)

## 2.2 Description of unyago

Unyago is a traditional training for young girls approaching puberty (Bangser 2010, 7). There are several different types of unyagos practiced among different tribes in Tanzania. However, nowadays due to intermarriages, the tribes are mixed up and so the practices in different unyagos are very similar to each other. (LiiKe & SDA 2015). The major differences take place in the final ceremony. Makonde is the majority tribe in the Mtwara Region. The biggest subgroup of Makonde tribe is Tanzanian Makonde and they practice a version of unyago called chivelevele. Halley's description of chivelevele is used in the thesis as the theoretical background of unyago, since it's the most practiced version of it. (Halley 2012, 167.)

Unyago is seen as an important step for a girl child from childhood to the stage of "*ukubwa*" which means "bigness". The state of *ukubwa* is comparable to adolescence, except that it starts before puberty, whereas adolescence starts from puberty. This makes unyago as a social transition to adolescence and early adulthood. Because it is held just before puberty, it prepares a girl for forthcoming physical changes but not responding to them. The girl needs to be sent to unyago before puberty starts. One reason for this is that after puberty the girl is seen to be ready to get married and therefore should already know what a marriage life includes. Marriage is considered to be the next step from adolescence to adulthood. (Halley 2012, 184 - 185; Bangser 2010, 7.) Many girls are looking forward to unyago because after finishing it, they are recognized as women in their community and they are seen more valuable. They also receive money and gifts in the final ceremony and for many girls, this is the first time that they get money of their own which they can spend as they wish. (Helgesson 2001, 49.)

Unyago starts with an opening ceremony and ends with a big party where the girl is being introduced again to the community. Typically, there are four weeks between these ceremonies.

The girl is spending those weeks in isolation from the community in one room. She is kept hidden from men's eyes and only female family members, *kungwis* (unyago trainers) and *washikamkonos* (slightly older girls passed through unyago previously), can visit her. During this isolation time, she is taught mostly by the *washikamkonos* through songs and dances which each have a message or a lesson to teach. These lessons are about respect towards elderly, life skills, personal hygiene, family life, sexuality and sexual practices. In the content of sexuality and sexual practices, she learns how to please her future husband sexually and how to take care of his needs. (Halley 2012, 186 - 190; Bangser 2010, 7.) The *kungwis* have a great impact of what the girls will learn since they are the primary decision-makers and experts in the unyago ritual knowledge (Halley 2012, 244).

There are two time periods for unyago. The most common one is from mid-December to mid-January. The other option to attend unyago is from mid-June to mid-July. These time periods are used due to school holidays. The popularity of the unyago in mid-December to mid-January can be explained by agricultural reasons. June to July unyago is difficult because the harvest season starts from late June and all the help is needed on the farm. In the beginning of the harvest season the families have fewer resources to finance the unyago rituals and host all the guests, since the food storages from last year are emptier and money might be tight. (Halley 2012, 180.)

There is not a quantitative age to determine when the girl is sent to unyago. The right time for unyago is when the first visible markers of puberty occur, and when she is a bit cognitively mature. Considering these factors, the typical age for unyago is from 8 to 12 years. In the past, girls initiating unyago were older than nowadays. The youngest one participating unyago in Halley's research (2012, 181 - 182) was only six years old and the oldest was 12 years old. In two *kungwi* (unyago trainer) interviews made by LiiKe and SDA (2015), the *kungwis* mentioned the age for unyago to be between five and ten years old. For some families, the factor determining the time for their daughter to go through unyago is their economic situation. If a harvest is good one year, that will be the year to send the daughter to unyago. (Helgesson 2001, 51.)

Some of the rituals consist of physical discipline towards the girls undergoing unyago. For example, in the final rituals of unyago, the girls are being punished for their previous bad behaviour and they are hit with sticks. In chivelevele unyago the *kungwis* ask the girls' family members to tell about her bad behaviours and then the *washikamkonos* (girls passed unyago previously) start to hit the girls. While being hit the girls are asking forgiveness and promise to change their behaviours. In some forms of unyago this hitting might last up to 15 minutes but this is not the case in chivelevele. After this ritual, the *kungwis* tell the girls to never tell anyone about the lessons they have learned. Girls are being threatened that horrible things

will happen to them if they speak about what they have experienced in unyago. (Halley 2012, 235 - 236.)

### 2.3 Unyago and sexuality

There are differences in the messages of sexuality in different types of unyagos. Halley (2012, 246) describes, that in chivelevele, the importance and value of the woman's sexuality is recognized. The lessons are about relationships between a man and a woman, the role of sex in human's history, and practical advices for sexual practices. *Kungwis* (unyago trainers) tell the girls to be careful in their sexual relationships. They should value their sexuality and share it only with men who know how to appreciate and care for them. A woman needs to have a good reputation concerning her sexuality in order to have authority and status within the community. In the second largest form of unyago, called mkomango, the issue of sex is over-looked less formally as a fun and a pleasure activity. (Halley 2012, 243).

In unyago, a women's sexuality is linked to their gender and economic roles. Halley (2012) mentions two significant concepts in unyago which are related to adolescent girls' sexual activity. Firstly, it's a developmental transition from childhood to adolescence and it's a time in girls' lives when they'll become sexually mature. After unyago she is able to get married and possibly sexually active. Therefore, unyago consists of activities and lessons which are preparing girls to this stage of life. Some of the lessons teach sexual practices but the main purpose of unyago is more than that. All the lessons of unyago form a comprehensive developmental transition providing skills and knowledge for the next life stage. After this transition the girl is considered to be ready to engage in marriage and sexual relationships. (Halley 2012, 245.)

The second significant concept is the message of a woman's role in a sexual relationship. The girl will gain skills and knowledge of what to do as a woman in a sexual relationship. For example, they will learn how to move their body during a sexual intercourse and how to take care of her and her partner's hygiene after sex. In many discussions of sexuality in unyago, it is explicitly expressed that girls should be and will be economically supported by their sexual partners. The following quotes from Halley's (2012) research illustrate some of the songs in unyago:

“At night, at night, the boys give the girls presents, it is those boys of the night.”

“And that is why a man has to take care of his wife always, because it is because of us that they have life will demonstrate how the sexuality is in contact with economic roles.” (Halley 2012, 245 -246.)

## 2.4 Unyago in relation to adolescent pregnancies

The reproductive health and HIV / AIDS professionals have blamed unyago to be a reason for teenage pregnancies and early marriages in the Mtwara Region. However, the local people are proud of their tradition and perceive it as an important milestone in a girl's life. It's a way to pass on important knowledge about self-respect, respect for parents and elders, the strength of women in the community and community building. (Bangser 2010, 7.) Common opinion is that unyago is important, but nowadays the girls initiating it are too young. Young girls forget the teachings and start practicing sex soon after the rite. For many girls, unyago is the only source of reproductive education. The girls will learn that sex leads to pregnancies but not how to prevent them. (Helgesson 2001, 50.)

Even though in unyago the girls are given the permission to start sexual relationships, it's not the only reason for adolescent pregnancies. It's not only teaching young girls about sex but also how to live in the society as a woman. There are many other factors contributing on how girls' sexuality is being determined. Social and gender expectations, and economic situation are the principals. (Bangser 2010, 7.)

## 3 Sexuality

Since arguments and perceptions exist that the unyago tradition is causing adolescent pregnancies and its sexual content is harmful to the children, I find it relevant to use theory about children's sexual development and sexual education as a part of the theoretical framework of the thesis. There are slight differences between girl's and boy's sexual development. Since the study is concentrated on girls, I focus on the theory of girls' sexual development. According to Halley (2012, 181 - 182), the youngest children undergoing unyago are six years old so I start to look into child's development from that age forward. Hence the thesis is examining a subject relating to sexuality and sexual health, I find it important first to determine the key concepts which will be used in the thesis. After the terminology is cleared, I move on to the children's sexual development and subsequently to sexual education.

### 3.1 Definitions

Sexual health and related issues, and sexuality is defined by WHO (2006, 5) as follows: sexuality is constantly present throughout a person's life. It covers gender, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in several ways, for example: thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. Sexuality can include all of these dimensions, however not all of them are always experienced or expressed. The interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors are all influencing on sexuality.

WHO (2006, 5) defines sex to mean gender but in this study, the term sex is used to refer a sexual intercourse and the term gender to refer to a biological gender (a boy or a girl). By sexual practices and sexual activity, I also refer to sexual intercourse.

Sexual education in this chapter is used in its broad meaning. It covers sexuality and sexual contact from its physical, emotional and interactional points of views, and many other aspects like feelings of friendship, safety and attraction. (THL 2010, 11.)

### 3.2 Sexual development

In general, within the first six years of living, a child moves from total dependency to limited independency. They become aware of their own body. They start to explore their own and each other's bodies at the age of two and three. At the age of three when the linguistic skills get better, the child starts to ask questions from her parents and other adults about sexuality. (THL 2010, 23 - 24.)

At the age of four to six children learn to follow rules, they play and start forming friendships. Within friendships they often say that they love their friend or teacher for example. They connect the feeling of liking someone to love. Usually their "love" doesn't have anything to do with sexual feelings. They learn social norms and realize that touching their private places and being naked in a public space are not acceptable. That's why the exploration of their own and others' bodies happen through play. Children at this age are extremely interested in reproduction and ask a lot of questions about where babies come from and so on. They often become shy about their bodies. They start to understand gender and recognize gender roles. Around six years old child's moral development causes her to become more ashamed about sexuality and the sexuality lie dormant for a while. The interest about sexuality grows when the child gets older. Despite the modesty, the thirst of knowledge about sexuality remains. (THL 2010, 24.)

At the age of 10 to 13 the child enters adolescence which can be divided into early (10-13 years), middle (14-16 years), and late (17-19 years) stages. During those years the cognitive development takes place and abstract thinking and reasoning develops. At the stage of pre-puberty, the physical changes start to occur and youth start to look for more prescribed knowledge about their and the opposite sex's bodies and genitals. They get concern about their body image. Different behavioural experiments are common at early adolescent stage. The opposite sex starts to interest and the first experiments of holding hands and kissing on the cheek might start. (Kar, Choudhury & Singh 2015, 2; THL 2010, 24.)

The biological factors trigger the start of puberty around the age of 10 to 15. Under puberty, the sexual development speeds up and intellectual skills and moral develop. Youth will learn how to deal with issues which are not noticeable and events which are happening elsewhere. Their problem-solving skills start to develop. They'll be able to connect separate things into whole. The physical change becomes visible, breasts as well as pubic and axillary hairs start to grow. The physique starts to take a feminine, adult shape. Menstruation starts at around 12 years old. The first ones start their first relationships with opposite sex which can include kissing and cuddling. During the late adolescence, they develop a sense of identity. Social involvement, peer interaction, as well as sexual interest, develop in this phase. They become more independent and take distance to their parents. Usually in this stage the last ones start engaging into relationships as well, which will eventually lead to sexual relationships. (Kar et al. 2015, 3; THL 2010, 24, 26 - 27.)

### 3.3 Sexual education

The contents of successful sexual education vary according to child's development stage. It needs to give information about empowerment and sexual rights and it should not be intimidating or judgmental. By the means of sexual education it is possible to transfer the knowledge, skills and values about sexuality to the children and youth. (THL 2010, 33.) Sexual education shouldn't be only one-time event but it needs to be a continuous process like sexual development is. It needs to correspond to learner's changing life situations and development stages. The same subjects should be discussed again and related information should be given according to the age and development of the learner. (THL 2010, 31.)

The sexual education for younger children is based on the knowledge of their own body and feelings. Generally speaking children are ready to start understanding and receiving information about reproductive issues after the age of 10. However, it's not the absolute truth since every child is developing individually at her own phase. The topics taught proceed from general to more specific information. At the age of 6 to 9 they should learn the basic idea and methods of contraception. Sexual intercourse is not the main subject for this age group but it can be included in the education in general level. Children aged 9 to 12 years should be prepared for puberty by offering information about hygiene and the upcoming changes. They are ready to conceive information about reproduction and family planning, and they should be given information about contraceptives and how to use them in the future. They can be introduced the topic of genitals and their functions. 12 - 15 years old youth should become aware about their own responsibility concerning the topics of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. (THL 2010, 41- 50.)

Cultural influence and the attitudes of the family on the changes caused by puberty, have a great impact to the adolescent's sexual behaviour after puberty (Kar et al. 2015, 3). Lack of



proper sexual education leaves the adolescent to cope alone with all the changes under puberty and it causes a lot of stress. Unprotected sex, unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases are often results of insufficient sexual knowledge. Sexual education should be given according to child's development starting from early childhood. The ideal situation would be that the information is given to the child beforehand so she can respond to the next developmental phase of her sexuality. Sexuality develops throughout a person's lifetime. Biological, psychological and social factors are all equally important factors contributing to the development of sexuality. Sexual learning and attitudes towards sexuality emerge from social and environmental factors, including parenting style, peer relationships and cultural influences. The family's attitudes - and so on the child's attitudes towards sexuality are affected by the society and its culture. In addition to biological, psychological and social factors, many other factors are influencing on sexuality development, for example: political, legal, philosophical, spiritual, ethical, moral values and nowadays increasingly media. Media offers a lot of different information about sexuality and shapes people's perceptions about it. (Kar et al. 2015, 4 - 5, 7; THL 2010, 23.)

The stage of psychological development impacts on the child's capability to understand and interpret sexual content on the media. Gruber and Grubez (2000, 5) present two studies which explore how exposing to sexual content of media affects adolescents. Silverman-Watkins and Sprafkin have found out in their study, that 12-year-old child was not as likely to understand sexual material as 14- and 16-year-olds. Brown, White and Nikopoulou discovered that 11- to 15-year-old, at an earlier development stage wasn't as interested in sexual contents on the media as more developed girls. The more mature girls were interested in looking for sexual contents on the media as "educational" purposes. They wanted to learn "the rules, rituals and skills" of romantic and sexual relationships. I believe that this theory can be applied in this thesis since the young girls are exposing to sexual content in unyago.

### 3.4 Controversy about sexual education

Sexual education is a controversial subject. There is an abstinence-only-until-marriage- (AOUM) and comprehensive approach to sexual education. AOUM approach is the old-fashioned way which doesn't give scientifically accurate information and exaggerates and misinforms about contraception and the risks of it. It promotes ideas of gender roles which can be questionable. It doesn't provide the skills and knowledge needed to a safe transition from youth to sexually healthy adulthood. (SAHM 2017, 402.)

AOUM-programs are not efficient and don't often reach their goal to prevent pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (STIs). In 2012, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conducted a meta-analysis examining 66 comprehensive risk reduction programs and 23 AOUM programs. The comprehensive programs affected positively on sexual behaviour, whereas the

AOUM programs didn't show any sufficient confirmation of a change in abstinence, other sexual behaviours, or other sexual health outcomes among the youth. The comprehensive programs had positive outcomes on prevalent sexual activity, the amount of sex partners, frequency of sexual activity, use of protection, frequency of unprotected sexual activity, STIs, and pregnancy. It was found that AOUM programs didn't have an effect on youths' abstinence from sex as compared to a control group. Both had similar sexual behaviours among the sexually active youth including the number of partners and the age at initiation (SAHM 2017, 401.) Due to AOUM's inefficiency and negative effects, many professionals have started supporting the comprehensive sexual education approach which includes abstinence and education about condoms and contraception. It also permits an access to condoms and contraception for sexually active adolescents. (SAHM 2017, 402.)

Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine believes that sexuality education should include all the aspects of sexuality, and it should be medically accurate and culturally competent. It should offer the youth the capacity to make decisions which lead to healthy sexuality. It should provide information about all the important concepts such as sexual health, risks for diseases and unwanted pregnancy, sexual and reproductive health care, contraceptive methods and their advantages and risks, gender identity and power dynamics, sexual abuse, good relationships and personal accountability. (SAHM 2017, 400 - 401.)

#### 4 Adolescence

Adolescent covered almost 23 % of Tanzania's population in 2010, which means about 9.9 million adolescents. (UNICEF 2011b.) The definition of adolescent is not so clear at all. There are many definitions for children and young people. World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF (2011a) define adolescent to be from 10 to 19 years old person. The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines everyone under 18 years old to be a child. United Nations defines youth as 15 to 24 years old and WHO and others use the term 'young people' when talking about people from 10 to 24 years of age. By this term, they mean youth and adolescent combined. (WHOa.) In this thesis I decided to use WHO's and UNICEF's definition of adolescence, hence by adolescent, I mean a person aged between 10 to 19.

In Mtwara, the normative life pathway for girls has proceeded from childhood to adulthood through unyago and a subsequent marriage. The girls have been sent to unyago before puberty starts and after unyago they have been socially recognized as adolescents. After they have reached puberty they would get married and the marriage would mean that they have moved from adolescence to adulthood. This have made the time of adolescence short. A lot shorter than it is nowadays due to an education and participation in school. Joshi and Gaddis

(2015, 35) have found out that the rates of early marriages are strongly correlating with adolescent girls' school progress. Nowadays people get married older, after finishing school. The girls usually get married if they don't pass their exams for secondary school or they drop out of school. The girls who stay at school will marry later hence it's illegal to marry a student. (Halley 2015, 151.)

A place of residence makes a significant difference on a girl's life. In the rural areas the girls are more likely to get pregnant early and it's more difficult to find a job which provides sufficient income. For uneducated girls it's even more difficult. Educated women are socially less vulnerable since they are more respected in the community and have a voice in decision making. (UNFPA 2017.) Working women are financially more independent so it's more difficult to take advantage of them.

Educated girls will marry later but it doesn't have an effect on the initiation of sexual debuts. In Mtwara the social transition to adulthood is through unyago and not marriage. This is the reason why it seems to be socially acceptable to be sexually active before marriage. (Halley 2015, 151.) There are many factors affecting to girls' initiation to sexual relationships. Peer pressure, early marriage and economic difficulties play a leading role.

There are studies about contraceptive use among adolescents in Tanzania but the results vary. In Kazaura and Masatu's (2009) research, more than 40% of Tanzanian adolescents reported to be sexually active, but many of them didn't use condoms. Of the sexually active adolescents, 42.0 % used a condom during the previous sexual activity. In-school adolescents were using fewer condoms than their out-of-school peers. WHO (2017) stated that in 2010, the contraceptive prevalence among 15 - 19 years old girls were 14.9 % in Tanzania, implicating that 14.9 % of the 15- to 19-year-old girls or their sexual partners used some method of contraception (WHO). Although the numbers differ in the studies above, the overall result is the same. The use of contraceptives in Tanzania is low. The low percentage in contraceptive use is due to poor sexual and reproductive health education.

#### 4.1 Adolescent pregnancy

When a girl gets pregnant between the age of 15 and 19, the term adolescent pregnancy can be used (Loaiza & Liang 2013, 17). Adolescent pregnancies and child births speed up the population growth, which puts more pressure on government budget and obstructs development. (UNICEF 2011b, 4, 14.) In Tanzania, 28 percent of women aged 20 to 24 have had a live birth before the age of 18 (Loaiza & Liang 2013, 17). Adolescent fertility rate is 128 and it means that 128 girls (aged 15 - 19 years) out of 1000 are giving a birth. The rate is one of the highest in the world (UNICEF 2011b.; WHO 2015). Nowadays there are 23 % less married adolescent girls in Tanzania. The use of different types of contraceptives has increased among girls and

the adolescent pregnancies have decreased more than 12 %. These changes have covered all socio-economic groups. (UNICEF 2011b, 2.) However, despite the improvements in adolescents' situation, Tanzania remains to be a country with one of the highest adolescent pregnancy and birth rates in the world. One in every ten 16-year-old girls, one in five 17-year-old and more than one in three 18-year-old girls gets pregnant in Tanzania. One in every six adolescent girls is married. (UNICEF 2011b, 4, 14.)

Many young girls don't plan and want to become mothers (WHO 2014). Poverty and low education level are connected with teenage pregnancies. The girls who are staying at home and not going to school usually get married soon after puberty and are in a greater risk of getting pregnant. After getting married it's common for the girl's parents, husband or in-laws to start pressuring the girl to start having children. (WHO 2014; UNFPA 2017.) This remains to be the practice in many countries, especially in those where the level of education is low, and it's the normative life pathway for girls.

#### 4.2 The effects of adolescent pregnancies

Adolescent pregnancy and the human rights are connected and an adolescent pregnancy easily leads to human right violations against the pregnant girl. Insufficient reproductive health information and inaccessible contraception violate the right to health and lead to pregnancies. Pregnant adolescent girls will be expelled from school which desecrates the right to an education. (UNFPA 2017.)

Adolescent body isn't fully developed so the health of a young pregnant girl is at risk. Complications are more likely and the pregnancy can have dramatic consequences for the mother. Adolescent pregnancies are globally the leading cause of death among girls aged 15 to 19. (UNFPA 2017.) Young mothers might not have adequate knowledge how to nurture the baby and so these babies are twice as likely to die within their first month of living (UNICEF 2011a, 13).

#### 4.3 School and adolescent pregnancies

In 1999, the Primary Education Development Program was created in Tanzania. Schools were established in all over the country and the tuition fees were removed. After this, in 2004 the Secondary Education Development Program was initiated and every region got its own secondary schools. Between 2004 and 2010, the number of adolescents going to secondary schools raised three-fold among girls, and four-fold among boys. Although the accessibility of education got better, the quality is not good. In 2012, only 31 % of the students passed the Secondary Education Examinations. (Joshi & Gaddis 2015, 1.)

The main reasons for school drop outs among girls in Tanzania are truancy and pregnancy. The problem of losing girl students due to pregnancies is higher in the lower secondary school when the girls are approximately aged 12 to 15. (The President's Office-Regional Administration and Local Government 2016.) Over 55 000 pregnant girls have been expelled from Tanzanian primary and secondary schools within a decade. Expulsion based on pregnancy is not written in the law but it's generally the practice. The schools are free to make their own rules and regulations and in some schools the pregnancy is explicitly noted as a reason for expulsion. Others consider sexual activity, marriage or abortion to be the justification for expulsion. (Bjerregaard, 11, 50.) If the girl is allowed to return to school after giving birth, it is problematic. Finding someone to take care of the baby while the mother is at school might be difficult and the stigmatization of being a child mother is humiliating. Generally, the community blame the girl for getting pregnant (UNICEF 2011b, 28.)

## 5 Study design

In this chapter I will clarify the purpose of the thesis and explain my research methods. The reader is walked through the whole research process. All the stages and factors which affected to the research and the choices I made are explained.

### 5.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to examine adolescent girls' perceptions about traditional unyago training in Mtwara and its possible effects to adolescent girls' sexual activity - and so on adolescent pregnancies. The research question is: what kind of influence unyago has on girls' initiation of sexual activities? The research aims to find out young girls' opinions about unyago training and its effects to their sexual life and relationships. LiiKe can utilize the research findings in their next development projects to improve equality and girls' situation in the community.

### 5.2 Qualitative research

Before starting this inquiry, I had to choose the right research methods to be used. At first, I thought about quantitative approach because of the first discussions with LiiKe about finding out if there is a connection between unyago and sexual debuts of the girls. I was planning to make a survey like it is the custom in a quantitative research. A survey would have been an effective way to get information from a large group of people and ask about the sensitive topic but it would have not made it possible to get deep information (Vilkka 2017, 61). After further discussions with LiiKe, I decided that I want to find out subjective perceptions rather than statistical information. Therefore, I settled on qualitative research which is more suitable

ble for studying individuals' experiences and perceptions, unlike quantitative which is interested in series of cases. Human thoughts are almost impossible to describe by quantitative methods (Kananen, 32).

Qualitative research seeks for empirical information about social life. It enables to get a deep description and explanation of the phenomenon studied. The way how people see their reality and how they process it are the things which qualitative research aims to find out. Materials to be utilized as data or information can be both textual and visual, for example interview transcripts, fieldnotes and documents or artefacts, photographs, video recordings and internet sites. (Lapan, Quartaroli & Riemer 2011, 4; Saldana, Leavy & Beretvas 2011, 3 - 4.) The less is known about the phenomenon, the more qualitative research is suitable for examining it. There was only a limited amount of previous research about unyago so qualitative research was a good choice for me also in this sense. Qualitative research methodology is flexible and proceeds in cycles. During the research process, it is possible to return to the earlier phases if necessary. (Kananen 2008, 24, 30.)

Whereas quantitative research starts from a ready set of hypotheses which the research tries to prove right or wrong, qualitative research pursues to develop new hypothesis. In my case, I could have started from the hypothesis that there is a connection between unyago and adolescent pregnancies but by choosing a qualitative methodology, I needed to discard that assumption. In qualitative research the researcher is an instrument herself, unlike in quantitative research she uses technical instruments. In qualitative research, the researcher needs to stay objective in order not to affect to the findings and consequently the reliability of the research. Staying objective is possible by being aware of the subjective role of the researcher in the research. The researcher must be able to put aside her own views and biases, and be open minded and sensitive for all kind of information arising from the data while analysing it. (Fortune, Reid & Miller 2013, 112 ; Kananen 2008, 25, 28.)

### 5.2.1 Data collection

My data was collected from girls living in Mtwara who had gone through the unyago training. Due to my distant study field in Tanzania and language barrier between me and the respondents, an external interviewer was used. The interviewer was LiiKe's counterpart organization SDA's project manager Thea Swai. The interviews were conducted in Mtwara Region between July and August 2017. In total 28 girls took part in the research. 20 of them were interviewed with semi-structured interview and eight of them answered the same questions by filling in a survey. The informants were aged between 15 and 21. 12 of them were pregnant and 16 weren't. The non-pregnant girls were gathered from Sino, Myanga, Mangamba and Mitengo secondary schools. In Myanga secondary school the survey was tried out as a way to collect

the data, but in every other schools the informants were interviewed. The pregnant girls were found with the help of Likombe and Ufukoni Health Centre.

The informants to participate in qualitative research are being selected discretionary and they are forming a sample. The term for this selection is theoretical sampling. Kananen (2008, 34) explains the term by using Mason's (1996, 94) description of theoretical sampling in her book *Qualitative Researching*. Theoretical sampling means that the informants to be studied need to have certain characteristics and to be relevant to the research question. The informants should know as much as possible about the phenomenon what the research concerns. In my study, I had predefined the number of informants and the criteria for them. The criteria were: a young girl, living in Mtwara and has gone through unyago. To make my sample more diverse I wanted to have non-pregnant and pregnant girls. By dividing the informants into two groups I could compare them with each other. (Kananen 2008, 35 -37.) The number of informants wanted was 15 non-pregnant girls and 15 pregnant girls. These numbers came from LiiKe who wanted to have a big group of informants. Eventually 28 girls were interviewed and the data reached its saturation point, meaning that the data didn't bring up any new information (Kananen 2008, 37). After the decision was made about the sample of the informants, it was time to consider the means of obtaining the information.

By choosing a qualitative research methodology, it was possible to interview the respondents and that gave an opportunity to get more specific and deep information about the unyago training's effects to girls' sexuality. Unlike survey, the interview gives the interviewer the freedom to modify her words according to the interview situation. She can repeat the question, explain it, correct possible misunderstandings and have a conversation with the informant. (Kananen 2008, 73.) Young girls might be taciturn, and even more so if they are not used to interview situations. In these cases, the interviewer could try to coax the informant to respond.

There are many different interview methods to choose from. After considering different methods, I chose to use semi-structured interviews as a way to collect my data. I didn't use group interviews for two reasons; the subject of the research is relatively sensitive and during my preliminary familiarization into the topic, I discovered that the girls might have been intimidated to speak about the contents of unyago, so they might not dare to speak under peer pressure. Considering these factors, I thought that girls are more likely willing to speak out individually. In depth interview wasn't good for this study, neither the most commonly used theme interview, due to limited amount of time. I wanted to get relatively large number of informants so the interviews needed to be kept short.

In one of the secondary schools (Myanga) the interviews were conducted with a survey due to taciturnity of the informants in the previous interviews. The interview situation might have been too intimidating to the informants to talk freely about the sensitive issue, so we tried the survey as a method of collecting the data. Altogether eight informants were interviewed with surveys. They were gathered into a same room and after presenting the purpose of the study, they were explained all the questions in the survey. The interviewer was in the room for the whole time and the informants had the chance to ask help if needed. However, the survey was not so successful way of gathering the data due to some difficulties to interpret the given answers, so we continued with semi-structured interviews in the subsequent interviews.

Unlike theme interview which proceeds through themes, semi-structured interview has predefined questions in a certain order. The questions are the same and in the same order for every respondent like in a structured interview but there are not ready-made answers to choose from. The respondents are free to give their own answers. (Eskola & Suoranta 2000, 86.) The interviewer has an active role, she is able to explain the question and ask for more precise answers. Semi-structured interview fitted my study because it has a lot of structure and yet the flexibility of an interview. Because of the external interviewer and the relatively young age of my respondents, it was good to have a structure in the interviews. The interview questions were quite detailed in order to ease the responding and make the interview to move forward. (Magnusson & Marecek 2015, 65.) With the structured interview design, I was also able to make sure that the interviewer conducts the interviews as planned and remembers to go through all the topics by asking the predefined questions. The predefined questions also help the interview situation to stay within the outlines of the thesis (Lapan et al. 2011, 89).

Although there was a structure in the interview design, the interviewer had the freedom to modify her words according to the interview situation. We came to this decision after the first interviews where the participants seemed to be a bit taciturn and the survey didn't work. We were able to do these changes to the interview design, since qualitative research enables continuing and progressive data analysis during the research. The research, and interview questions can be redesigned and modified to fit better for the study and this is what we did. (Anzul, Ely, Freidman, Garner & McCormack-Steinmetz 1991, 140.)

My interviews were short due to the relatively large number of informants and the limited amount of time to spend on my research. The interview consisted of four background questions and six questions about unyago (appendix 2). Most of the questions were open ended since I wanted to give the informants freedom to answer as they wish and avoid short yes or



no answers. I wanted to get subjective experiences, opinions and reflections from the informants by their own words. (Magnusson & Marecek 2015, 47.) The interviews started by the interviewer introducing herself and the research. The informant was told that the information is used only for this study, the participation is voluntary and the interview can be ceased at any time. The interviewer went through the covering letter (appendix 1) with the informant and answered any questions posed by her. The covering letter consisted information about me and the research. It is essential that the presentation of the study gives accurate information to the informant so she knows what to expect from the interview. The interview should not consist of questions or topics which were not mentioned in the presentation of the study. The informant may become reluctant to continue the interview if it differs too much from what she expected. (Magnusson & Marecek 2015, 65 - 66.)

The interviews were recorded from the first question to the last one by using a smart phone recorder. The questions were asked in Swahili and the answers were given in Swahili. After the respondent had given her answer, the interviewer translated it into English and they moved on to the next question. I received the recordings via e-mail and WhatsApp application.

#### 5.2.2 Data analysis

Content analysis is a method to analyse qualitative data. Its characteristic intention is to analyse data objectively and systematically, creating a general and compact description about the research phenomenon. The data is being conceptualized, gathered and reorganized into one logic and coherent information. The aim is to transform the fragmental data into clear and compact form without losing the information within it. Content analyse has two different approaches, inductive and deductive. I used inductive approach where the analysis proceeds from single cases to generalization. In other words, the conclusion arises from the individual cases. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 107 - 108.)

Inductive content analysis process can be divided roughly into three stages. At the first stage the data is dissolved and reduced. The researcher looks for all the relevant information concerning the research question and separates that information from the rest. Only the relevant information stays. In the second stage, the remained data is organized into groups by looking for, for instance, similarities or differences. These groups are conceptualized and named after their content. In this stage, the data becomes more compact since the individual information is being included into broader concepts. These concepts are creating the base for the study findings. The researcher can continue this process of gathering the concepts again into new groups, conceptualize them and so on. This can continue for many rounds depending on the size of the data. At the last stage, the relevant information for the study is separated and theoretical concepts are formed based on chosen theory. The process proceeds from the

statements of the original information to theoretical concepts and conclusions. By connecting concepts, the answer to the research question is found. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2002, 108 - 113.)

Content analysis is a good method to analyse text so it was a suitable option for my data analysing method, since my data consisted of interview transcripts. I did the analysing manually and no data analysing programs were used. I started my data analysing process by going through the recorded audio files of the interviews. I transcribed the English translations into separate text files by using Microsoft Word 2016 text processing program. Each interview accumulated about half page of text with the font Trebuchet MS, font size 10. I had 28 interviews so in the end of the transcribing process I had 28 half pages of text. After I had the transcripts done, I sent some of them with the interview recordings to another interpret to ensure the reliability of the translations. The interpret didn't have the time to go through all the interviews, so I sent only the most relevant ones to him. No major differences within the translations were found.

I printed all the transcription text files into separate paper sheets and read them all through multiple times. I numbered the files from 1 to 28. Numbers 1 to 12 were the pregnant girls and numbers 13 to 28 were the non-pregnant girls. Later on, in the data extracts I have marked the pregnant girls with (P). For example, 12(P) means a girl number 12 who belongs to the pregnant sample. After I was familiar with the data, I started underlining all the relevant and interesting expressions from the data, keeping the research question in mind. I created simplified expressions from the original ones. After that I collected all the simplified expressions into a Word file and started to look for similarities within them. I highlighted all the expressions including similar information with same colour and organized them based on the colour. This created 25 groups which I named based on the content. Then I went through those groups and joined similar groups together. I kept on doing this until I got all the related topics joined into a broader group. In total, I got three groups which I conceptualized as a general content of unyago, criticism and sexual awakening. The concepts are explored in the next chapter as the findings of this thesis.

## 6 Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The aim of the thesis was to examine the adolescent girls' perceptions about unyago tradition and its possible effects to adolescent girls' sexual activity - and so on adolescent pregnancies. The research question was: what kind of influence unyago has on adolescent girls' initiation of sexual activities. This chapter tries to answer to the question posed above.

The findings of the thesis are not generalizable, since the sample of the informants was only 28 people. However, the data contained some clear patterns which will be explained in more

detail subsequently in this chapter. In this research, the data reached its saturation point. It started to repeat itself and additional information didn't come up. By the means of content analysis, three main themes were generated from the data. These themes are called: a general content of unyago, sexual awakening and criticism. The data gave information about the content of unyago which I decided to separate into two themes, the general content and the sexual content of unyago. First in this chapter, the general findings of the thesis are explained as a summary, and the following subchapters provide more detailed description about the contents of every theme. The first theme, a general content of unyago, gives a glimpse of what the girls are taught in unyago. In addition to the general content, the informants were talking about the sexual content of unyago and so that became the second theme standing out from the data. The third theme arose from the critical point of views towards unyago and it's called criticism. These three main themes are explained later in more detailed.

The informants had undergone different kinds of unyagos but all of them shared similar experiences and perceptions about the training. This supports the theory of different unyagos being similar to each other (Helgesson 2001, 49; LiiKe & SDA 2015). By comparing the data gathered from pregnant and non-pregnant girls I noticed that the pregnant girls were a little bit more talkative in the interviews. Other obvious differences between the two groups of informants didn't occur. The table 2 below shows how the initiation age of unyago varied among the informants who were able to tell their age when undergoing unyago.

Age in unyago	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Amount of girls	2	3	1	1	3	8	1	3	2	1

Table 2: the reported initiation age of unyago among the informants.

The initiation age of unyago among the informants varied between five (two girls) to 14 (one girl). The youngest girls participating unyago were five years old which is one year earlier than Halley's theory (2011, 180) had addressed. Eight girls out of the 28, went through the unyago training at the age of 10. The second common ages to participate in unyago were 6, 9 and 12 (three girls in each age group).

All in all, the findings of this research follow previous research findings and theory at large. The data showed that the informants were familiar with the problem of adolescent pregnancies and sexual relationships among youth in Mtwara. Although clearly the majority of the informants didn't feel themselves getting more interested in sexual practices during unyago, they recognized the phenomenon in the community. Many of them viewed unyago's sexual content to be one of the causes contributing to the girls' interest in sexual practices.

My data confirms that there is a sexual content, at least in some forms of unyago. Within that sexual content girls are being taught how to please a man sexually. A clear connection between the sexual training and the girls' sexual activity can't be proven since most of the informants were talking on behalf of other girls and not about their own experiences. This can be explained by the theory that in unyago, the girls are told to keep quiet of what they have learned in the training (Halley 2012, 236). Many of the informants claimed unyago to have an influence on girls' initiation of sexual activities but not on their own, however. The common message was: I didn't learn anything about sex and I didn't get new thoughts about sexual practices during unyago, but other girls do and so they start engaging into sexual relationships. The girls feel themselves grown up and ready to start practicing their sexual skills after unyago. Older girls undergoing unyago, aged 10 and above, were seen more likely to get interested in sexual relationships after the training than younger girls.

The common view founded in Helgesson's study (2001, 50), that nowadays the girls initiating unyago are too young, didn't get much support in my research. Informants in this study were talking about different forms of unyagos for younger and older girls. Many of them would send all the girls to the unyago for younger girls because it doesn't consist the sexual content. This study shows that the contents of life skills and social norms are valued and should be kept in unyago.

The unyago trainers, *kungwis* have a big influence on what the girls will learn in unyago and how their sexual behaviour change during and after unyago (Halley 2012, 244). The *kungwis* has different approaches to the sexual training in unyago. Some of them encourage girls to start practicing sex and others tell them to abstain from it. They are approaching the reproductive education from an abstinence-only-until-marriage (AOUM) point of view. This can be claimed since the informants had been told about reproductivity but so few had received information about contraceptive usage.

Due to the lack of informants' own experiences of the sexual content of unyago or increased interest in sexual practices, the reliability of the findings can be questioned. Anyhow the study findings support the general image that unyago needs to be updated to meet the modern days. Unyago got critique from many of the informants. The general opinion was that the sexual content of unyago should be removed but the contents of respect towards parents and older people, hygiene and other life skill related topics should be kept in unyago. Those topics were viewed as important and good for the children.

## 6.1 A general content of unyago

The data gave information about the general content of unyago. The informants told about the topics and lessons taught in the unyago training. According to the data, unyago includes teaching about personal hygiene, family activities, how to take care of oneself and respect towards parents and older people. All the topics found in Halley's (2011) and Bangser's (2010) inquiries about the contents of unyago occurred in my data. My findings are in line with the theory, that in unyago the girls are taught about respect towards parents and older people, life skills, personal hygiene and family life. In the data, all these subjects were expressed in a positive way.

1(P): "The girls are taught different topics about hard working, hygiene and respect to parents."

12(P): "In unyago, I have learned a lot of things there, for example, I learned how to respect my elders. For example, we are taught how to do, to perform domestic activities for example cooking. Before unyago training you do not know much but after unyago training you know a lot of things about how to take care of the family activities."

According to Bangser (2010, 7) and Helgesson (2001, 50), a common opinion within the local community is that unyago is a tradition which teaches important knowledge to the next generation. The local people are proud of it and this shows in the data too. Some positive views about unyago were addressed and even the critical statements often recognized some positive features in unyago.

3(P): "I think the unyago training, the content is helping the girls a little bit. I think it should continue."

25: "I learned nice things in unyago."

12(P): "They should continue training the children under ten years old because when they are younger they are not teaching them about the sexual issues."

The constantly emerging message was that unyago has the sexual content but the informant herself didn't have it in her unyago training. This is discussed more detailed on the page 35, under the theme sexual awakening. Many of the informants denied the sexual content of unyago in general or just in their case. They denied learning anything about sex in unyago nor getting more interested in it during unyago.

10(P): "I did not learn anything about sex in unyago."

Some of the girls denied the sexual content of unyago at first but subsequently indicated being taught about sexual issues nevertheless.

16: "No, they are not talking about sexual relationships in unyago."

16: "During the training unyago we are told not to use it until we are grown up."

Out of the 28 informants, 22 didn't feel that unyago affected their interest in sexual practices. By sexual practices I mean sexual intercourse in its all forms, both penetrative and non-penetrative sex. Four of the informants explained that they were too young to become interested in sexual practices while undergoing unyago. These informants were at the age of 12 (one girl) and 10 (three girls) when participating the training. According to the theory about sexual development (THL 2010, 26), the ages of 10 and 12 are the time of puberty, when the children start to become more interested in sexuality. The opposite sex starts to interest and so the first experiments of holding hands and kissing on the cheek might start. However, there is still a long way to the last stage of puberty when the first sexual experiences start.

25: "No [new thoughts about sex] because I was very young when I went through unyago."

9(P): "No, I did not get any thoughts [about sex] because I was very young."

The development stage of a child affects her response when exposed to sexual content. This theory could explain these informant's expressions. The research about children exposing to sexual content of media has showed that 12-year-old child was less likely to understand the material than 14- and 16-year olds, and girls (11 - 15) at the earlier stage of development, weren't as interested in sex portrayed in the media as more developed girls. (Gruber & Grubez 2000, 5.)

Couple of informants mentioned there to be two different types of unyagos and their contents are related to the age of the children. This is new information, since I couldn't find anything pointing to this from the theory I used. However, the inquiry conducted by LiiKe and SDA (2015), had found out that there is a demand for an age sensitive unyago within the community. My data suggests that there are some forms of unyagos which are considering the age of the participants, and this was perceived to be a good practice.

9(P): “Ah it depends on the tribe, and I would like to advise them that for the tribes who are training the girls in unyago in older age, they should change their topics because they are teaching them about sexual issues when they are starting to grow up. So this is not good.”

12(P): “No, my thoughts about sex didn’t change because the training considers age. For the younger ones, they are taught things related to their age and the older ones are taught things related to their age for example, how to take care of their husbands and so and so.”

12(P): “For me, I suggest that they should train the girls who are under 10 years old because if they train those who are aged 14 or 15, they are going to train them things which are not related to their age. Yeah the things they will teach them is about yeah, whenever you meet a man you should know how to receive him, how to take care of him, yeah so those are the things taught there.”

From the previous extracts, a conclusion can be made that in the age considering unyago the emphasize of the training is more in the life and social skills for the younger children, and the older ones get the sexual training. The European comprehensive sexual education corresponds to the development stage of the child. Generally, over 10-year-old children are becoming able to understand and so, to receive information about reproductive issues. They can be introduced to the topic of genitals and their functions. They should get information about contraceptives and how to use them in the future. Younger children are mainly taught about knowing their own bodies and feelings. (THL 2010, 41- 50.)

Some informants on the other hand talked about a changed unyago rather than two different versions of it. The start of many comments was that unyago has changed to the worse. The common opinion was that unyago used to concentrate on life skills and respect towards elders among other topics and those kind of skills perceived to be good for the girls. Nowadays it’s sexualized. The *kungwis* (unyago trainers) are teaching young children about sex and that was perceived to be harmful to the children.

10(P): “Nowadays I see it’s common [thoughts about sex change]. Many girls are participating into sexual practices at younger age. It’s because previously they were talking about respect and some other good topics but nowadays the *kungwis*, they do not feel good if they do not speak about all these things so they like to train them [the girls] about the sexual things, so it causes many girls to engage into sexual practices at this younger age.”

One factor contributing to adolescent pregnancies is the fact that unyago doesn't seem to provide a proper information about contraceptives and the usage of them. For some girls unyago is the only source of reproductive education (Helgesson 2001, 50). Only three informants out of 28 clearly stated receiving teaching about contraceptives. The data showed that the *kungwis* (unyago trainers) have told the girls that sexual intercourse leads to pregnancy, but overall the teaching about contraceptives was almost not existing. The sexual education provided in unyago, if there is any, seems to be abstinence-only-until-marriage (AOUM) approached education. It's not an efficient approach because it doesn't give exact information and misinforms about contraception by overemphasizing or misstating the risks of it. (SAHM 2017, 401.) Some of the comments revealed that the knowledge about contraceptives is weak. One girl was taught that contraceptives are harmful for her reproductive system.

Interviewer: "What did you learn about contraceptives in unyago?"

22: "One of the contraceptives is to take care of the children well."

24: "I was told that if I use contraceptives I can damage my reproduction system and I won't conceive."

The finding of the lack of knowledge about contraceptives reflects the fact that the percentage of the contraceptive use is low among adolescents in Tanzania. The finding of the absent contraceptive education in unyago supports Helgesson's (2001, 49 - 51) theory that the girls are taught that sex can lead to pregnancies but not how to prevent them.

1(P): "Sometimes the trainers are threatening them [the girls] because they are in the age of puberty, so after they have undergone their menstruation period, the trainers are threatening them like that, if you practice sex now you are going to become pregnant."

Few informants were told how to escape or avoid pregnancies but the means remained unknown since they didn't give more detailed explanation. This finding disagrees with Helgesson's study, stating that the girls are not taught how to avoid pregnancies, yet can't explain how the girls were taught to avoid pregnancies.

20: "I was told how to escape from getting pregnant."

14: "They [other girls] are taught how to escape from teenage pregnancies."



The data showed two types of behaviours from the *kungwis* (unyago trainers) concerning sexual relationships. There are different messages of woman's sexuality in different forms of unyagos. In chivelevele unyago, woman's sexuality is handled more formally than in mkomango unyago. In chivelevele, the *kungwis* tell the girls to be careful in their sexual relationships in order to maintain their good reputation. In mkomango unyago, the issue of sexuality is handled less formally and sex is presented in a positive way. (Halley 2012, 245 -246.) Helgesson's study (2001, 49 - 50) addresses that girls are encouraged to start sexual relationships after unyago. This study found out that other *kungwis* are encouraging girls to sexual debuts, and others are using the AOUM type of sexual education by telling the girls to abstain and wait before participating in sexual relationships until marriage or until they are grown up. The *kungwis* are the primary decision makers in unyago and what comes to the content of it. They have a remarkable impact on what the girls will learn. (Halley 2012, 244.) Cultural attitudes towards sexuality reflect in person's own sexuality and sexual behaviour (Kar, Choudhury & Singh 2015). Different types of unyagos can present different sexual attitudes, but I didn't find any clear connection between the type of unyago the informant went through and her increased sexual interest or the message about sexuality she got. This is partly because many of the girls couldn't name the form of unyago they went through.

27: "I learned that contraceptives are important in life but you should wait until you finish school."

16: "During the unyago training we are told not to use it [the knowledge about sex] until we are grown up."

24: "I learned that I should not engage into sexual relationship until I reach the age of getting married."

## 6.2 Sexual awakening

Even though the majority of the respondents denied receiving any teaching about sexual practices, they didn't deny the sexual content of unyago, so the data affirms the theory about the sexual content of unyago. It's been discovered that in the content of sexuality and sexual practices, the girls learn how to satisfy their future husband sexual needs (Halley 2012, 186 - 190; Bangser 2010, 7). Like in the previous chapter it came out, the fact whether everyone gets the sexual training stays unclear, because so many of the informants denied it or expressed that younger girls don't get the sexual teaching. So personally, they didn't have the sexual content in their training but they told what other girls are learning about sexuality and sex in unyago.

4(P): "They tell you, if you go in your parents' room, you will find them naked."

17: "Things taught there are about how to take care of husband/men in marriage or in a sexual relationship."

18: "I was taught how to receive a husband, how to take care of a family. For example, if a man, if my husband comes back from somewhere I have to receive him."

23: "I learned how to dance [moving the wrists] in unyago [how to handle man sexually]."

25: "Unyago training is the source of training about sexual issues."

Four girls out of 28 recognized themselves getting more thoughts and interest in sexual practices after unyago than before it. The data didn't show a connection between given sexual teaching and pregnancy. Only one of those four girls stating to be more interested in sex after unyago was pregnant so a clear connection between the increased interest in sexual practices and pregnancies didn't occur either.

4(P): "After I went through the training I started to get some thoughts about sexual practices. Yeah, after the unyago training I started to get some thoughts and now I got a boyfriend."

21: "Yes, after I went through unyago, I started to become more interested in sexual practices than before."

24: "Yes [she is more interested in sex] and it's because I was taught about sex."

26: "Yes [she is more interested in sex] therefore I think we should stop this practice because it is not good."

The informants expressing to become more interested in sexual practices during unyago were 13, 10 and 5 years old when undergoing unyago, and one didn't remember her age. A child's sexuality grows as she grows and it is an interesting issue in every stage of development (THL 2010, 22). A five-year-old child is not developed enough to understand sex and sexuality like

adults. She is still at the stage of exploring herself physically. (THL 2010, 26.) Anyhow one informant in this study felt more interested in sexual practices after unyago even though she was at the age of five when participating in it. The other informants aged 10 and 13 were at the stage of puberty. In that stage of sexual development, it's normal to start becoming interested in boys and sex or other related activities (THL 2010, 26).

The one salient feature which stood out from the data (discussed earlier on page 29) was, that even though many of the girls denied learning anything about sex in unyago nor getting more interested in sex personally during unyago, they stated that to other girls it happens. The other girls are taught about sexual issues and so they get interested in sex and start practicing it after unyago. This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that the girls are forbidden to tell anyone about the lessons they have learned in unyago. The girls are told that bad things will happen if they speak about what they have learned in unyago. (Halley 2012, 236.) There were nine girls clearly stating that their thoughts about sex didn't change but to other girls it happens. Many girls also viewed that unyago is affecting the girls to start engaging into sexual activities at younger age.

16: "No, my thoughts about sex didn't change during unyago, but some other girls yes. I see them getting these thoughts. After unyago they dance before men. They do it. They want to show it. They want to practice it. But during the unyago training we are told not to use it [practice sex] until we are grown up."

14: "They never told us anything about sex in unyago. But they are teaching to some other girls."

4(P): "Some topics in unyago, their contents are changing some girls and makes them to start sexual practices at very young age."

10(P): "Nowadays I see it's common [thoughts about sex changes]. Many girls are participating into sexual activities at younger age. It's because previously they [unyago trainers] were talking about respect and some other good topics but nowadays the *kungwis*, they do not feel good if they do not speak about all these [sexual] things."

Halley (2012, 184 - 185) describes the unyago training to be a step to the stage of "*ukubwa*", meaning "bigness", which can be related to adolescence. My data shows two opposite perceptions about the "*ukubwaness*" of the girls. Like previously mentioned on the page 29, some of the informants felt that they were too young to start engaging into sexual relationships after unyago, nor it didn't affect their thoughts about sexuality due to their age.

22: “I did not like to engage into sexual relationship because I was still very young.”

25: “No, [new thoughts about sex] because I was very young when I went through unyago.”

None of the informants said that they felt themselves grown up after unyago. Informants told that some of the other girls do however, and so those girls start engaging into sexual practices.

20: “My thoughts about sex didn’t change during unyago. But some other girls’ thoughts do change, because they think they are grown up already.”

15: “No, I did not get any thoughts, but yes, some other children’s thoughts about sex change during unyago because they think they are grown up and mature so they start practicing [sex]. That’s why some others get pregnant.”

The data suggests that one of the reasons for the other girls starting to get interested in sexual activities is that they feel themselves grown up. This can be explained by the theory that it’s perceived that through unyago, the girl child moves from childhood to adolescence and the girl gets more respect from the community (Halley 2012, 184 - 185; Helgesson 2001, 49). It’s a social transition to the next stage of life, but not always corresponding to the development stage of the girl.

The opinions about girls being grown up in or after unyago seemed to divide also the *kungwis* (unyago trainers) into two different camps. In the first camp, the *kungwis* didn’t see the girls old enough for sexual relationships. The *kungwis* told the girls to wait to be grown up before getting engaged into sexual relationships.

9: “Yes, I learned some things about sex in unyago. They just taught me that after I’m grown up, I will be able to go to my husband’s place. I can get married.”

24: “I learned that I should not engage into sexual relationship at young age, until I reach the age of getting married.”

The other *kungwis* perceived the girls to be grown up after unyago. Like in Helgesson’s theory (2001, 49 -50), the data shows that some of the girls are encouraged to find men and to start engaging into sexual relationships.

9 (P): “Yes, some [*kungwis*] tell us that you are grown up. In unyago they tell you, you are now grown up. You will go to your husband now. Yeah (laughing) you will go to your husband.”

20: “I was told to escape from boys. They [*kunqwis*] told me that I was already grown up, so I have to be aware, otherwise I will get pregnant.”

20: “Yes. Some are more interested in sex after the training because they are told that they are grown up and they are ready so they start doing this [practicing sex].”

Culture’s attitudes towards sexuality effect on how the children perceive their sexuality (Kar, Choudhury & Singh 2015). If the culture is approving and encouraging towards sexual relationships the children are more likely to get engaged into them. Therefore, unyago drew some critique which is discussed in the next chapter.

### 6.3 Criticism

The third arising theme from the data was criticism. Unyago was perceived to consist some bad topics which are harmful to the girls. These bad topics were sex related topics which will drive the girls to start practicing sexual activities. Sexualized unyago passes on positive and encouraging attitudes to the children about sex, thus it might affect their sexual behaviour.

4(P): “So all these things they [*kungwis*] are teaching them [the girls] about bad practices, sexual practices, which are not good. They will motivate the girls and children to start engaging into sexual practices.”

8(P): “There are some topics which are not good. They are misleading the children that’s why some younger girls find themselves engaging into sexual practices with men.”

27: “The [sexual] content is not good.”

6(P): “The [sexual] content should be chanced, because those things which they are taught there, they have no meaning. They are meaningless.”

Unyago was perceived to be old fashioned and needed to be changed. The topics should be updated to be suitable for modern times and the sexual content should be removed. There

was a demand for better topics such as health education. Like mentioned earlier, the topics about respect and life skills were viewed positively.

18: "They teach her [the girl] about elder's things so I think that this content should be removed, I think that [the sexual content] should be taken out."

8(P): "The unyago topics should be taught in relation to our society and what the world needs today."

19: "The content of unyago should be improved, like teaching them how to prevent themselves from pregnancies and to respect parents. Rather than teaching them about all the sexual contents. They could teach them how to take care of themselves and respect parents."

Unyago, as it is now, was seen destructive and some even wanted to stop the whole tradition.

10(P): "I think that nowadays the unyago trainings is not so good. It's harmful to the children because they [*kungwis*] teach a lot about sexual practices. They will tell you about how to handle a man sexually. They tell you that you have to handle the man in this way, in that way. So this is destroying them [the girls]. So maybe if you get the older women who are training the girls [the *kungwis*] to teach better topics than nowadays. Nowadays unyago is destructive. "

26: "Sex issues in unyago are not so good because they spoil the community."

24: "It is a bad habit to teach the girl about sex in unyago because it spoils her future. Because when taught about sex, she can practice and can get pregnant and then drop out of school and her future ends up there."

Unyago divides opinions and this can be seen in this study as well. Some view it as an old-fashioned and counterproductive practice and others value it as an important tradition which transforms important cultural knowledge to the youth. (LiiKe & SDA 2015.) In this study, more critical views than positive views towards unyago emerged. Two informants expressed purely a positive opinion about unyago, and 17 had some critical views about it. Many of the informants would keep the tradition alive but modify it to be more age sensitive and to correspond to the modern days.

## 7 Ethical consideration and trustworthiness

This study is conducted by the general principles guiding a scientific research. When studying social life, ethical dilemmas may occur, hence the research ethics are an important aspect when assessing a research. No harm can be caused to the informant. The inequity in power relationships between the researcher and the informant was quite high in this study. I am a white girl with a high education and the informants are young Tanzanian girls who are one of the most vulnerable group of people in the community. I followed the basic ethical principles of a research: beneficence, respect and justice throughout my entire study. My research is beneficial to the informants since it helps my working life partner LiiKe to develop new projects to improve the community where the informants and their families live. The informants were treated with respect. The local interviewer was familiar with the culture and language, so she knew the right and respectful way to communicate with the informants and the whole community. The interviews were conducted in the informants' own mother language Swahili to get more detailed data and to show respect. Justice was ensured by using rational, non-exploitative and well considered measures in the study which are explained throughout this research report. (Lapan et al. 2011, 22.) In an ethical interview, the informant needs to be given a good general picture of the content of the research and what to expect from the interview. Every informant got a covering letter which explained the research so they knew what to expect from the interview. The interviewer is not allowed to ask anything which wasn't mentioned in the presentation of the research. (Magnusson & Marecek 2015, 65 - 66.)

My own values and the way I see the world is partly different from those supported in unyago and that's why it was interesting for me to study the subject. I see that a pregnancy for a young teenage girl is not a favourable situation. The pregnancy ends her childhood too early, puts her and the baby's health at risk and the mother usually needs to quit school. Uneducated girl is unlikely to get a sufficient income so she needs to depend on other people to support herself and the baby. The dependency on others makes her vulnerable and puts her at risk of abuse. My values are affected by the Western culture I'm living in. Due to the knowledge about this new culture I was studying in my thesis, I questioned my values. My cultural sensitiveness in this study means that I realized that my culture is not proven to be the right one or flawless either so I can't perceive our values and ways of thinking to be the right ones. In Mtwara, the unyago tradition is respected and the culture values motherhood. Families are big and the family is the social security for people. Some girls decide to get married early and start a family. Even though that is not an ideal idea for Western people, it can be a desirable situation for the girls living in Mtwara. If the culture appreciates motherhood over education, it is difficult to change it and it might be even unethical to try to change it from outside. The need and actions for change need to come from the community itself.

The subject of the study was sensitive since it examined a cultural tradition which is respected and important to the community. It could have caused an ethical dilemma if the community would have suspected that the study would have judged their culture and cultural practices. The community might have seen my study as a possible harm for their culture and so affected negatively to the research. Yet, I had a culture sensitive approach. By this I mean that I was not judgmental towards the unyago tradition and I had a full respect towards the culture and the people concerned by the study. The permission for the study was asked from all the relevant people. The Municipal Director, the teachers and the nurses at the interview sites were informed about this research. The community didn't take my study as a threat and it was relatively easy to find the respondents and get the blessing to interview them.

When assessing a qualitative research, three factors are taken into consideration: the impacts of researcher's presence on the research scenery, her values and the informant's honesty (Silverman 2006, 290). People have the capability of lying, misunderstanding the questions and making unattempt mistakes. These facts need to be kept in mind when working with people. I was aware of the possibility of the informants to be reserved in the interviews since in unyago the girls are told to keep quiet about the things what they see and hear during the lessons (Halley 2012, 236). To avoid taciturnity, anonymous interviews were used.

Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are influencing on the reliability of a qualitative research (Eskola & Suoranta 2000, 211). The reliability of a qualitative research can be divided into internal and external reliability. Internal reliability means that other researchers agree and could construct the same findings. Theoretical and conceptual determinations should be in harmony with each other in the study. External reliability in this study is taken into consideration when the informants and the research setting is described as detailed as possible. The description should be sufficient enough so that the research could be renewed in a similar context. Other researchers studying the same or similar settings should be able to get the same results. The readers should get a clear picture of the line what led the researcher to her conclusions. (Eskola & Suoranta 2000, 213; Lapan et al. 2011, 29; Seale 2011, 147, 157; Silverman 2006, 282.) The criteria for reliability is taken into account in this study by making the research process as transparent as possible by explaining and justifying the research policy and data analysis methods in detailed in the research report (Silverman 2006, 282). I have explained all my thoughts which led me to my decisions and told all the dilemmas faced during the process.

The researcher is an instrument herself in qualitative research and needs to stay objective. She can't make interpretations based on her own biases. Objectivity is one of the most challenging aspect when conducting and assessing a qualitative research. The objectivity requires



keeping a distance to the informant (Kananen 2008, 28). For me, it was easier to stay objective in the role of a researcher due to the physical distance to the study field and the informants. I was conscious of my own values and biases concerning the research topic throughout the research process. In a credible research, the researcher's interpretations of the informants' messages are equivalence to what they actually mean (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2013, 138). In this research, this was taken into consideration in the interviews. The respondents heard their answers translated and had the chance to correct possible misunderstandings. From the recordings I heard that if the respondent wasn't sure about the meaning of the question, she went silent and the interviewer explained the question again. In some interviews I heard the interviewer confirming from the informant that she understood her correct.

The external interviewer is a risk for the reliability of the research but I believe that in this study it had also positive effects on the reliability. The informants were Tanzanian girls and the interviewer was a Tanzanian woman. It's easier to create relaxed atmosphere to the interview situation if the interviewer and the respondent share some significant features with each other. In this case, the interviewer shared the same cultural background, language and gender with the respondents so she knew the appropriate language and approach to use with the informants. (Magnusson & Marecek 2015, 61.)

I couldn't be present in the interviews myself due to the location of the study field and the language barrier between me and the participants. Due to these factors, LiiKe's sister organization in Tanzania, Sports Development Aid (SDA) helped me to conduct the interviews. Although the external help in the execution of the interviews was a good thing in some extensions (mentioned earlier in this chapter), it needs to be taken into consideration while assessing the readability of the thesis. A colleague from SDA, Thea Swai interviewed the informants and translated the interviews in English. The most informatic translations were double checked by another interpret in Finland to make sure that the data was translated correctly. Even though the best efforts within the resources were made to overcome the language barrier, I still needed largely to rely on others' interpretations and so the full reliability of the thesis can be challenged.

LiiKe and SDA have made many inquiries, so I knew that they are familiar with the processes and practices of a research and interviews. I choose Thea as my interviewer because I had witnessed her conducting interviews for another research while I was working in Tanzania, so I knew that she can carry out my interviews well. I had an online meeting with her before she started conducting the interviews. We discussed about the content, place, body and structure of the interviews. Trough discussion we developed a common understanding about how the interviews would be held in a culture sensitive way. By having this discussion with Thea I made sure that she and I had a mutual understanding of how the interviews should proceed

from the beginning till the end. We agreed that all the interviews would be recorded completely so I could hear the whole interviews as they were. Although I wasn't there to see what was happening outside the recordings, I was able to hear the whole situation. This way I could mitigate the reliability problem.

## 8 Discussion

Next I will discuss about the research findings and the possible actions what could be made to reduce adolescent pregnancies and school drop-outs in the Mtwara Region in Tanzania. While going through the data, the absence of a proper sexual education and information about contraceptives in unyago caught my attention. It would be necessary for unyago to offer comprehensive information about contraceptives in order to ease the problem of adolescent pregnancies. Unprotected sex, unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases are often results of insufficient sexual education (Kar, Choudhury & Singh 2015, 7). Although some of the informants in this study wanted to take off the sexual content from unyago and some wanted to stop the whole tradition, I don't see the necessity of doing so. For some girls unyago is the only source of information about their body, personal hygiene and sexuality. This information is valuable for the girls reaching puberty so it would be good to keep those subjects there.

I believe that the unyago trainings should be uniform and the contents should be the same in every form of unyago. The key actors in changing the content of unyago would be the *kungwis* who train the girls in unyago. LiiKe and SDA have already recognized this opportunity and have had meetings with the *kungwis* and started to develop a *kungwi* organization for them. It is essential to engage the *kungwis* to the development work and take them to be a part of creating the new contents of unyago. Without them engaging to the work, nothing will change.

In my opinion, one solution for the adolescent pregnancy problem could be a comprehensive sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education which would correspond to the age of the children. Good, comprehensive sexual education offers information about empowerment and sexual rights, and transforms knowledge, skills and values about sexuality (THL 2010, 33). With a proper comprehensive sexual education, it is possible to create sexually healthy individuals and prevent adolescent pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

Unyago's challenge to provide "sexual education" is, that it is a one-time training and so it can't meet every child's needs and every development stage. A five-year-old child is not developed enough to understand sex and sexuality like older children, since she is still at the stage of exploring herself physically. The sexual health education should be continuous so the

topics would come in right order to support child's developmental stage. First, they would learn about the issues like: respect, personal hygiene and physical changes, and later on would come the sexual content for the older children. This would mean that there would need to be more than one unyago for younger and older children, or the timing of unyago should be set to defined age group and the education would meet the needs of that group. Having more than one unyago would be challenging due to unyago's high cost to the families. That's why I see that the sexual education should be given at schools, starting from primary school so the children who don't proceed to secondary school would also get the education. At school the sexual education can be present throughout the child's development process in every grade. The topic examined in a further research could be about the condition of the sexual education in Tanzanian schools. Is there any, how much and what is the quality of it?

Since this study can't show a link between unyago training and increased sexual interest among young girls, the solution to the problem could also be sought from other actors in the community, rather than focusing too much only on unyago. For example, an active civil society and non-governmental organizations who see the importance of SRH education could start working around the issue. The cultural differences need to be taken into consideration, since different cultures have different perceptions about health education, sexuality and reproduction. Those issues might not be understood the same way than we understand them in our Western culture. One model or practice can work in one environment, but when brought into another context, it might not work anymore. For example, in some cultures it might not be so effective to advocate the girl on contraceptives and reproductivity, if the contraceptives are not available for her or if she doesn't have the power to decide about her body. First, the factors in the background need to be recognized. The proposals for actions need to be set realistic and suitable for the environment.

The data suggested that if there is any education about sexuality or reproductive health in the unyago training, it is most likely emphasizing on abstinence from sex. The findings show that other *kungwis* (unyago trainers) are encouraging girls into sexual debuts, and others told the girls to abstain and wait from participating into sexual relationships until they are grown up. Both of these approaches could be harmful for the children. In my theoretical background, I have introduced the model of abstinence-only-until-marriage program for sexual education (AOUM) which I can recognize to be used in unyago at some extend based on my data. Meta-analysis conducted by U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, showed that AOUM didn't influence on youths' abstinence from sex compared to control group. It isn't based on scientifically accurate information and gives misinformation about contraception by overemphasizing or misstating the risks of it. (SAHM 2017, 401.) Even though the study is made in the United States, I believe that the results can be universally utilized. At some point, all youth get interested in sex and at that moment, they should have the accurate and

reliable information about how to protect themselves from diseases and pregnancies. The more educated the people are, the more capable they are to make smart and responsible actions.

Other negative aspect of AOUM approach to sexual education is that it promotes questionable values like gender roles and it excludes the sexual minority groups (SAHM 2017, 401). Unyago is highly heteronormative and doesn't recognize the sexual minority groups. However, this issue can't be discussed within the frames defined to this thesis. The gender roles addressing that men need to support the women financially, are present in many African cultures. According to Halley (2012, 246), the lessons of unyago explicitly express that girls should be and will be economically supported by their sexual partners. This kind of message don't encourage girls to study and they might quit school and get married. The girls with financial difficulties might end up having sexual relationships in order to have someone to support them.

Reinforcing gender roles is not good for the society and it holds the development back. If the girls and women can't make their own income, they need to rely on others and this can drive them at risk of being abused by her supporters. Educated girls are more likely to educate their children and take a better care of them. The society gets the maximum resources to its use by educating also the girls. (Department for International Development 2005, 1.) The school's policies of expelling the pregnant girls don't support girls' education and equality. It is contradictory that the schools are concerned about the high rates of school drop outs among girls, but at the same time they are expelling the pregnant girls. It could be investigated how the schools could respond and improve the girls' situation. Perhaps they could change their policies towards the pregnant girls and young mothers. The school or other actors like non-governmental organizations (NGOs) could offer some other educational opportunities like: support groups or part time studying to the pregnant girls and young mothers. The NGOs would have a role to play in providing assistance in taking care of the children while the mother is studying.

In all the discussions above about SHR education, gender roles and girls' empowerment, boys' and men's role can't be forgotten. Boys need and deserve to get the comprehensive SHR education as well as the girls. If we want to improve the position of the girls in the society, we need to work with the community as a whole including the men. We don't want to create a juxtaposition where the men are seen as the perpetrators and the women as the victims. The men need to be advocated about the benefits of girls' equal rights to an education. The men also need support in breaking the behavioural norms of gender roles. New kinds of role models of man- and womanhood could be presented to both genders.

## 9 Conclusion

In this concluding chapter of the thesis, I reflect on the research I've made and the findings it accumulated. I'm satisfied of the sample size of the research and the data gained from it. Even though I had a relatively big sample (28 informants) and the data reached its saturation point, the results can't be generalized to present all the young girls' perceptions about unyago in the Mtwara Region and it is not even the goal in qualitative research. However, I have made efforts to maximize the generalizability of the findings by comparing them to other research findings, and by choosing the informants who shared many mutual characteristics with each other and had personal experience and knowledge about the unyago training. (Eskola & Suoranta 2001, 65 - 66.)

The theoretical framework supports the thesis by offering relevant information to the readers so they could fully understand the context of the thesis. I chose the most recent studies and statistics available to be used in the thesis. The sources which have been used are mainly published within ten years to ensure that the thesis is supported by the most recent and accurate information. Theory about unyago was a bit challenging to find and since I wanted to have as many sources of information as possible about it, I used Helgesson's research, published in 2001. It is 17 years ago but I found it useful in the study. Some of the sources were older than ten years but they consist of information which is still valid for example, qualitative research literature. Some of the theory and studies used in this thesis are made in a Western culture context so it needs to be considered does the theory apply in a Tanzanian context. A Western model can't be taken as it is and set into another context expecting it to work. I was aware of this question and I chose the theory which I see to be transferable to the Tanzanian context by at large.

I am aware of the white saviour complex, and the intention of the thesis is not to impose the Western values and practices as resolutions. A classic example of the white saviour complex would be a situation where a white man goes to a developing country and tries to rescue them. The privileged white man with all his "superior" knowledge comes and brings the help and solutions to the disadvantaged. It is detrimental because it creates and maintains views that people living in those countries are somehow helpless, in trouble and need to be rescued. These conceptions are wrong since the people are fully capable of creating their own solutions to solve the problem and they are the ones who know what is best for them and their society. This study topic arose from the already existing critics and discussions about unyago. The community itself had addressed the problem and no outsider came to tell them that it is a problem. The discussion and solutions proposed in this study are based on the data gained from the interviews. The discussion is a result of my own thinking and reasoning, which is affected by my values and cultural background. Someone else could have come up with different conclusions and suggestions.

The weak spot of the thesis is the fact that the data came to me through an intermediary and it changed its form through translation. Whenever working with narratives, there is a possibility of misunderstandings. The external interviewer and different cultural background between me and the informants might have influenced to the interpretation of the data. In the interview situation, the interviewer repeated the expression of the informant when translating it to English, so the informant could hear the possible misunderstandings the interviewer might have done. However, the informants might not correct the interviewer or couldn't understand English that well. The translation also might not have been totally correct. Although some of the translations were double checked by another interpret, it is possible that some mistakes still remained. Another possible mistake might have happened when I was making my own interpretations of the data. Since I didn't send the findings or conclusions to the informants to read they couldn't correct my possible mistakes. Sending the findings to the informants would have taken too much time and resources.

I find this research important because it corresponds to the current discussions and questions concerning unyago's relevance nowadays within the community of the Mtwara Region. It gave an insight to the unyago training and its prospective defects. This thesis has the voice of young girls living in the Mtwara Region. It presents the girls perceptions about unyago tradition and how does it affect to adolescent girls' sexual activity - and so on adolescent pregnancies. And more precisely, this study wanted to find out, what kind of influence unyago has on adolescent girls' initiation of sexual activities. Based on the findings it views the problem of young girls' initiation into sexual practices and adolescent pregnancies from the point of view of sexual education. It suggests that by modifying the contents of unyago to response to the developmental stage of the child and to the present time we are living in, the problems could be eased. The community including men, unyago trainers, schools and NGOs should also be engaged. They could be the key actors in helping to reduce adolescent pregnancies. A further research could be done about the current situation of primary and secondary school's sexual education.

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## Appendix 1: Covering letter

LiiKe & Sports Development Aid  
Mtwara



HELLO!

I am a student in Laurea University of Applied Sciences in Finland. I study social services and I am conducting my thesis research for an NGO LiiKe, who is working on development projects in Mtwara. My research examines traditional unyago training and adolescent sexual practices. The purpose of the research is to find out adolescent girls' perceptions about unyago and its' possible effects to girls' sexual activity - and so on adolescent pregnancies. This research will give valuable information about unyago from youth perspective. I wish you a very warm welcome to take part of my research and give your valuable perception about the issue.

I collect my data by interviewing adolescent girls in Mtwara. The interviews will be conducted anonymously by LiiKe's partner organization Sports Development Aid's (SDA) local female employee Thea Swai. It consists three background questions and five questions related to the research topic. The interview will take approximately 10 to 20 minutes. Participation is voluntary and the interview can be ceased at any time by the participant. The interview data will be destroyed after the research is ready. More information about the research can be asked from me by e-mail or Thea Swai.

With best regards

**Anu Nieminen**

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## Appendix 2: Interview questions

### Background information:

1. Age
2. How old were you when participating in unyago?
3. Which kind of unyago you went through?
4. Information on health: Are you pregnant or have you already given birth?

### Unyago questions:

5. Please tell me, what did you learn about sex in unyago?
6. What did you learn about contraceptives in unyago?
7. How did your thoughts about sex change during unyago?
8. Are you more interested about sexual practices after unyago than you were before? If yes, why?
9. I would like to know what do you think about the sexual content of unyago
10. These are all the questions I had. Do you have anything else that you want to tell me?