

**Blesser-Blessee Relationships: Perspectives and
experiences of students at Howard College,
University of KwaZulu-Natal**

By

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COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
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ABSTRACT

In South Africa there are some young women who engage in sexual relationship with older partners who are rich so that they will be provided with money and material items. The women involved are called blessees and their rich partners are called blessers. The practise is a form of transactional sex as older rich men (blessers) exchange money and expensive material items to get sex in return from the women (blessees). Transactional sex is motivated by two economic factors, which includes consumerism and survival. The aim of the study is to understand blesser-blessee relationships from the perspectives of students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College.

The study relies on a combination of in-depth individual interviews and focus group discussions to better understand blesser-blessee relations. In total, there were 15 in-depth interviews, with ten females and five males as well as two focus group discussions. All the interviews were conducted with first-year students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

The study found that as many black families in South Africa are faced with high levels of unemployment, so many parents are struggling to financially support their children. The rising cost of tuition fees, limited scholarship and bursaries, accommodation needs have been the major reason for first-year female students to engage in sexual relationship with blessers because they want financial assistance from them. Blessers were found to be violent, powerful and abusive to their partners. It was found that as these blessers were spending more money on students, this behaviour has given them more power in these blesser-blessee relationships. The big issue about such behaviour is that students involved in these types of relationship are at risk of HIV or STIs as the study revealed that these men are more likely to engage in sexual relationships with multiple partners. The study recommends that since blesser-blessee relationships involve sexual risk behaviours, prevention programmes must raise awareness among young women of the risks associated with these relationships.

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ACRONYMS

AIDS	: Acquired Immuno- Deficiency Syndrome
CPVAW	: Canadian Panel on Violence against Women
FFG	: Female Focus Group
FGDs	: Focus groups discussions
HIV	: Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDI	: Individual in-depth interviews
LGBTI	: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and intersexual
MFG	: Male Focus Group
MSM	: Men who have sex with other men
MUST	: Mbarara University of Science and Technology
SA	: South Africa
SSA	: Sub Saharan Africa
STI	: Sexually-Transmitted Infections
UKZN	: University of KwaZulu-Natal
UN OIOS	: United Nations - Office of Internal Oversight Service
UNAIDS	: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
WSW	: Women who have sex with other women
WTO	: World Health Organization

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

The term *blessers* have recently become popular in South Africa (SA), and some use the word interchangeably with the term *sugar daddy* (Thobejane, 2017). Phamotse (2017) argues that a blesser is someone who is wealthy and provides money in exchange for sex. The term is used to describe men who are rich, engage in relationships with young, vulnerable women and in exchange provide these women with money and gifts in order to obtain sexual benefits in return (Luke, 2005). A *blessee* is someone who exchanges sex for money and material benefits (money and material receiver), and is mostly young women. The blesser-blessee relationships involves the exchange of sex for money and is therefore considered as transactional sex. Transactional sex is defined as a sexual relationship that occurs between two partners who are not married and who have economic differences but engage in a relationship with each other for money, gifts or sexual benefits (Kassa et al., 2018; Ranganathan et al., 2017; Stoebenau et al., 2016). Transactional sex is motivated by money, gifts and other material gains (Choudhry et al., 2014; Dunkle et al., Eller, 2016; 2007; Kuate-Defo, 2004). Transactional sex is mostly practised by partners of different age groups (usually with a five to 10-year age difference) (Kaute-Defo, 2004; UNAIDS, 2018). In most cases partners who are young are those who are financially desperate and those who are older are those who are often wealthier (Jewkes et al., 2012; Kuate-Defo, 2004). **Transactional sex has many names such as sugar daddies, ben 10s, prostitution, etc.** UNAIDS (2018) stated that in Africa, the estimate of transactional sex among teenage girls and young women ranges from 2.1% to 52%. In South Africa, men that were involved in transactional sex were called sugar daddies (Amo-Adjei et al, 2014) but are now called blessers (Phamotse et al., 2017), in Nigeria they are called the Aristos (Tade and Adekoya, 2012), and in most part of the world are known as sugar daddies (Kuate-Defo, 2004; Ranganathan et al. 2017; Silberschmidt and Rasch, 2001; Stoebenau et al., 2016).

There are not many authors who have written about blesser-blessee relationships as this is a relatively new phenomenon in South Africa. The behaviour is more similar to sugar daddy

relationships, but “blesser and blessee” terms were created through social networks, where younger women posted messages displaying expensive products on social media forums stating that they are blessed (Thobejane et al., 2017). As a result, more young women started engaging in these relationships because they also wanted to be blessed with money and expensive gifts (Thobejane et al., 2017). Transactional sex is a common practice in South Africa and such practice has contributed to the issue of unjust sexual practices (Amo-Adjei, 2014). This is often caused by the power imbalances between the partners because of age and socio-economic differentials (Amo-Adjei, 2014). According to the National HIV Prevalence, Incidence, Behaviour and Communication Survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) (2012), relationships with large age disparities between partners presents a higher risk of HIV/AIDS and other sexual transmitted diseases for younger women. The relationship between young women and older men is considered as one of the main factors fueling the HIV and AIDS epidemic in the country (Gregson et al., 2002; Schaefer et al., 2017).

According to Ntsieni (2017) transactional sex among university students is associated with meeting their subsistence needs, improving their employment opportunities, obtaining higher grades and receiving luxury goods. University female students from upper-middle-class backgrounds engage in transactional sex to obtain material benefits such as luxury items and other expensive materials (designer fashion wear and accessories) or to secure their already privileged class status, while those of lower-class backgrounds use it to secure their basic needs including food, clothes and accommodation (Ntsieni, 2017). A study that was conducted among university students in Nigeria and Uganda showed that female students appeared to be most involved in transactional sex (Choudhry, 2015). In addition, these students stated that they engage in such relationships for financial purposes and not because they want to marry their partners. There was a great deal of stigma and judgment attached to these relationships and therefore many opted to keep them secret from their friends and family (Choudhry, 2015).

The aim of this research is to understand the blesser-blessee relationships from the perspectives of first-year students at Howard College, University of KwaZulu-Natal. To understand the factors that encourage female students (blessees) to engage in these

relationships and the risk factors found in these relationships. The intention to do this research project is to shed more insights into these types of relationships.

Transactional sex is commonly found in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), where poverty and unemployment are greatly affecting the majority of people (Choudhry et al., 2014; Stoebenau et al, 2016). In SSA, poverty among women in most cases is created through gender inequality and this has made women vulnerable and caused them to engage in sexual relationships with men who are in a much better financial situation than them (Tade and Adekoya, 2012). Transactional sex has been a common behaviour among vulnerable young women and men in SSA (Biddlecom, 2007, Mabala, 2006, Padian et al., 201). Among the youth the rate of HIV infection is high (Luke, 2010, World Health Organization, 2001). A study done in Kenya by World Health Organisation (WHO) shows a high percentage of HIV infection among young women (less than 20 years) compared with men of their age, in Ndola it is 23.9% in women and 3.4% in men and in Kisumu it is 15.5% in women and 3.7% in men (World Health Organization, 2001). Studies suggest that young women have a heightened risk of HIV infection because they are more likely to engage in sexual relationships with older men. More studies conducted in SSA showed that women who started their sexual activities at earlier ages are more likely to be infected with HIV than those who started later (Ghebremichael et al. 2009; Hallett et al., 2007). A study conducted by Pettifor et al. (2004) show that a higher percentage of HIV infection occurred among women who started their sexual activities at an early age (54.6%) compared to those who started late (38.2%). Furthermore, Pettifor et al. (2004) found that in Zimbabwe more young women who started their sexual activities at an early age were mostly engaged in transactional sex, engaged in sex with concurrent partners and have lower level of education. Most of these women reported that they were unlikely to use a condom within these relationships (Pettifor et al., 2004). Another study conducted in South Africa by Pettifor et al. (2009) showed that approximately 12,000 young women aged 12 to 24 years old had their first sexual encounter with older partners and were not using a condom at their first sexual encounter. Dunkle (2006) pointed out that not all young women want to be in these relationships, however, the majority of them are pushed into these relationships as they lack money to afford their basic needs.

1.2 Motivation for the study

Transactional sex is a global issue facing many women, but it is more likely to occur in poor regions (Williams et al, 2012). Amo-Adejei et al. (2014) argued that the majority of young women who are involved in transactional sex usually have multiple sexual partners. The problem with having multiple sexual partners is the increase of the risk of HIV and STIs since in SSA partners who engage in transactional sex have a highest incidence of HIV infection (Padian et al., 2011). Hunter (2002) argues that transactional sex is often associated with financial concerns. In SA, some students are struggling to acquire resources such as food, accommodation and tuition fees. The rising cost of tuition fees challenges most university students, especially the ones coming from poor backgrounds (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003). Some students enter these relationships due to limited scholarships and sponsorships, rising tuition fees and debts pressure, therefore they engage in transactional sexual activities to obtain financial help from their partners (Daly, 2017; Luke, 2005).

Another cause that drives students to be involved in transactional sex is high levels of poverty and unemployment (Dunkle, 2004). Poverty and unemployment are the major issues facing the South Africa population (Tshoose, 2010). It is a struggle for many parents to support their children as the majority of them are facing dire social and financial situation (Adele, 2017). Students from the lower and middle income classes were the ones who were more likely to drop out of university as their parents were struggling to pay their fees since they were earning meagre salaries (Letseka and Maile, 2008). Other students whose families are struggling to support them come from single-parent families and others from families where grandparents are the only family providers. However, as their families may not have enough means to provide their children with adequate financial support during their year of study, such students end up engaging in blesser-blessee relationships. These students face the challenges of negative stereotypes and are further judged by other students regarding their lifestyle. Leclerc-Madlala (2003) noted that some students decide to engage in transactional sexual relationships in order to get financial assistance from their richer older partners so that they can meet their needs.

The reason why many young female university students are involved in transactional relationships is that they want to have money and buy expensive products that they cannot

afford such as clothing, food, smartphones and other expensive items (Amo-Adjei et al, 2014). Choudhry et al. (2014) noted that students enter these relationships to meet the lavish university lifestyle costs, while others engaged in them due to the lack of parental control as they live alone in the university residence. It is important to shed more insights into the blessing-blessee relationship as an emerging and growing trend, especially among university students, as this will help policy makers to find new strategies to deal with such issues as many young women who are involved in these relationships face multiple challenges.

1.3 Problem Statement

Studies have found that in SSA there is a great deal of inequalities in transactional sex (Shannon et al., 2012, Dunkle et al., 2004). Kuate-Defo (2004) noted that gender inequalities are mostly found in large age disparity relationships. Sexual risk taking by women is mostly found in the context of high socio-economic dependency and gender inequality (UNAIDS, 2018). The growing number of young women engaging in relationships with older men because of wanting to receive material benefits in return has become a major issue, especially in SSA because it involves a heightened risk of HIV infection, STI and other sexual and reproductive health risks as many women are exposed to physical, emotional and sexual abuse from their partners (Misra and McKean, 2000). The issue causing young women in SA to be exposed to violence from their partner is because of economic inequality found in these relationships, their partner as they are more likely to be wealthier and as a result they tend to have more power than these women (Moyo-Khonje and Brobbey, 2017, Zember et al., 2015). Women tend to have limited ability to negotiate safe sex with their partners because they are afraid that if they do, they will lose their rich partners. Also, as these women are young, age becomes a barrier for them to discuss important topics with their partner due to the fact that they are older. Age-gap in relationships are the driving force behind the HIV epidemic (Maughan-Brown, Kenyon and Lurie, 2014). Furthermore, Maughan-Brown et al. (2014) found that young women aged 20-to-24 years engaged with a partner who is five or more years older than herself is therefore roughly three times more likely to have sex with an HIV-positive man. Thabiso Teffo who is a spokesperson for the National Department of Health said that blessers are ruining the lives of young women, stating that the high rate of HIV infection is also a result of these relationships (Mukwevho, 2016).

1.4 Aim of the study

The overall objective of this study is to shed more insights into the blesser-blessee relationship.

The specific objectives are:

- To explore the attitudes of students towards blesser-blessee relationships;
- To investigate the reasons for engaging in blesser-blessee relationships;
- To identify the opportunities and constraints for changing blesser-blessee relationships.

In order to address the objectives of the study the following key questions are important:

- What are the attitudes and perceptions of students regarding blesser-blessee relationships?
- What are the reasons that influences students to engage in blesser-blessee relationships?
- What are the opportunities and constraints for changing blesser-blessee relationship?

This study was designed to understand the blesser-blessee relationship from the perspectives of young people. The study used a combination of qualitative methods including individual interviews and focus group discussions.

1.5 Theoretical Framework – Social Constructionism

Social constructionism according to Reckwitz (2002) is a social theory that examines how social phenomena develops in social contexts, a theory of knowledge of sociology that

examines the jointly constructed development of the understanding of the world (Galbin, 2014). Social constructionists believe that reality is built or constructed by human activities in a society (DeLamater and Hyde, 1998). The theory focusses on uncovering what people and groups perceive in the real world. The theory used in this study is social constructionism because the study is based on young black university students and the way they construct their sexualities within society. The theory was also used because the study relates to gender inequality within blesser-blessee relationships. DeLamater and Hyde (1998) stated that sexuality is a social construction, it is the way in which individuals think and talk about the behaviours of sexuality. Patriarchal ideas that men are superior to women (male dominance over women) and that women are inferior to men have been constructed by society and this in general has led to the violation and exploitation of more women in the society (Sultana, 2010). Social construction consists of three stages: externalization, objectivation, and internalization (Berger and Luckmann, cited by Patterson and Keefe, 2008). Externalization is defined as the process by which individuals construct a cultural product or outcome, objectivation happens when cultural products take on an objective reality of their own, separate from those who construct them, resulting in being looked at as part of objective reality, and internalization happens by way of socialization when members of a society learn the objective facts of a culture and integrate them as part of their lives (Berger and Luckmann, cited by Patterson and Keefe, 2008).

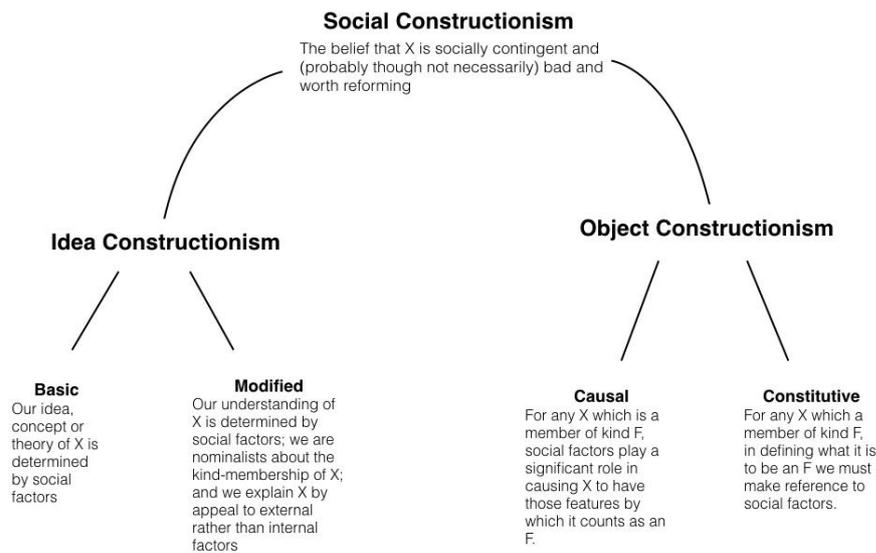
Brickell (2006) argues that constructionism questions the behaviour of power within gender and sexuality. Sexuality is thereby constructed either by history, culture, economic and political structure (DeLamater Hyde, 1998). The behaviour of men and women have been culturally and socially constructed by rights, power, and access to resources, and also influences the way in which sexual interactions are negotiated (Mantell et al., 2009). Harrison et al. (2001) stated that gender inequality in South Africa has been associated with unprotected sex, which has increased HIV risk infection among women. Dominant notions of masculinity which portrays men as providers (Wamoyi et al., 2019) have led many women to subscribe to the belief that when they engage in sexual relationships with men they should be financially supported. In addition, the issue of men having multiple sexual partners has been another practice that society has constructed (Hoss and Blokland, 2018).

In this study, men (blessers) are assumed to have more power over women (blessees), often they are directly or indirectly coerced by their partners. Also, studies suggest that it is more acceptable for men (blessers) to have multiple sexual partners (blessees). In this context,

young women (blessees) are likely to engage in sexual relations with many men in order to obtain more resources from their multiple partners (blessers).

The study questions and themes were formed through the objectives and align the objective with the theory.

Figure 1.1 Social Constructionism Diagram



E. Diaz-Leon 'What is Social Construction?' (2013) *European Journal of Philosophy* DOI: 10.1111/EJOP.12033

Source: Diaz-Leon (2015)

The diagram above shows two types of social constructionism, idea constructionism and object constructionism, and these two types focus on different phenomena that are constructed by people. The first type of social constructionism is the idea constructionism and is divided into two different categories, the basic idea constructionism and the modified idea constructionism. The basic idea of constructionism is an idea or a theory or a concept that is determined by social factors, it includes concepts constructed by the society such as gender, race, sexuality and money. There are many roles that are given to both men and women by society and the ones that relate for this study includes the patriarchal ideas that men are superior to women (Sultana, 2010), men as financial providers and women as financial recipients give men power of women’s sexuality (Morrell et al., 2012; Stark, 2013; Swidler

and Watkins, 2007) and the acceptance of multiple sexual partners by men (Hoss and Blokland, 2018).

Modified idea constructionism is the form of the construction such as social events and arrangements and is viewed into three different categories. The social contingency is the first category and is the standard social constructionism, it explains that our understanding of things are determined by social factors. The second category is the nominalism and is a type of theory with the idea that all kinds of membership is determined by human convention, and lastly is the external factors (personal prejudices, political bias or convenience, etc.) rather than internal factors (inter-theoretic virtues which includes coherence, evidence, simplicity, fit with evidence, etc.).

The object constructionism is the second type of social constructionism and it suggest that the phenomenon that is constructed is an object or events or state of affairs that exist in the world. Object constructionism come in two different forms, the first one is the casual object constructionism, these are objects made by people and do not exist by nature, but they are the product of art, for example any technological artefacts. The second one is the constitutive object constructionism, these are social roles made with set of rules and procedure that needs to be followed by those appointed, for example, the role of politician or president require one to act or behave in a formal way.

The social constructionism approach is being criticised by its perceived conceptualisation of realism and relativism (Andrew, 2012). It is criticised for being anti-realist, in rejecting that knowledge is a direct perception of reality (Andrew, 2012). Also, the subjective nature of social constructionism does not allow the researcher to commit to the possibility of gathering evidence about the real world (Taylor, 2018). The social constructionism theory is considered as an unhelpful theory to the researcher who seek to explain the reality of the phenomena (Taylor, 2018).

1.6 Organisation of Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter provides a background to the study, the aims and objectives, and also, the theoretical framework. Chapter two reviews literature on transactional sex and outlines the factors and consequences of transactional sex.

Chapter three discusses the methodology employed by this study including the study location, research methodology, instruments used to collect data and analysis. Ethical considerations and limitations of the study are also discussed in this chapter. Chapter four presents the main findings with regards to the three study objectives. The last chapter provides the discussion of the main findings and makes recommendations to address the problems highlighted in the research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Many studies have shown that transactional sex is one of the major factors that has resulted in the increasing number of HIV infections in both developed (Bauermeister et al., 2010, Dunkle et al., 2010) and developing countries (Moore et al., 2007, Wamoyi et al., 2010). This chapter presents a review of the literature on transactional sex, specifically those factors that facilitate transactional sex and their implications for reproductive health.

2.2 Different types of sexual relationships

Most western studies consider transactional sex as sex work, while those in SSA regard it as different from sex work, as people treat each other as partners in these relationships (Amo-Adjei et al., 2014). They regard transactional sex as non-commercial and non-marital sexual relationships that are motivated by the exchange of sex for money or material benefits (Dunkle et al., 2007; Stoebenau et al., 2016, 2017, Wamoyi et al., 2016). Partners refer to each other as boyfriend and girlfriends, not as sex workers or clients, and the relationships tend to last longer than those associated with sex work (Ranganathan et al., 2017, Hunter, 2002). The study conducted by Tade and Adekova (2012) showed similar results from students involved in transactional sex relationships as to how they did not refer to themselves as sex work. Transactional sex is referred to economically driven and survival sex, being an exchange-based relationship (Davis, 2010; Tade and Adekoya, 2012). Wamoyi et al. (2011) argue that transactional sex is different from sex work, as the female sex workers use their bodies in public to indicate that they sell sex and negotiate prices, while those who engage in transactional sex do not negotiate price, although the provision is expected. Mwapu et al. (2016) state that sex workers sell sex to different men who they do not call their partners, while those who engage in transactional sex refer to them as their partners. Women who engage in transactional sex choose to engage selectively with men who are rich, while sex workers approach any man, regardless of his status (Kassa et al., 2018).

In transactional sex, the partners do not develop feelings for each other and are only involved for the benefits they derive from the relationship (Amo-Adjei et al., 2014). In normal relationships, the partners love each other and buy gifts to express their love (Perry, 2003). A study by Amo-Adjei et al. (2014) observes that love appeared to be absent in transactional relationships, with the younger partner reporting that they did not to have any feelings for their older and often married partner. Young women between the ages of 15 and 19 involved in transactional sex in rural and urban areas of Mali reported that they classified these relationships as irregular that were unlikely to lead to marriage (Castle and Konate, cited by Chatterji et al., 2005). Contrary to this, Formson et al. (2016) found that young women involved in transactional sex relationships wanted the relationship to continue and hoped that their rich male partners would marry them one day.

2.3 Factors promoting transactional sex

2.3.1 Demographic factors

There are multiple reasons that influences people to engage in transactional sex. A series of studies has recognised some of the demographic factors that promote transactional sex, including demographic factors such as age (Chatterji et al., 2005; Choudhry et al. 2014; Kuate-Defor, 2004) and gender (Groes-Green, 2013; Kuate-Defo, 2004; Wamoyi, et al., 2011). Factors associated with transactional sex include age differences, older men engage in transactional sex with younger women and older women with younger men (Choudhry et al. 2014).

Age

Chatterji et al. (2005) found that in SSA, young women and young men are at the high risk of engaging in transactional sex. Furthermore, they noted that older women were less likely because the majority of them were employed and they were able to take care of themselves unlike young women; many of whom are still in schools and unemployed. They are the one more likely to be in need of financial help and they resort to these relationships to obtain money (Chatterji et al., 2005). Kuate-Defor (2004) stated that in most cases, age mixing

relationships involving older and younger people happens when young individuals are deprived and desperate, and want to be assisted by people who are rich. Some studies found that between 27 and 50 percent of adolescent girls engage in sexual relationships with partners who are six years older than them (Gregson et al. 2002; Kelly et al. 2003) and others reported that between 12 and 25 percent engaged with partners who are ten years older than them (Gregson et al. 2002; Kelly et al. 2003; Laga et al. 2001). Only few girls engage with partners of the same age at theirs and very few have relationship with men that are younger than them (Kelly et al. 2003). Many adolescent girl's older partners were likely to be married to other women (Silberschmidt and Rasch 2001, Rasch et al., 2000). Studies done in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, shows that adolescent girls were more likely to be impregnated by their older partners, about three-fourth girls were impregnated by their ten year older partners and more than one-fourth were impregnated by partners whose are much older, sometimes 20 years older (Rasch et al. 2000; Silberschmidt and Rasch 2001). Luke (2003) notes that when adolescent girls get older, the age difference between them and their partners increases. Furthermore, Luke (2003) stated that the large age differences between partners are common in SAA, mostly found among girl who are still in secondary schools, employed in informal sectors and those coming from working class areas (Machel, 2001; Nyanzi et al., 2001).

Gender

Gender norms, such as the different roles men and women have in terms of how they have to behave or act, are created by society. In Africa, men are expected to be the main providers, while women are the financial and material receivers (Morrell et al., 2012; Stark, 2013; Swidler and Watkins, 2007). Most women in Africa believe that when they are in a relationship, their partners should provide for them (Jewkes and Morrell, 2012), this gender norm being another driver of transactional sex. Gender inequality is defined as a situation where men and women receive unequal treatment and opportunities (Parziale, 2008). MacPherson et al. (2012) state that the gender differences are reinforced by power inequalities among individuals. The uneven distribution of wealth and opportunities causes women to engage in transactional sex (Groes-Green, 2013), and to seek relationships that will enable them to extract resources from their partners (Groes-Green, 2013, Wamoyi, et al., 2011).

Men and women in transactional sexual relationships have different roles. Women are able to extract resources from their partners while the men hold more power in decision-making (Dunkle et al., 2007; Wamoyi et al., 2010). Studies have suggested that there is a great deal of inequalities in transactional sex relationships in most SSA countries, including Botswana, Swaziland (Shannon et al., 2012) and South Africa (Dunkle et al., 2004). Kuate-Defo (2004) stated that gender inequalities are more common in sexual relationships with large age disparities between partners. The gender difference also affects the risk of infection, with women aged 15 to 25 being at a higher risk of contracting infections than men of the same age group (Wamoyi et al., 2016). A UNAIDS (2018) report notes that sexual risk taking by women is more common in the context of high gender inequality and socio-economic dependency.

2.3.2 Socio-economic factors

Sometimes people engage in transactional sex because of socio-economic disadvantages. The socio-economic factors promoting transactional sex include poverty, the need of drugs, peer pressure and parental pressure. People have their own different reasons that encourages them to be involved transactional sex, depending on their needs and wants.

Poverty

People have different reasons for engaging in transactional sex, such as survival transactional sex (Zembe, et al 2013). Survival transactional sex is the exchange of sex for money to meet survival needs (Zembe et al., 2013). One of the primary drivers that motivates people to engage in transactional sex is the structural failure that results in poverty, financial constraints and other challenges (Stoebenau et al., 2016). These financial constraints limit their ability to buy the things they need, which may result in them deciding to engage in these relationships (Stoebenau et al., 2016). Bauermeister et al. (2017) noting that young men participated in these transactions due to financial constraints associated with being unemployed and needing

money to sustain themselves. Women in Africa have traditionally been excluded from being involved in many economic activities, including owning property and accessing employment (Katz et al., 2005). More recently, the adverse economic situation in Africa has forced young and old women to be economically dependent on their husbands or boyfriends (Luke and Kurz, 2002). Tade and Adekoya (2012) stated that poverty is gendered in SSA, with the majority of women being poorer than men. The reason why more women are poorer than men is because they are less likely to be employed or be employers (Chakravarty et al., 2017). Women are also less likely to work in formal high paid jobs, and more likely to be found in the informal sectors where they are paid lower wages (Stark, 2013). Gendered labour markets mean that women are economically disadvantaged, which has resulted in some women engaging in transactional sex (Wojcicki, 2002).

Kamndaya et al. (2016) notes that in Blantyre, Malawi, transactional sex occurs more among people living in slums, where the majority of young people lack money and resources. The authors also found that the desire to keep abreast with fashion trends, as well as the lack of food and housing influence women to engage in these relationships. Hutchinson et al. (2016), in a study in Northern Uganda, argue that economic change, male mortality, imprisonment and military affiliation affected women's livelihoods, which in many cases leads them to engage in transactional sex. . A study by Béné and Merten (2008) found that women who engage in transactional sex were fish traders, so they engage in sexual relationships with fishermen because they wanted to secure their supply of fish since selling fish was their way to make money to support their families. Women-headed households in Africa and the United States are the most affected by poverty, as they are mostly likely to lack paternal financial support and are often victims of gender inequality. They are more likely to be involved in sexual relationship with older, rich people (Kuate-Defo, 2004).

According to the United Nations (2015), poverty, hunger, life style and the desire to improve their skills are the main reasons that motivates young women to engage in transactional sex. A study done in Liberia in 2011 showed that young people started to engage in transactional sex during the civil war years, during which time the country faced high rates of poverty and unemployment (Okigbo et al., 2014). In Liberia, transactional sex emerged during the decade of civil war, when many individuals were struggling financially, and engaged in such

relationships to meet their socio-economic needs (Okigbo et al., 2014). Ranganathan et al. (2017) found that the majority of poor households in rural Bushbuckridge in Mpumalanga, South Africa, reported that they engage in transactional sex due to the loss of the family providers, and were therefore forced to engage in these relationships to obtain money to support themselves and their families. Luke and Kurz (2002) found that financial interest encourages women to engage in transactional sex, and includes economic survival, status and lifestyle improvement. Béné and Merten (2008) state that transactional sex occurs mainly among women who are single, widowed or divorced, their lack of money being a common factor as they want to improve their financial situations. In summary, the above studies show that women engage in transactional sex due to their disadvantaged economic situations.

The growing number of young women engaging in transactional sex result from issues related to unemployment, low paid jobs and having low or no education (Bandali, 2011; Bauermeister et al., 2017; Stoebenau et al., 2016). Bandali (2011) further explain that single women who are unemployed, with low levels of education, and whose children are not provided for by their biological fathers, are more likely to engage in transactional sex to earn money and support their families. Dunkle et al. (2010) note that transactional sex was associated with women who had a low income and low levels of education. The study conducted in Montserrado County, Liberia, showed that women who engage in transactional sex had primary and high school level of education, and were earning an income of approximately \$25 000 per annum (Dunkle et al, 2010). Okigbo et al. (2014) reveal that educated women were less likely to be involved in transactional sex, as education opens doors for high paid employment (Okigbo et al., 2014, Stoebenau et al, 2016). The above literature shows how high levels of education and high paid employment plays an important part in preventing women from engaging in transactional sex.

Drugs

Economic dependence and drug addiction have also been reported to perpetuate transactional sex between individuals (Guimarães et al., 2016; Oldenburg et al. 2014; Plitt et al., 2005). Dickson-Gomez et al. (2013) found that those who are using non-injecting illicit drugs are likely to engage in transactional sex. Dickson-Gomez et al. (2013) stated that in San Salvador

(El Salvador) some were exchanging sex for crack and other drugs. They found that approximately 22.8% of people using illicit drugs were engaged in transactional sex (Dickson-Gomez et al., 2013). A study conducted in Baltimore, Maryland (USA) by Plitt et al. (2005) found that 12.3% of 543 non-institutionalised drugs users were engaging in transactional sex (exchange sex for drugs and money). Furthermore, Plitt et al. (2005) reported that among illicit drug users, the transactional sex rate was higher among women than men. In a study conducted by Dunkle et al. (2010), women using drugs engaged in transactional relationships with various partners because they want money or drugs. The literature indicates that not having money affects people because they end up getting involved in wrong doings just to get money and most of the things that they engage in affects them in return.

Peer Pressure

Consumerism transactional sex relates to young women exchanging sex with older men to obtain an allowance to buy expensive items, such as hair, cell phones, food, clothes, etc. (Luke et al., 2011; Masvawure, 2010; Watt et al., 2012). Many studies in Africa show that peer pressure is another factor that motivates young women, including students, to engage in transactional sex (Moore et al., 2007). Qualitative studies done in Ghana, Cameroon, Uganda, Kenya, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe show that peer pressure motivates young women to engage in transactional sex to obtain expensive items such as jewellery, clothes, accessories, hairstyles and makeup (Chatterji et al., 2005, Kolbe, 2015). Daniel and Logie (2017) observed that young people are easily influenced by their friends, and regard friendship as important. In addition, Daniel and Logie, (2017) noted that young women are very selective regarding with whom to engage in a relationship with, and convinced each other not to give sex for nothing. They regarded women involved in sexual relationships with men who do not support them financially as being foolish. Kaufman and Stavrou (2004) revealed that young women who lived in South African urban areas engaged in sexual relationships with older rich partners to receive favours, such as free entrance to clubs, tickets to concerts, and access to food, drink and drugs at clubs.

The transactional nature of sexual behaviour sometimes begins in schools, but its growth occurs at universities due to the high cost of fees, lack of parental control and peer pressure (Choudhry et al. 2014; Sadgrove, 2007). In Nigeria, consumerism transactional sex is mainly practiced by university students wanting to obtain expensive items with the money they receive from their older partners (Tade and Adekoya, 2012). Many female university students from poor- or lower-middle-class backgrounds are pressurised by their peers from richer families, or from those already engaged in transactional sex. They are seen to have luxury items, such as clothes, cell phones, jewellery and food, and to be able to afford their household bills, tuition fees and transportation costs, which results in them resorting to these relationships to have the same things that their peers have (Daniel and Logie, 2017; Hunter, 2002, Mazvawure, 2010; Shefer et al., 2012). In Mozambique, young women attending school who came from working-class areas were more likely to engage in transactional sex than those from middle-class areas (Machel, 2001). Selikow and Mbulaheni (2013) noted that the majority of young women in universities who come from townships were subject to peer pressure, one of their important goals being to fit in socially with the other students on campus.

Some households in South African townships are less poor than those in rural areas, with these students generally engaging in such relationships because they want to live a lavish lifestyle (Selikow and Mbulaheni, 2013). Leclerc-Madlala (2003) states that South African university students use transactional sex as a way to access the modern lifestyle that is portrayed by the media and globalization. Luke and Kurz (2002) argue that some students in universities engage in transactional sex because they want to obtain higher grades, get employment opportunities and have luxury items that will raise their status among their peers. Moore et al. (2007) noted that gifts have become an important aspect among girls and a valuable social symbol. The paper presented by Shefer et al. (2012) on their study about transactional sex in a South African university found that material exchanges in the form of money and food were the primary drivers for female students. Shefer, Clowes and Vergnani, (2012) stated that in SA, university female students engage in transactional sex in order to improve their social status.

Parental Pressure

Studies have shown that some parents encourage their daughters to engage in transactional sex due to financial issues, this pressure further motivates them to engage in transactional sex to obtain an income and help their families (Masvawure, 2010; Tade and Adekoya, 2012; Thobejane et al., 2017; Zembe et al., 2013). Some parents indirectly push their daughters to engage in transactional sex as they allow the boys to look for work while the girls must stay at home and do household chores, which results in them engaging in these relationships to obtain their own money (Nyanzi et al., 2001). Nyanzi et al. (2001) further argued that some parents find their daughters rich older men to have relationships with so that they will benefit from it. A study conducted in Liberia in 2008 and 2011 by Okigbo et al. (2014) found that 13 to 19-year-olds still in school reported that their parents, and another family member, encouraged them to engage in relationships with rich partners so they would have a source of income. Frost and Bingenheimer (2011) found that parents wanted their children to have partners who would give them money and use it to support the family. Wamoyi and Wight (2014) reveal that young women are motivated to engage in these relationships due to the lack of love and support from their parents. The literature has shown that there are direct and indirect parental pressures that encourage young women to engage in transactional sex.

2.4 Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) in Transactional sex

While studies have shown that women have a higher likelihood of engaging in transactional sex than men, the LGBT community have also been found to have a high likelihood of being engaged in transactional sex. There are multiple drivers of engagement in transactional sex among men who have sex with other men (MSM). This includes economic motivation, drug use, harassment and discrimination (Oldenburg et al., 2014), lack of a permanent place to stay, low levels of education and members of racial minority groups (Bauermeister et al., 2017). A study conducted in Nigeria by Bamgboye et al. (2017) found 38.2% of MSM engage in transactional sex with the highest percentage among those aged 15-19 (44.7%) and those with secondary education (73.9%). Furthermore, Bamgboye et al. (2017) found that more MSM involved in transactional sex were married. Many transgender women engage in transactional sex due to the economic insecurity and employment discrimination they face

and to address their financial issues (Badgett et al. 2007; Solomon et al. 2015). Transgender women, especially transgendered Coloured women in New York, were reported to have a high rate of engagement in transactional sex to access money, food and shelter in return (Clements-Nolle et al., 2010, Raiford et., 2016). Oldenburg et al. (2014) argue that men who engage in transactional sex are found to have experienced various psychological factors, including childhood sexual abuse, depression and intimate partner violence, all of which increases the risk of being infected with HIV/AIDS. Wells and Polders (2004) note that LGBT youth who are bullied are more likely to engage in transactional sex. Furthermore, Wells and Polders (2004) state that in South Africa and some other Southern African countries, women who have sex with other women (WSM) are discriminated against by society and face health risk factors due to transactional sex and from forced sex by men (rape). Transactional sex among gay people who experience unprotected sex due to discrimination and the lack of power to negotiate safe sex with their older partners can cause them to have a higher risk of contracting HIV/AIDS (Wonga et al., 2008; Bamgboye et al., 2017). Oldenburg et al. (2014) states that the HIV infection rate was 20 times higher among MSM involved in transactional sex than the general population. Moreover, Oldenburg et al. (2014) found that South Africa and China had similar issues of high HIV infection among MSM engaging in transactional sex than the general population. Sandfort et al. (2013) stated that lesbian and bisexual women engaging in transactional sex were found to be more likely to be HIV infected than those who were not.

2.5 Motivation of older rich men

The motivation that encourages men to engage in transactional sex includes asserting their masculinity, improving their social status and the social norms that dictates that men should support their female partners (Potgieter et al., 2012). Men are often motivated to engage in sexual relationship with young women because they know they will get easy access to control these women, as they are young and vulnerable (Stoebenau et al., 2016). They engage in relationships with younger women because they feel younger women are easily manipulated (Baba-Djara et al., 2013; Wamoyi et al., 2010). Older men prefer being in relationships with younger women who have not engaged in as many sexual relationships as older women, and their bodies are more attractive (Masvawure, 2010). They believe that it is safer to engage in

sexual relationships with younger women as they assume that these women are not promiscuous and do not have sexually transmitted infections or HIV. These beliefs also lead to unprotected sexual encounters (Luke, 2005; Leclerc-Madlala, 2013; Tyndale and Kyeremeh, 2010).

A study done in Mbekeni, Eastern Cape, found that older men became involved in these relationships with younger women because they were easily seduced, their bodies being fresh and lovely as they were still young (Stoebenau, et al., 2011). Some men indicated that they prefer to have relationships with younger women as they have fewer needs and wants than older women (Gukurume, 2011; Longfield et al., 2004; Sikuku, 2017; Wamoyi, et al., 2011). Tyanale and Kyeremeh (2010) reported that older men use their money to attract and manipulate younger women because they know that they are desperate. Sikuku (2017) stated that older men seek to engage in relationships with young women because they still maintain their beauty, which women their own age lack, and they feel much younger when they are with these young women.

In addition, Sekuku (2017) mentioned that marriage for older men can be a challenge, which makes them feel vulnerable, and they therefore engage in sexual relationships with young women because they need to reclaim their sexual skills. Older men report being stressed by both work and family, and engaging in relationships with young women makes them feel good because they are able to reduce their stress (Men's Health, 2015). Older men prefer younger women as they perceive them as having more sexual energy (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003, Philaretou, 2001). Philaretou (2001) added that older men enjoy sex with younger females, while many enjoy the feeling of being in a relationship with younger women because they feel more valued and of interest to them (Philaretou, 2001). Swidler and Watkins (2007) stated that rich men are motivated to engage in transactional sex relationship with multiple partners due to their desire to help deprived women, from which they gain social status.

2.6 Challenges in transactional sex relationships

People involved in transactional sex relationships face multiple challenges, such as gender-based violence, unsafe sexual behaviours, HIV/AIDS and sexual transmitted infections, unplanned pregnancies and abortion, all of which impacts negatively on their well-being.

2.6.1 Gender-Based Violence

Luke and Kurz (2002) argue that in Africa, the power imbalance between partners has been a norm for many years, where age, gender, and economic differences have traditionally existed between partners. Furthermore, Luke and Kurz (2002) stated that these imbalances have continued to exist, although less strongly, they are still found in some other relationships, both marital and non-marital. The authors added that it is the men in Africa who have greater access to resources, and as a result, tend to have more power than women, which results in them having more control over sexual and reproductive behaviour, and causing many young women to be infected with HIV/AIDS (Luke and Kurz, 2002). Gender-based violence is known as a behaviour that violates human rights, and impacts negatively on human well-being (Mayhew and Watts, 2002). This behaviour affects many people, and is considerably under-recognised by the public health sector (García-Moreno, 2005). Most people who experience violence generally lack the power to make decisions about their bodies, this type of behaviour directly affects the sexual, physical and mental health of people, both in the short- and in the long-term (García-Moreno, 2005, World Health Organization, 2002). In addition, García-Moreno (2005) stated that violence against women is common, the different types being sexual, physical and mental, all of which affect women's health. According to the Canadian Panel on Violence against Women (CPVAW) (1993), gender violence will only end once there is equality between the genders, and that if inequality persists, women will continue to face violence.

Young women and men involved in sexual relationships with older people are sometimes subject to physical and sexual violence, and lack the power to protect themselves as they are vulnerable (Kuate-Defo, 2004; Van Staden and Badenhorst, 2009). Kuate-Defo (2004) also

found that violence occurs more when young women break the promise to provide sex in return for money or gifts to older men. Many women who are dependent face the problem of being abused by their partners (Kristin and Rachel, 2007). A study conducted in Tanzania by Maganja et al. (2007) found that older male partners first serve young women with what they want, then they expect to be provided with sex in return, and if these women refuse, they force them. A study conducted at the Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) in Uganda by Choudhry et al. (2014) found the majority of both young women and men who have received money or gifts in exchange of sex also reported physical violence from their partners.

Giorgio et al. (2016) discovered that international female migrants face multiple issues, including language barriers and a lack of documents to find employment, and illegal migration exposes them to a greater risk of being involved in transactional sex and experiencing sexual violence. Giorgio et al. (2016) found that one in ten women who engage in transactional sex were exposed to sexual violence during their migration to South Africa. Gukurume (2011) report that the result of violence occurring in these relationships can be seen when young women, especially university students are likely to experience HIV and STIs, unplanned pregnancies and abortions. Dunkle et al. (2004) state that physical abuse and rape is very high among vulnerable women, especially those engaged in transactional sex. Atwood et al. (2011) found that many young women engaged in transactional sex face rape when they refused to have sex, or their older partners insist on not using a condom.

2.6.2 Violence against women in South Africa

Violence against women has been one of the issues affecting women in South Africa, mostly the ones that are vulnerable. Violence against women cases are continuously being reported (Mills-Fairweather et al., 2013). In 2002, South Africa has the highest number of cases of violence against women (VAW) (Sibanda-Moyo, Khonje and Brobbey, 2017). The recorded murder statistics of women in South Africa were said to be higher than the global level (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017). South African's 2016 Demographic and Health Survey estimates show that one in five women older than 18 years had experienced physical violence in their lifetime, with 40 percent to 50 percent of men revealing having perpetrated physical

violence against their partner (Sibanda-Moyo et al., 2017). Moreover, shocking statistics by researchers from the University of Cape Town show that one in three women in South Africa have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime (Weber and Bowers-DuToit, 2018). In the Western Cape in November 2017 there about 66 child and youth murders statistics recorded, and these were the most shocking one-year statistic ever (Weber and Bowers-DuToit, 2018). According to Mills-Fairweather et al. (2013), about half of women homicide victims were killed by their intimate male partners. Furthermore, HIV negative young women who are have experienced intimate partner violence are 50 percent more likely to be infected with HIV over a period of two years compared with other women (Mills-Fairweather et al., 2013). Moyo-Khonje and Brobbey (2017) in their study suggested that the economic inequality that is found among partners engaged in blesser relationships causes women to have less power and this is the reason why women experience violence from their partners. Zember et al. (2015) stated that young women are the more likely to experience violence compared to older women. Furthermore, Zember et al. (2015) stated that age-mixing and transactional sex increases the risk of intimate partner violence among women with multiple partners.

The lack of women empowerment is one of the reasons why many women are engaging in relationships with older men so that they will obtain resources. The continuation of violence among women has also been caused by the lack of cooperation among government agencies (Edberg et al., 2017, CSV, 2016, Sibanda-Moyo and Brobbey, 2017). According to Moyo and Brobbey (2017) the lack of financial resources has been identified as one of the barriers leaving women vulnerable to abuse and resulting in difficulties of reporting incidences of abuse. Also, the lack of funding and isolation of organisations are also some of the causes slowing the combating of violence against women (Moyo and Brobbey, 2017). The lack of capacity and training among child and family agencies to address violence victims has an impact on the individual decision to report the act of violence or seek help (Edberg et al., 2017). More worryingly, violence against women causes serious sexual and reproductive health problems (Mpane and Nsibande, 2015).

2.6.2 Risk of STIs (including HIV and AIDS)

Wamoyi et al (2016) argued that transactional sex in SSA is one of the drivers that increases HIV and sexually transmitted infections among young people, specifically young women, as

a result of how they are treated within these relationships, and because they often engage in sex with multiple partners. Studies have found that young women in SSA aged 15-24 are more at risk of contracting HIV compared to males of their age (Stoebenau et al. 2016; Ranganathan et al. 2016; Wamoyi et al. 2016). The practice of transactional sex has been one of the leading factors that has put many young women at risk of getting HIV (Stoebenau et al. 2016). Wamoyi et al. (2016), in their recent systematic review, found a heightened risk of HIV infection among women who practiced transactional sex. Many young people who engage in sexual activity at an early age with older partners are more likely to engage in sex with many partners, as these relationships do not last long. Mgwaba and Maharaj (2018) in their study revealed that relationships that are casual or informal used to last for a short period and can even end in a month. Mgwaba and Maharaj (2018) further explained that the short duration of relationships leads to serial or concurrent sexual relationships. This places many young women at risk of contracting HIV (Hindin and Fatusi, 2009, Kalmuss et al., 2003, Zaba et al., 2009). Relationships involving large age and economic differences between the partners are said to be spreading HIV/AIDS in SSA (Luke, 2005, Luke, 2010). Economic, age and gender imbalances found in transactional sex relationships often increases risky sexual behaviour among young women, as they reduce the ability to negotiate safer sex practices (Luke and Kurz, 2002, Masvawure, 2010; Series, 2007; Luke, 2010; Van Staden and Badenhorst, 2009). Booysen and Summerton (2002) stated that poverty in South Africa has increased HIV infection among vulnerable women due to their inability to negotiate condom use. Selikow and Mbulaheni (2013) stated that money and gifts in transactional sex relationships cause young women to be afraid to negotiate safe sex, as they think that once they have a disagreement with their partners, they will not get what they want and need. Amo-Adjei et al. (2014) argue that it is unlikely for university students who are engaged in transactional sexual relationships to negotiate safe sex with their older partners, as they are scared of the men who have more power. Age differences between the young women and older men also causes women to be afraid of negotiating safer sex practices, which increases the risk of HIV among young people (World Health Organization, 2001). A study on transactional sex conducted by Fielding-Miller et al. (2016) in Swaziland found that many respondents reported that the many items provided by their partners resulted in them not arguing about condom use. A study conducted in Kenya also found that the promise of material benefits resulted in the young women not insisting on the use of condoms (Luke et al., 2011).

A study conducted in South Africa by Jewkes et al. (2012) found that women engaging in transactional sex with a casual partner as well as multiple partners are more at risk of getting HIV. Dunkle et al. (2004) found that men in Soweto, South Africa, indicated that when they spend more money on women, they expect them to have unprotected sex in return. Maughan-Brown et al (2016) stated that young women coming from low-income families are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviours. Stöckl et al. (2013) noted that young women's are not physiologically mature resulting in a higher risk of infections including HIV and AIDS.

Older rich men may take young women out for dinner and buy them alcohol to get them to engage in sexual encounters (Norris et al, 2009). Norris et al (2009) argued that women use alcohol as it helps them to socialise more easily with these older men. Magni et al (2015) found that some young women who engage in transactional sex consume alcohol beforehand to give them confidence, despite this practice not being safe, as they sometimes engage in unprotected sex. Mtiku (2011) stated that unprotected sex is the main risk factor for HIV and AIDS. Okigbo et al. (2014) reported that transactional sex increases the risk of HIV/AIDS in many ways. This includes having multiple partners, consuming drugs and alcohol before engaging in sexual activity, with many of these men being infected with HIV. A study in Changsha and Kunshan, in China, by Mantell et al. (2015) found that respondents who had previously been involved in transactional sex reported more risky behaviour than those who had not. They reported that they started being sexually active at a younger age, had a high number of recent multiple sexual partners, concurrent sex partners, casual sex partners, practiced anal sex, had sex at least once a day, and had an STI (Mantell et al., 2015). Okigbo et al. (2014) found that many respondents were previously engaged in transactional sex reported that they started being sexually active at an early age, and therefore had many sexual partners. A study conducted in Nigeria by Bamgboye et al. (2017) found that men who engage in transactional sex with other men (MTSM) are more likely to present with STI symptoms compared with those who did not engage in transactional sex. The common STI symptom found among MTSM were genital discharge, anal discharge, genital ulcers, anal ulcers and genital warts (Bamgboye et al., 2017).

2.6.3 Unplanned pregnancies

Transactional sex often results in unmet sexual and reproductive health needs among young women, and includes unsafe abortion, STIs and gender-based violence (Choudhry et al, 2014). McCleary-Sills et al. (2013) indicate that transactional sex is common among young women, and as condoms are not frequently used in these relationships, early or unplanned pregnancies are common. The young women who engage in transactional relationships with older men have little control over decision making, which puts them at risk of getting sexual diseases and unplanned early pregnancies (Adeniyi et al., 2018; Jewkes et al., 2008). A study conducted in two communities, Kamuli and Kampala, in Uganda by Luke and Kurz (2002) found negative consequences experienced by teenage girls who were engaged in sexual relationships with older rich men which includes sexual abuse and exploitation, unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortion and higher risk of maternal morbidity as these young girls were unable to negotiate safer sex with these older men. Several studies have shown that unplanned pregnancies among young women poses a public health challenges, as such behaviour leads many to face risky health outcomes, such as maternal depression and anxiety, unsafe abortion, premature birth, HIV and STI (Mbelle et al., 2018; McCleary-Sills ET AL., 2013).

A qualitative study conducted in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania by Silberschmidt and Rasch (2001) found that adolescent girls engaged in sexual relationships with sugar daddies were likely to report having experienced an illegal abortion. These men were refusing to practice safe sex with these girls and as a result they ended up impregnating these girls but because they did not intend to have babies with them, abortion was seen as a solution (Silberschmidt and Rasch, 2001). Many of these girls were advised by their partners to abort their unborn babies, others by their friends and others by their mothers or female relatives (Silberschmidt and Rasch, 2001). Abortion in Tanzania is illegal, and such behaviour is punishable for those who practise it as well as those who supply drugs or instruments to abort. Adolescents are allowed to freely access family planning information, education and services but they continually practice abortion because they are not aware of their right to such services (Silberschmidt and Rasch, 2001).

2.7 Summary

This chapter has provided a review of the literature on transactional sex, specifically the factors that facilitate transactional sex and their implications for reproductive health. Transactional sex has been studied by many authors across the world. Transactional sex is viewed differently and has been given different names in different countries. Some of the terms that are used for transactional sex include blesser-blessee relationships, aristos transactional sex, sugar daddy and sugar mummy relationships and economic motivation sexual relationships. In Western countries, this practice is considered sex work, however, in most African countries it is not considered sex work because there are differences found between the two. Studies have revealed two economic factors that stimulate the practice of transactional sex, this includes the economic survival factor and the consumerism factor. The consumerism factor has been found to be the major driver for young women to practice transactional sex. Transactional sex is viewed as one of the major issues facing the world today because many studies have revealed that this practice has contributed to the growing number of HIV infections. Literature has shown that the level of HIV and AIDS is higher among younger women than younger men. Young women who engage in transactional sex do so with older men who have already been exposed to HIV because they are more sexual experience. Another major reason that led to an increase in the number of HIV infections among young women was the issue of economic differences between them and their partners, and the lack of power to negotiate condom use with their partners.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

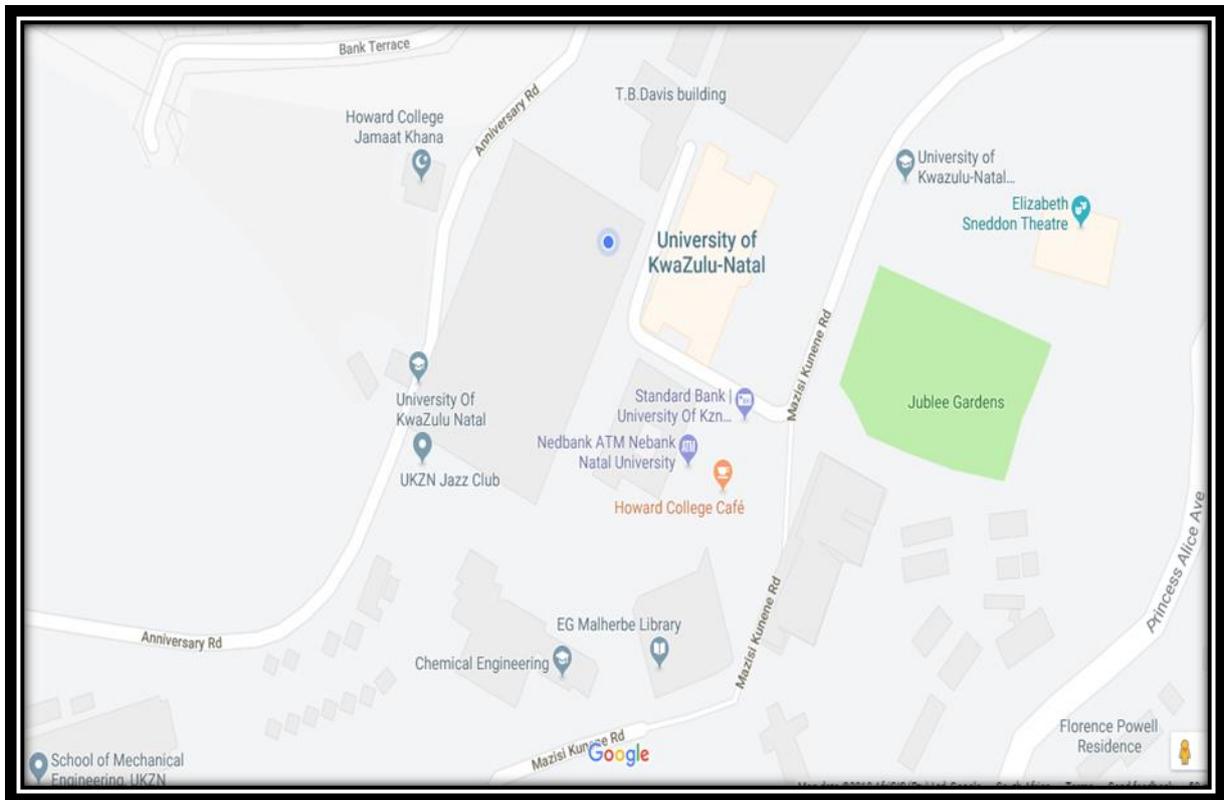
The aim of this study is to understand the blesser-blessee relationships from the perspectives of students at UKZN, Howard College campus. The objectives of this study were to investigate reasons for engaging in blesser-blessee relationships, to explore the attitudes of students towards blesser-blessee relationships and, to identify opportunities and constraints for changing blesser-blessee relationships.

The data was collected using triangulation of qualitative methods, combining individual interviews and focus group discussions. The advantages of using two qualitative approaches is that it provides in-depth, detailed information. The qualitative research helped the researcher to gain a deeper understanding about such behaviour.

3.2 Study Context

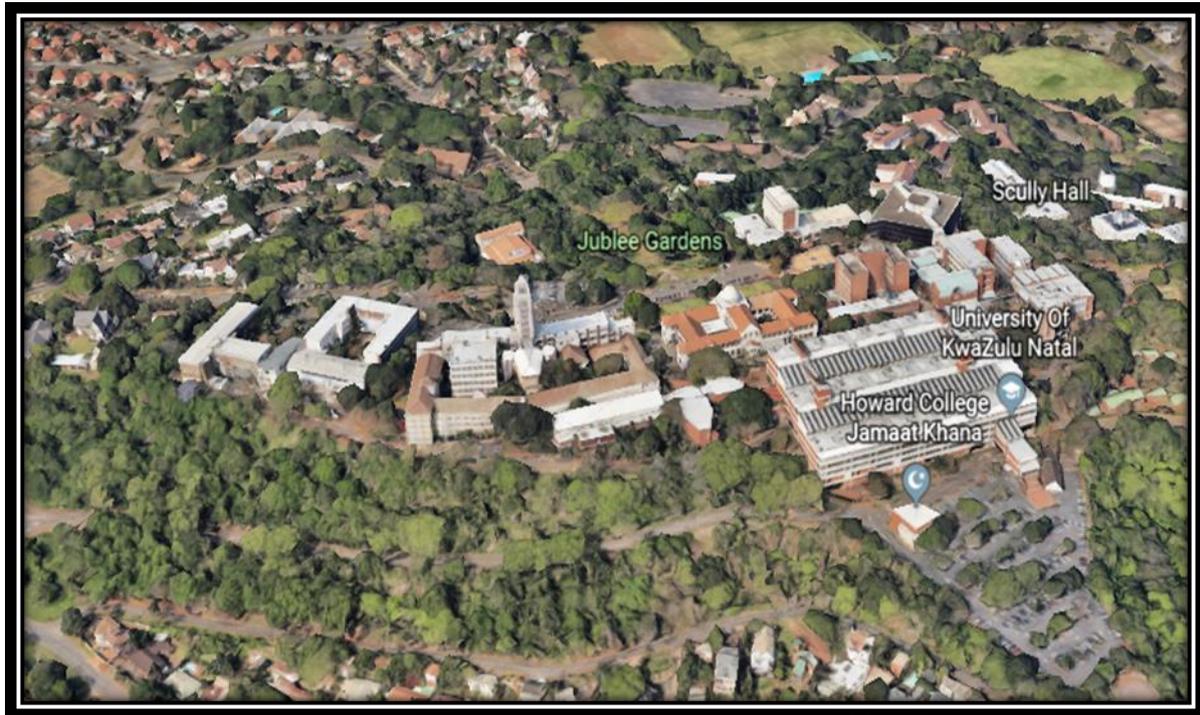
The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) is located in KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa, and consists of five campuses: Howard College, Westville, Pietermaritzburg, Edgewood and Nelson Mandela School of Medicine. The UKZN statistics showed that in 2016, of the 46,520 students enrolled, 26,631 were female and 19,889 were male. By race during that year, most were African (33,292), followed by Indians (10,179), Whites (1,885), Coloureds (968) and others (199) (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2017). The majority of the Howard College students are African and most came from poor backgrounds. Issue related to poverty, rising tuition fees and the desire for expensive items by the students has led some to engage in relationships with wealthy men in exchange for money and material benefits (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Molwa, cited by Ziki, 2015; Ntsieni, 2017). The rich men who engage in relationships with the students are called blesser and students are called blessees. This site was selected as it is the campus at which the researcher is based, and it will be easier to collect data as there are more African students, who are the focus of this study.

Figure 3.1: Map of Study Site: University of KwaZulu-Natal



Source: Google Maps (2018)

Figure 3.2: Map of Study Site: University of KwaZulu-Natal



Source: Google Earth (2018)

3.3 Research Methods

This study used qualitative research methods that aims to obtain a detailed perspectives of the phenomenon under study. A qualitative research approach is used to understand human experiences, with Mayer (2000) indicating that it is used to understand the relationships between individuals and their motivations. Patton (1998) stated that this method uses an interpretative approach to understand human experience. Qualitative research looks at people's lives, behaviours, experiences, emotions and feelings, and can also examine cultural phenomena, social movements and interactions between different nations (Rahman, 2016). This approach allows the researcher to study and understand the perceptions, behaviours, and attitudes of first-year university students. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) stated the qualitative approach is an appropriate and useful tool for collecting in-depth information. Qualitative research methods are different from quantitative methods that generate numerical data that can be statistically analysed, while qualitative methods generate data in the form of words (Polkinghorne, 1991). The researcher used this approach to understand the experiences

of first-year students who were involved in these relationships, and the perceptions of those who are close with them.

The advantages of using qualitative methods are that they are useful when generating categories to understand human phenomena, and for exploring the interpretation that individuals give to the actions they experience. The benefit of using qualitative research methods is that they provide detailed information about the respondents, their feelings, opinions, and experiences (Cohen et al., 2011). This method allows a researcher to ask open-ended questions, giving participants more time to provide all the information they want.

The disadvantage of using the qualitative approach is that data collection is time-consuming and can be expensive (Mays and Pope, 1995; Opdenakker, 2006), the cost depending on where the data will be collected, for example, increased costs if the study location is far from the researcher's home. As open-ended questions are used in qualitative research to gain quality data, it is a time-consuming process, particularly if there is a large sample size. Finally, data collected from a small sample may pose problems regarding its generalization for the entire population and the results may not guarantee accuracy (Marshall, 1996).

3.4 Triangulation

This study relies on the use of triangulation of methods. Patton (1999) stated that triangulation refers to the use of various methods or data sources in research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena. The researcher used triangulation by conducting individual and focus group interviews, which helped her to gain a better understanding about the blesser-blessee relationships and the reasons for these relationships. In-depth individual interviews were conducted in English with first-year students who were aged 19 to 23 years old and included both males and females. The researcher conducted two focus groups, each group having members of the same gender, one being female (six students) and the other male (five students). The reason for conducting two focus groups was that the researcher wanted to hear different views and to get an in-depth understanding of blesser-blessee relationships.

3.4.1 In-depth interviews

In-depth individual interviews (IDI) are used in qualitative research as a tool for collecting data from participants, and can be conducted face-to-face or using a phone, depending on the choice of the researcher. In-depth interviews involves open-ended questions and sometimes involves probing to extract more detailed information or deep understanding of the concept or subject (Berry, 1999). The in-depth individual interview has the advantage of providing meaningful data (Stokes and Bergin, 2006), unlike surveys, they provide detailed information and most participants feel more comfortable having a conversation than completing forms (Neale, Thapa and Boyce, 2006), they uncover valuable insights and enables the researcher to probe more for greater details (Minhat, 2015). The type of information conducted through in-depth interviews usually involves personal matters such as the individual's lived experience, cultural knowledge, values and decisions, feelings or perspectives (Johnson, 2002). Unlike other methods, in-depth interviews are more like a journalistic interview, as the format of questions are open-ended, they give the participants the freedom to explain and expand in details about what they think or know (Showkat and Parveen, 2017).

The in-depth interviews were conducted in person with all participant members. All in-depth individual interviews were conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College campus from first-year students. The in-depth interviews were conducted in a quiet and safe venue and they took an average of 20 to 30 minutes. The in-depth interviews were recorded with a cell phone device and the researcher also took notes for the sake of ensuring accuracy. The in-depth individual interviews consisted of 15 participants, 10 females and five males aged between 19 to 23. As the topic of the study was sensitive, using in-depth individual interviews was very helpful as the participants felt more comfortable talking to the researcher about their experiences. Using this method was effective, as this method allowed the participants to talk freely about the things they knew and/or experienced about blesser-blessee relationships.

3.4.2 Focus group interviews

The study relies on two focus group interviews, one female focus group and one male focus group, the age of the participants of the focus group ranged between 19 to 21 years. There were six participants in the female group and five in the male group. The focus groups interviews were conducted after the IDI. The interviews were conducted on separate days. According to Dilshad and Latif (2013), focus group interviews are one of the qualitative research tools used for collecting data from participants in a group. They are used to encourage group interaction about the participant's experiences, meanings, understandings, opinion and beliefs. Focus group is made up of five to eight individuals, who are brought together by a researcher to gather in-depth information about the study, however, the size can range from few as four to as many as 12 people (Krueger, 2014). Sometimes smaller groups of four or five are called mini focus group and the good thing about such group is that they allow all participants in group an opportunity to share their ideas (Krueger, 2014). The focus group is created for discussion on a given topic in order to obtain different points of view, where group members give their own understanding of the topic (Denscombe, 2014). Grudens-Schuck, Allen and Larson (2004) stated that the aim of conducting focus groups interviews is to obtain high quality of data. The discussion was beneficial to the researcher who was able to understand the specific viewpoints raised by participants.

It is said that the focus group method produces good discussions on a given topic (Grudens-Schuck et al., 2004). Once one participant reveals what she/he knows or experienced, this creates an opportunity for another participant to participate freely. For a focus group to function well during the discussion, Morgan (1993) argues that a researcher should allow participants to laugh, relax, and feel free to open up and tell their personal stories. Another important thing about focus group interviews is that they save money and time, as interviewing people as a group takes less time than interviewing them individually. As there were two focus group discussion, this created more information and ensured that the result were valid (McLafferty, 2004).

The disadvantages of focus group discussions is that they can waste time and organising a group can be a challenge (Freitas et al., 1998), with most people not respecting time. People are not the same, some are shy to speak in front of others while others are more outspoken. Some members of the group may be afraid to reveal what they know in front of other members. Confidentiality may also be problematic in focus groups interviews, as some members may fear that what they will discuss will be revealed outside the group by others.

However, all the participants were asked if they would be able to participate in a group before the interviews to avoid such challenges.

3.5 Sampling

Sampling is a process whereby a small portion of the population is selected in order to obtain information that will represent the characteristics of the entire population (Burns and Grove, 2009). Non-probability sampling was used in this study, and this type of sampling according to Showkat and Parveen (2017) does not measure attributes of phenomenon, it uses non-random methods to collect the sample and these methods are generally based on the judgment. This method of sampling is easy to use compared to probability sampling. This study used convenience sampling to identify 15 first-year students for the in-depth individual interviews and two focus groups, with six participants in the female group and five participants in the male group. The reason for choosing first-year students for this study is that most of them face many challenges, as they are young and still new to the university. Etikan et al (2016) stated that convenience sampling is a type of non-random or non-probability sampling that allows a researcher to choose whoever is available and willing to participate at that given time. The reason to use convenience sampling is because it is easy and cheap to use.

The study explored first-year students' perspective about blesser-blessee relationships, but some student had experiences. Such participants that were involved in blesser-blessee relationships contributed well to the study. They provided more detailed information and have help the study to make some important discoveries that will inform policy maker and improve the lives of many young women in South Africa. Although they were more knowledgeable about these relationships, most of their comments were more similar with the one provided by other participants. In the process of recruiting participants, as the study focuses on collecting the data from first-year students, the researcher walked around the campus and asked first-year students if they were willing to participate in the study. All participants that agreed to participate were asked by the researcher to provide their phone number. This was done in order for the researcher to easily communicate with the participants about a suitable time and venue for the interview. As the researcher was a tutor

for the first-year students it was easy for her to recognise some of the first-year students. Before the interviews, all participants were told about the study and about their right to participate and to withdraw at any time. For the in-depth interviews, 15 individuals (10 female and five males) were selected based on eligibility. The interviews were conducted in a venue that ensured maximum privacy. Most often the venues were in Shepstone building (Shepstone 12, Shepstone 14 and level 8 room 811) and others took place at the Albert Luthuli residence also known as Tower residence, room E303. All participants were aged between 19 to 23 years, others resided at home and others resided at the university residences. The interviews were one-on-one interviews and the researcher was given permission by all the participants to record the interviews.

Triangulation involve data that is collected through different methods in order to achieve a more accurate and valid estimate of qualitative results. Therefore, this study used a combination of individual in-depth interviews and two focus groups. For the two focus groups, the researcher wanted to combine female and male participants but felt that they may not be willing to freely participate. As this topic was sensitive, the researcher decided to group participants according to their sex (single-sex grouping) in order for them to feel free and to open up about what they know or have experienced. The purpose of interviewing people as a group is to find in-depth information and hear different points of view. Having one participant who was able to open up and speak freely enabled other participants to do the same. Powell and Single (1996) noted that if participants within a group have different gender, that may affect their ability to speak freely. Grudens–Shuck et al. (2004) stated that collecting data from a group with different characteristics normally decreases the quality of the data. It is therefore preferable to conduct interviews in a focus group with members of a similar gender e.g. females only and males only participants.

3.6 Data Collection Process

The researcher has visited different places within the university (Howard Campus) to invite students to participate in the study, and included the local area network (LANs) rooms, on-campus residences and cafes. For the purposes of this study, the sample was restricted to only those registered at UKZN, both female and male first-year students. As the researcher had

been demonstrating to first-year students the previous semester, it was easy for her to find first-year students. All interviews took less than an hour and were captured using a voice recorder and note taking. The researcher has used both methods to not lose any information, the goal being to protect the data collected.

3.7 Data Collection Instrument

Three data collection instruments were used to obtain data for this study, these being the researcher, interview guide, audio record and notebook.

The role that is played by the researcher in qualitative research is different to that in quantitative studies, as they become the primary and most important tool for data collection. The researcher becomes an interviewer and a group facilitator to obtain the raw data for the study. The responsibility of a qualitative researcher is to collect data from the participants, be able to communicate well with them, ask important and understandable questions, and be able to explain when they do not understand (Hoepfl, 1997). This enables the researcher in return to obtain high quality of data and to have a good experience, these being the qualities of being a good qualitative researcher. The researcher therefore followed the rules of being a good qualitative researcher by being organized, informing the participants of their withdrawal rights, communicating well with them, being a good listener, and asking probing questions to obtain information (Simon 2011). The intention was to obtain good results for this study.

Interviewing is the process of obtaining data from asking questions to the participants in order to gain knowledge. The interview guide is used as a tool or instrument used to ensure that the relevant data is collected during the interviews. The purpose of the interview guide is to give direction to the questions that a researcher will ask during the interviews. The researcher-developed questions for the individual and focus group interviews guided by the literature on transactional sex to understand the behaviour and attitudes. The interviews were semi-structured, as this allowed the researcher to collect in-depth data (Cousin, 2009). The interview guide for individual interviews (Appendix 1) had 14 questions and the focus groups interviews had five questions (Appendix 2), which served as a guide, although the researcher asked other probing questions as well.

The researcher has used an audio recorder and wrote notes during interviews, for which a pen, a notebook and an audio recorder were used to record the information from the participants. Muswazi and Nhamo (2013) stated that it may be useful to write notes, although this may take time, but sometimes relying only on technological instruments can be problematic, as they may not always function well. The advantage of an audio recording is that it works better than note taking, as it is fast and captures all the information provided by the participants (Muswazi and Nhamo, 2013). In order to obtain the best possible data, the use of both instruments is very effective (King and Horrocks, 2010). Therefore, in order not to lose the data collected and to obtain the best possible information, the researcher used both an audio recorder and note-taking during the interviews.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

As the main ethical considerations should include the participant's rights in any study, an informed consent form was given to the participants and an information sheet that contained what the study was about, their protection from harm, ensuring their privacy and confidentiality, and to encourage them to be honest. Participants were informed that they were not obliged to participate in the study, they could participate freely, and they could withdraw at any time. Regardless of any situation that may arise, researchers should bear in mind that participation rights should not be violated. As a result, the researcher in this study made sure that the rights of the participants were protected and not violated. In this study, the participants were fully informed about the study before the interviews, about their rights, and what will be required of them, and the amount of time the interview will take. The researcher ensured that the participants were not harmed during interviews and that their privacy was ensured, as the recording was done without using any names in the study. The researcher first obtained the gatekeepers letter granting permission from the UKZN Registrar's office (Appendix 3) to collect data. Once this was obtained, the researcher then sought permission from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Appendix 4) for the study. Every participant was provided with a consent letter (Appendix 5) about the study. The data collected from the participants will be stored securely in the supervisor's office for a

period of five years. All the interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the participants.

3.9 Validity, Reliability and Rigour of the Study

According to Wang et al (1999), reliability is defined as the consistency of data measurements should the test procedure be repeated. Validity refers to when the information from the test is appropriate and has meanings (Wang et al, 1999). When the study makes sense to the participants, it indicates that they understand why it is being done. The process in which validity is obtained is through the interview process between the researcher and the interviewees, where all the participants understand what they are sharing. The data collected from the real world (ecological validity) in most cases is likely to be valid (Schmuckler, 2001) compared to that collected from external validity (Social Research Methods, 2018). However, this study had high validity as the data was collected from students, their answers being based on what they know and have experienced. The researcher recorded all the information during the interviews, which improved the reliability of this research. Rigour refers to the legitimacy of the study and requires the researcher to be responsible for following the required research steps (Crescentini and Mainardi, 2009).

3.10 Data analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is describe as a process of reducing the raw data that the researcher has collected and transform it so that they make more sense (Kawulich, 2004). The analysis process involved arranging the data, summarising it into categories and patterns and related themes are identified. The type of analysis used in this study was thematic analysis, this type of analysis consists of checking and editing, transcription, interpreting the data and verifying it (Sutton and Austin, 2015). All interviews were recorded (audio recorded) and then transcribed into written words to facilitate the data analysis. The interpretation is informed by the theoretical framework used, which in this study was the constructive theory, which assumes that the behaviour of individuals is constructed by society. The researcher compared the theory and the result obtained from the participants. The text was checked and

edited, and the spelling, grammar and other errors in each paragraph addressed, with the punctuation, such as commas and full stops, having been edited. The researcher summarised the codes and classified the information obtained from participants and grouped them into themes using thematic analysis. The validity of the data was checked as the researcher read all the text twice and to verify the compliance of the results with the raw data.

3.11 Limitations of the study

A number of limitations may have affected the results, these being the small sample population, which may not represent the whole population of affected students at UKZN, which jeopardized the quality of data. The process of collecting data was not easy, finding vacant venues and meeting with participants was challenging. Finding suitable venues at convenient times proved to be a challenge, as did the time keeping of the students, some of whom arrived an hour late or not at all. The focus groups are usually done first but as this study as the topic was sensitive, it was a bit challenging to find participants available to participate. Many kept on postponing and making excuses and others were available at different times, so that was a challenge that the researcher faced. Therefore, for the sake of the time, the researcher started with in-depth individual interviews as it was easy for her as she was available most of the time to go and interview the participant at any given. Unfortunately, the focus group interviews were done last because the researcher had to wait for everyone to be free for that specific chosen time. The researcher invited 10 members for each group but only six in the female's group and five in the male's group came to participate in the study. The focused group discussion especially that of female, took longer, some members gave more examples and asked more questions, other questions were relevant and others were not, so the researcher had to manage the discussion more closely. Another limitation encountered was that the other few members of the group (female focus group) were shy and that was a challenge because they discussed only a few questions. The subject were sampled from first year students meaning the result of the study may not generalizable to all female students on campus and since it was only conducted in UKZN, Howard campus, the result may not be a true generalisation of other universities. Since the study used in-depth interviews, it provided a detailed understanding of the blesser-blessee relationships

3.12 Summary

The study used qualitative methods, specifically in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to obtain information about blesser-blessee relationships and these methods were effective in collecting information. This chapter has also discussed how the data was analysed in this study. The researcher followed all the ethical guidelines and the participants were informed about their rights to participate or to withdraw at any time. Validity, reliability and rigour of the study has been discussed. The challenges and limitations that the researcher encountered while conducting the study were discussed and the strategies to overcome such challenges and limitations were highlighted.

Chapter 4

Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from a qualitative study drawing on in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to shed insights into blesser-blessee relationships. The participants were given anonymous code names in the form of numeric number to protect their identity. The four major findings presented in this study are inclusive of the meaning of blesser-blessee relationships, factors promoting these relationships, risks associated with these relationships, and observed strategies to deal with the issues found within these relationships.

4.2 Sample Characteristics

The in-depth interviews consisted of 15 participants, 10 (67%) females and five (33%) males aged between 19 to 23, with the average age being 21. All participants were single, first year, South African students, who either stayed at the university residences or at home.

Table 4.1: Demographic profile of the in-depth interviews

ID No.	Age (years)	In Partnership	Gender	Place of res.
1	19	Yes	Female	University
2	20	Yes	Female	University
3	20	Yes	Female	University
4	19	Yes	Male	University
5	23	Yes (Blessee)	Female	Home
6	22	Yes (Blessee)	Female	University
7	20	Yes	Female	University
8	20	No	Female	University

9	22	Yes (Blessee)	Female	University
10	23	Yes	Male	Home
11	20	Yes	Female	University
12	21	No	Male	University
13	21	Yes (Blessee)	Female	University
14	20	Yes	Male	University
15	23	Yes	Male	University

The study also had two focus group interviews, one female only and one male only. The ages of the participants ranged from 19 to 21 in both groups, with the average age for both being 20. All the participants were single, first year, South African students who stayed in the university residences or at home. The participants for groups were new and are not extracted from the list above.

Table 4.2: Demographic profiles of the focus groups

Focus Group No. 1					Focus Group No. 2				
ID No.	Age	In Partnership	Gender	Place of res.	ID No.	Age	In Partnership	Gender	Place of res.
1	19	Yes	Female	University	1	19	No	Male	Home
2	21	Yes	Female	University	2	21	Yes	Male	University
3	19	Yes	Female	Home	3	21	Yes	Male	Home
4	21	Yes	Female	University	4	20	Yes	Male	Home
5	20	Yes	Female	Home	5	19	Yes	Male	University
6	21	Yes	Female	University					

4.3 Meaning of blesser-blessee relationships

The study has revealed that blesser-blessee relationships are relationships where sex is exchanged for money or material items. Students engage in these relationships because they lack the financial means. The blessees are those partners that are lacking financial means and therefore exchange sex for money or material items. The blesser is that partner who is rich, mostly older than blessees and who provides money in exchange for sexual pleasures. As these relationships involve the exchange of sex for money, they are not regarded as sex work. The study also found that partners involved in these relationships engage without developing feelings for each other, however, it may happen that one partner develops feelings for the other but it is not something that happens often. As a result, these relationships do not last long.

4.3.1 Sexual versus material benefits

The study revealed that there are two motivations for getting involved in blesser-blessee relationships. The one major driving motivation for the blesser is the desire for sex and the major driving motivation for the blessee is desire for financial support. In addition, from the interviews it is clear that there is an understanding of reciprocity in the relationship in that there is a benefit for both partners in the relationship.

The comments below are from the participants involved in these relationships.

“My understanding is that a blesser and a blessee relationship is simply a relationship between a man and a woman who engage in sex exchange for money” (IDI #5, 23 years).

“I will say it is a relationship where there is give and take, it is about what you can give me and what I can give you in return” (IDI #6, 22 years)

“If I need something I know that there is someone, and in return I will give him sex and he will give me money” (IDI #6, 22 years)

The above statements indicate that in blesser-blessee relationships sex is traded for material and monetary benefits. As the information provided by some of those involved in these

relationships, it represents the meaning of these relationships, as the participants were talking about something they know and have experienced. The partners in these relationships exchange what they have to get what they want, sex in exchange for monetary gain. The information presented below explains the meaning of a blesser and a blessee. Two female participants stated that:

Both comments below are from blessees.

“A blesser is someone who offers to maybe buy you clothes, as I said, take you out, someone who has more money than you, someone who... like other people, they even buy you a house, a car, those people will call them blesser because they bless you with something that you do not have for that moment. A blessee is someone who receive those things” (IDI Participant 9, 22 years).

“The blesser are people who are well off, people who are working, so in most cases the blessee as a student here in varsity. If I need something I know that there is someone, and in return I will give him sex and he will give me money” (IDI #6, 22 years).

According to the first participant, being involved in a relationship with a rich man, who is able to provide expensive items, is a blesser. They call this a blessing because the blessees cannot afford to buy themselves such things as they are expensive. The participant mentioned that the blesser can even buy blessees a house or a car, so such provisions are a blessing to them. The two quotes above both describe a blesser as a wealthy person and a provider to a blessee, and a blessee as someone who receives what a blesser provides, and these two gain benefits from each other, sexual pleasure for the blesser and money and material benefits for the blessee.

4.3.2 Characteristics of the blesser-blessee relationships

4.3.2.1 Age-disparate sexual relationships

In this study, many participants observed that in blesser-blessee relationships there is a large age gap between the partners, with the men generally being older than the women. In many cases, the men are much older than the women, sometimes more than 10 years older. The in-depth interview respondents said:

“I just know that it is between a young woman and older man, or someone who is probably old enough to be your dad or maybe like 15 years older than you” (IDI#1, 19 years).

“What I do understand is that it is a relationship between an older man and a younger woman, whereby the older man gets to fulfil his sexual desires and a younger woman get material things in return” (IDI #2, 20years).

“It is basically a relationship between usually an older guy who may be rich and may be in an intimate relationship with a young lady” (IDI #7, 20 years).

The comment below is from a blessee

“They are very old to these young girls, which means that they have more power, they are willing to abuse their power, and that will mean these young girls will be easily controllable” (IDI #5, 23 years).

The above comments indicate huge age gap differences and it shows that men are mostly the ones who are older in these relationships. Older men are generally working while many of the younger women are unemployed or studying at universities. Older men who are rich use their power to attract young women, as they know that they are financially in need and it is easy to exert control in these relationships, as some of the blessees are desperate. They choose to be involved with these young women because women of their own age are more mature, experienced and financially stable, making it more difficult to control them.

4.3.2.2 Absence of love

The blesser-blessee relationships are unlike normal relationships, and while they treat each other as boyfriend and girlfriend, these relationships are not based on emotions, although that may change and there may be an imbalance in affection between them. In the beginning of the relationship there is no love between the partners. The perceptions of participants are presented below.

“I think it sort of like an agreement between the two partners, that I give you this and you give me this, because at the end of the day there is no love” (FFG #4, 21 years).

The blesser-blessee relationships has always been about the exchange you see, like we are exchanging these things, it is not about I am committed to you, I love you, you know” (FFG #3, 19 years).

“Blessers are not boyfriends, they are not an ideal love partner, they are just there to provide you with means to live and with the luxurious life” (IDI #1, 19 years).

“Blessers do not give them the love that they want, they only give them the money that they need to live, as well as the money to put up in front for society to believe that they have it all covered” (IDI #1, 19 years).

“You know, it is so funny how people do not even realise they are in blesser-blessee relationship, a girl might say I am in love with this guy, but others can easily see that the guy is using her for sex and other things, I think it just your own perspective” (FFG #1, 19 years).

According to the perception of participants, they indicated that partners do not love each other in these relationships, they are involved for various benefits. The participants also revealed that love can be imbalanced in these relationships, as a blessee may fall in love with a blesser. However, as the majority of blessers are older, many already are in committed relationships with another partner, and are only involved in these relationships for sexual benefits.

4.3.2.3 Short in duration

The study revealed that the blesser-lessee relationships generally occur for a short period of time, as indicated below. These relationships are unlikely to be permanent. The participants stated that these relationships only last for a short period of time, normally for a few months. In most cases, the blessers intentions are never to stay in these relationships, as most of them do not love their partners. Once they feel that they have got what they wanted from the relationship, they move on to the next partner.

“This thing of blesser and lessee does not last, a month or less, then it is finished, maybe sometimes it does, but I have never heard anyone being blessed for the whole 12 months” (IDI #14, 20 years).

“These relationships sometimes do not last, once a woman loses value they find another one because she loses that value, that beauty” (IDI #4, 19 years).

“Women should stop being obsessed with the fancy lifestyle because this thing of blessers does not last, in life things that comes easy go easy” (MFG #2, 21 years).

Once the lessees are recognized that they have money and are flourishing, it becomes hard for them to face the public without the material benefits, and they then decide to find other blessers to keep them in the lifestyle that they desire and have become accustomed to living.

4.3.2.4 Blesser-lessee relationships are not sex work

The majority of respondents, especially the females, understood the blesser-lessee relationship. As these relationships are based on the exchange of sex for money, the participant were asked how these relationships were different from sex work. The responses as to how these relationships are different to sex work are indicated below.

“For me, it is different because a prostitute, it something that she does 24 seven and it is something she does with different people. So, for a lessee there is only one person, because even blessers do not allow you to have someone else” (IDI #11, 20 years).

Two females from the IDI who engage in blesser-lessee relationships said:

“Okay, as a blesse, I will say I am very different from a prostitute, because with the prostitutes there is no connection, I will say there is no connection of getting to know that person, whereas my partners it is a long-term thing, I have had this partner for a few months now, whereas with prostitutes it is just a one-time thing” (IDI #13, 21 years).

A comment below is from a participant involved.

“A blessee is a woman who engages sexually and not just sexually with the man, there are many other things, you find that the relationship involves more than just money, the man will be more interested in satisfying your needs, the man will be more interested in getting to know exactly what is it that satisfies you” (IDI #5, 23 years).

The participants explained that with a sex worker, it is a once off sex exchange with different men within a short period of time. In the blesser-blessee relationships, they are treated as a girlfriend and boyfriend and not as clients or sex workers. These relationships were explained as a romantic kind of relationships, where gifts, money and other material benefits are provided in exchange for sexual relations. According to the participants, they indicate that these relationships are different, as they normally last longer than sex work.

4.4 Factors promoting blesser-blessee relationships

The question on the theme mentioned above was to explore the reasons why students engage in blesser-blessee relationships. The study revealed that there are a number of reasons for student engaging in these relationships including poverty, accommodation, educational needs, luxurious lifestyle and peer pressure, and social media.

4.4.1 Poverty

Some participants identified the issue of poverty as one of the factors that pushed students to engage in blesser-blessee relationships, as indicate below:

“The major thing that contribute to that could be poverty back at home, because this thing of blesser, they promise you money, so like you even sacrifice with your

dignity through these things, because sometimes they buy you groceries and financially support you. You are sorted when you are dating these men” (IDI #14, 20 years).

The comment below is from a blessee.

“As a black person, I would say it is poverty because of that whole apartheid regime that we still struggling, even 24 years later, we are still struggling, so it has to do with poverty” (IDI #13, 21 years).

The statements above indicate that some students have these relationships due to their poor socio-economic status, as they often require money to meet their basic needs. They engage in these relationships for survival reasons, as many South African families are still struggling. Many young women cannot rely on their families for financial support so they resort to these relationships in order to meet their basic needs. These relationships are the only means of escaping their dire economic situation.

4.4.2 Accommodation and educational needs

The study has revealed that students involved in blesser-blessee relationships do so to pay for their tuition fees, books and accommodation, which the blessers will take care of. The following statements indicate these needs:

“Sometimes in blesser-blessee relationships you will find that some families are aware, and they will not mind because the guy pays your school fees and buys food for the family” (FFG #3, 19 years).

“Well, they do gain financial support, if they need to have their accommodation paid for, their tuition fees paid for, they get that” (IDI #1, 19 years).

Two female students involved said:

“There is a great deal of financial freedom, financial security, I mean being able to afford and what I mean is, at some point you find that this blessers goal as far as offering to pay for your accommodation, they offer to pay for your fees” (IDI #5, 23 years).

“I gained a lot and I have been saving, I have been getting a lot of money, but I have been saving it, because what I found is that most of the other kids usually spend the money, I am saving the money and I use it to pay for my fees” (IDI #13, 21 years).

The blessers may give the money directly to the student, who then uses it to support themselves while they are studying. Some blessers can afford to pay for both their tuition fees and accommodation, and it may be difficult for a student who owes the university not to accept this offer, especially for first year students, as they will want come back the following year and will need money for registration costs. A female student stated that she saves the money she gets to pay her tuition fees. This is the main reason some students engage in these relationships, to obtain the support needed for tuition and accommodation payments, rather than wanting to participate in these relationships for affection. This financial support that they receive also allows them to continue with their education without worrying about their economic situation.

4.4.3 Peer Pressure

The majority of participants revealed that some students are pressured by other students who live a lavish life style on campus, and end up wanting to have similar things as those students to fit in. The response from those involved were often about using the money to spend on expensive items and having a luxurious lifestyle. The participant revealed that those who have financial issues are subjected to peer pressure which influences them to engage in such relationships. The comments below explain the pressure they get from their peers and the luxurious lifestyle they want to live.

The first and last comment are from students involved.

“Also peer pressure like when you see your colleagues wearing nice labelled stuff and you just do not have, you are just wearing Mr Price, actually you want to have much better stuff” (IDI #9, 22 years).

“It is mostly Black people who have financial problems, so they engage in this relationship because they are trying to get whatever they desire, that they cannot get from their parents, they try to keep up with all the other cool kids who have stunning clothing, who have iPhones and all those things, so it is sometimes peer pressure. They feel like they have to maintain the same standard as their peers” (IDI #12, 21 years).

“Okay, what do you need to understand about me is that I love the finer things in life. I am obsessed with the highlife. Basically, I want to look good, I want to look classy, I want to travel, I want to go out on dates, go to expensive places and meet new people and travel abroad even, so, what I also picked up or what I realized about myself is that all those things that I picture myself having or doing in my life, those are the things that a normal guy would not give, a normal guy would not provide. So, every man who approaches me has to meet a certain criteria, they have to meet my standards, be able to understand what I want. If I were to ask my man please help me with five thousand, he must be able to deposit that cash into my account. That is just how it is, no negotiation” (IDI #5, 23 years).

The comments indicate that many students engage in blesser-blessee relationships due to peer pressure and wanting to conform to their group. Often others in their social circle live a luxurious lifestyle. Many students get into university and see other students living a lavish life and end up wanting to live the same lifestyle. The last participants explained that as she is the type that is obsessed with the highlife, every man that approaches her needs to meet her standards. This means that because of the lifestyle that she wants to live or things that she want to have, she cannot engage in a relationship with just any random guy but it has to be someone who will afford her needs and wants and nothing else. However, those people are not students nor just any random man but men who have money and can afford to fulfil her requirements.

4.4.4 Pressure from social media

The participants revealed that social networks have affected many students, that some engaged in blesser-blessee relationships because they want to have money and look like the Instagram girls, who are called *slay queens* (a modern slang for women who live a wealthy lifestyle but without the background).

“I feel like also the pressure, especially you know like the social networks and all those things and then you see people are having a good life, people are having this and that, and they are just dating older men, so you think to yourself that I can also get all these things just by getting an older guy, it is not a big deal you know” (FFG #3, 19 years).

“Instagram also encourages us to like things that we cannot afford, expensive clothing, overseas holidays” (FFG #4, 21 years).

“Pressure from the things that we see on Instagram they put pressure on us, so now you also want to live that life and you do not have the means you see, and people then end up engaging in such relationship” (IDI #11, 20 years).

The information above shows that some students engage in these relationships as they want to look good on social network platforms. Instagram is one of the social network platforms that has negatively affected the youth, with photographs posted by people who are well off, such as *slay queens*, putting pressure on the younger generation, especially women. Students are also under pressure as they also want to look good, wear luxuries hair, travel to expensive places and go to fancy restaurants. The study revealed that student do not have money to afford all those expensive things and for them to achieve this Instagram life they become involved in blesser-blessee relationships.

4.5 Risk associated with blesser-blessee relationships

The study observed a number of challenges associated with blesser-blessee relationships, and includes STI and HIV risk factors, poor academic performance, and issues related to power and violence, as presented in the following sub-themes.

4.5.1 STI and HIV risk factors

In sub-Saharan Africa, transactional sex was found to be one of the behaviours that results in the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases including AIDS and HIV, which was also perceived to be the case by the study participants. Most participants revealed the dangerous side of being involved in blesser-blessee relationships, but they indicated that students engaged in these relationships are often desperate, and end up being controlled by the blesser as they are dependent on them.

“No one would want to pay someone such huge amounts of money just to use protection with him, so I think he will say, no, I paid you this amount, so I cannot, just imagine the sexual diseases you going to get at that point, so HIV, STIs” (IDI #7, 20 years).

“There is a man who has a wife and five children. He lives in Umhlanga rocks and comes here at Howard and dates a student and takes that students to AZA club and then spends R5000 in that club and you think that when they are sleeping with that student they will use a condom. Like no way, there is no one who can spend such huge money and expect that he will use a condom, there is no one on earth who can do that, so that is what I know from a personal level” (IDI #15, 23 years).

“They will be exposed to the HIV virus as they have no say, they cannot control their own sexuality or reproductive health, the man will always be in control of what do I want, so they will always be against what the young woman wants” (IDI #5, 23 years).

The above quotes indicate that these relationships are imbalanced, with no equality between partners. The provision of large amounts of money gives the blesser power, which makes it very difficult to negotiate safer sex practices. The participants revealed that it is unlikely for a man to practise safe sex with a girl after spending so much money on her. The study found that students lack the ability of making informed decisions as they are still young, and have little sexual experience compared to their older (more experienced) male partners (blesser), which puts them at risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV and AIDS. Multiple concurrent sexual partnership were also found in this study, which introduces another risk factor for HIV or STIs. The perceptions of participants are presented below.

“When they do not get the love they want from a blesser or from a man they resort to having multiple partners. Each one has a role to play, one is for giving her financial assistance, one is for giving her love and comfort, one maybe is just for when she is stressed and she just want to let her head down and do whatever to distress (IDI #1, 19 years).

A female student involved said:

“Firstly, we need to consider the fact that you are not only the blessee to the blesser as there are many other blessees out there whom the blesser is engaged with” (IDI #5, 23 years old).

Having multiple partners increases the risk of becoming infected with HIV or STIs. Many respondents indicated that some blessees have multiple blessers as they want to have more money, while others stated that each blesser plays his role and serves different purposes. Some blessers engage in relationships with many blessees, which results in them spending less time with each blessee, who may not end that relationship but instead find someone else or another blesser to spend time with. As they are engaged in multiple concurrent sexual relationships, if one partner is infected, he or she will infect the other partner, and both can spread the virus to their other partners.

4.5.2 Poor academic performance

The participants also revealed that students who are engaged in blesser-blessee relationships are often distracted because they do not get enough time to focus on their studies, which results in poor academic performance. The majority of respondent reported that these students do not get enough time to study. The previous themes suggest that this may be due to their spending time with their partners (blessers) or main partners, clubbing or shopping. The information provided by the participants about the poor academics is presented below.

First comment below is from a female student involved.

“In some cases, you have to sacrifice your education as a student. In a case where you have exams for instance, or you are studying for a test or any other assignments you have to ensure that you get your things done. You have to get

your work done in time because when he calls and say I want to see you he does not expect any excuses, he does not understand” (IDI #5, 23 years).

“Another issue is that, you get easily distracted as a student, because if you know that he provides you with everything, I think you feel like you have to meet their demands. So lets say maybe you have an assignment that is due, maybe the next day and he asks you today maybe tonight, then you feel like you have to go even though you are not done with your academic work, but because you know that you are desperate and you know that you will be provided then you ended up going” (IDI #2, 20 years).

The students reveal that they sacrifice their education as the men do not want excuses if they want to see them, and that while they know that they are university students, they do not respect that they have academic commitments. Another participant revealed that as someone who provides them with everything, they feel that they have to meet their demands. She added that because they are desperate, they do whatever is asked of them as they know that they will be provided with whatever they want. They explained that blessers do not care that their partners are students, as their main interest is to get what they want, which is sex. Another problem that the students involved may face is depression if they become infected with HIV or STIs, which can also impact on their academic progress and result in them performing poorly or dropping out of university

4.5.2 Power and Violence

The study revealed some of challenges, which includes power, control and violence among the blesser-blessee relationships. As blessers are rich, this status gives them the power to control and violate these young women they are sexually engage with, taking advantage of the fact that these women are desperate and dependent on them financially. The comments on the challenges found in blesser-blessee relationships were taken from the participants who were involved in these relationships and such comments are provided below.

All comments below are from those involved.

“Okay, the decision from a blessee to accept whatever the blesser is willing to offer means she has nowhere else to go, she does not have a right or she cannot

go date other men because he is willing to provide everything that she wants. So should it happened that I find her cheating or doing the other things that I do not like, or she does not meet all those demands, I have a right to beat her up, I have a right to kill her, so that is just how the mind of a blesser works (IDI #5, 23 years).

“Like when sometimes, when I do not want to meet up with my guy, you would find that he gets angry, so I think it is all about power, because I am at his world, like you know, I have to do like everything he ask, it is like I owe him my life or something” (IDI #13, 21 years).

“He does anything he wants to do, so he can end up beating you at some point because we are just vulnerable, so that is how it is” (IDI #9, 22 years).

According to the participants, blessers were said to have more power than blessees, as they have more money and are much older. These men engage in sexual relationships with many young women as they want to prove their manhood, and know that it will be easier to control these women who are young and desperate. These young women get into these relationships because of the desire for money. While some know what action to take if they see that they are being controlled or abused, they prefer to tolerate whatever these blessers do to them as they are benefiting from them. In addition, they are more willing to accept their behaviours because they do not want to jeopardise their position.

4.5.3 Stressful relationships

The study revealed that students engaged in these relationships are often stressed or depressed, as they are in these relationships for money and material benefits and not for love. The participant’s perception about how blessees really feels by being engaged in these relationships is presented below.

“They can be excited about having such huge amounts of money, however they should bear in mind that they are paying for it by giving sex in return. So as you always having to sleep with different people, there is always something that you will lose slowly as time goes by. You end up waking one day not knowing yourself” (IDI #7, 20 years).

A student involved said:

“Do I like it, do I not like it? It does not matter, because at the end of the day I have to pay him for paying me you know, so you lose yourself in the process and you can see people having depression. Okay, we may walk around in campus all beautiful and you think we are having a life, not knowing what goes on behind closed doors when I am alone you know” (IDI #6, 21 years).

The information provided above explains that while the students involved in these relationships appear to be living a great life, they are not always happy with what they are doing, because they are paying with their bodies. They have to have sex with men they do not love. As much as the agreements are created by two partners, this does not mean they are both happy with the arrangement. The students who engaged in these relationships are the ones who face many issues, as their involvement is not something they like to do or are proud of doing. One participant stated that their bodies are being used, that they lose who they are, and that people will not know what happens behind closed doors. This suggests that they do not want other people to know what happens as they are scared of being judged. These young women may be depressed at some point because doing something they do not like is stressful, which becomes worse if they experience abuse in that relationship.

4.6 Changing behaviours

The study observed some suggestions that may prevent young women from engaging in blesser-blessee relationships, and includes helping young women to be aware of the risk factors associated with blesser-blessee relationships. For those who are already involved, they need to be responsible and take care good care of their health. The participants recommended various solutions.

4.6.1 Provision of information

The majority of respondents recommended that young women need to be provided with information about these relationships. They suggested that parents and society should educate young women about these relationships and their implications.

“I think the only thing that can really help is for the ones that have been involved with blessers to come out and speak about their experiences, so that someone else who has thoughts of engaging with a blesser can think twice. Just maybe look for another way, or they just leave it instead of endangering their lives” (IDI #1, 19 years).

A student involved said:

“I know our parents are very afraid, they do not know how to speak to their children, like especially about sexual stuff you know, because it starts from there, you know. So if our parents should talk to us about these things and give us more tips and advice, something like that” (IDI #9, 22 years).

“I think like instead of saying like it is wrong, it should not be done and stuff, I think we should come up with things, like when you do it be aware of everything that is going to happen” (FFG #3, 19 years).

A student involved said:

“So what needs to be done is to educate the young girls, or rather the students, about the consequences of considering entering into the blesser-blessee relationship” (IDI #5, 23 years).

They indicated that it will be good that information about these relationships is provided by those who had been involved, as they will provide all the detail of what really happens within these relationships. Once people know the truth about what is happening, they will choose for themselves to either engage in such relationships or find alternatives, so that if they choose to engage in such relationships, they will know what to expect and how to protect themselves. Another indicated that parents are scared to talk to their children about sex. They advise that parents need to talk to their children about sexual matters. They should tell them about the diseases that young women get when they engage in sexual relationships and educate them

about the methods they can use to protect themselves from sexual diseases once they are sexually active.

4.6.2 Parental love and support

The participants recommended parental love and support as one of the solutions that will help to prevent young women from engaging in blesser-blessee relationships.

“Firstly, it should start at home you know, that money alone is not all the support that we need, but knowing that your family is there for you, they are trying hard enough, that is enough on its own. Parents and family members need to be there for students, because we are in our 20s and confused and stuff, so the support that you will get from home is enough” (IDP #11, 20 years).

“Parents should give their children love and have a strong relationship with them, that is what is most important” (IDI #4, 19 years).

“Supporting your child does not mean supporting him or her financially, it can be spiritually, talk to your child, engage with your child, tell her what she is going to experience in varsity, assist her in any way you can, not because of monetary reasons or whatever but yes, that is what parents should do. A poor background does not mean you should resort to blesser-blesee situations, that is not the case, so I think parents should do that “(IDI #14, 20 years).

One participant explained that students in their 20s are still young and confused, meaning that they need more support from their parents, which does not only have to be in the form of money. It is therefore important for parents to communicate with their children and to have a strong relationship with them, as that will enable their children to feel free to share and ask them things that they do not understand. They also emphasized the importance of telling their children what they will experience at university, as being informed will make it easier for them to make good choices.

4.6.4 Young women should empower themselves

The study has revealed some of the things that women should do to empower themselves, as presented below. There was a feeling that women need to be independent and self-reliant. They do not have to depend on men to be successful.

“Those young people who are still growing up, they should not rely on males, they should not think that women do not know how to be independent, how to stand up on their own, how to do things that men are able to do as much as they can have money, also women can do that.” (FFG #1, 19 years).

“If you want to be pretty or do your hair, it does not have to be that I have to go to a guy just to sleep with him so that he will give money to do my hair” (FFG #1, 19 years).

“There are other ways of making it in life, there are jobs, even little jobs that you can do that will raise yourself spiritually, and that will enable you to grow without being in these relationships, because in as much we can get in these relationships, we are damaging ourselves inside” (IDI #7, 20 years).

A student involved said:

“Get a part time job and stuff, check all other alternatives before choosing this lifestyle and talk to people, but I would not recommend anyone to engage in such relationships” (IDI #13, 21 years).

The participants explain that young women need to know that it is also possible for a woman to make money without engaging in such relationships. They stated that there are many alternatives that students can do that will be useful to them. This is inclusive of finding a part-time job or talking to people if they need help.

4.6.5 Young women awareness programmes

The participants recommended implementing awareness programmes for young women, as indicated below.

“The university should play a part on behalf of our parents, since they are still at home, by developing programmes that may assist students, making them aware, it is not like they are not aware but talk about it more often” (IDI #14, 20 years).

A student involved said:

“There should be more programs that can help young women who are vulnerable, like women empowerment, but now it should focus on young girls, adolescence young woman who are still new at university” (IDI #6, 22 years).

The students suggested implementing awareness programmes for young women, as they are the ones most at risk because their minds are not mature enough to make good decisions. As many students who study in universities are away from home, they are experiencing a new way of living alone in university residences and others in nearby communes. Some students are taking advantage of this by doing whatever they like, knowing that their parents will not know. A participant recommended that the university should play a part on behalf of the parents by developing programs that will assist the students to be aware of the challenges they may face. One participant recommended that awareness programs need to be implemented for young women, particularly first year students, as they are new to the university environment. Awareness programs should play the part of reminding students about the important things they need to know in that environment so that they will know how to avoid situations or protect themselves.

While the university provides useful services for students, such as clinics and HIV and AIDS programme, many students are afraid to use them while others are lazy. The fact that participants recommended implementing awareness programs indicates that these students are not aware that the university already has such helpful services for students. Other strategies are needed to make information easily accessible to students, such as staff from these services making monthly visit to every university residence or implementing other awareness programmes that will be student friendly.

4.7 Summary

This chapter presented four major findings, the first being the meaning of blesser-blessee relationship. The information provided by the participants about blesser-blessee relationships is based on their perceptions, and in a few cases on own experiences. The study revealed that blesser-blessee relationships are relationships motivated by the exchange of sex for money and material benefits. The reason why students get involved in these relationships is because they lack enough money to meet their needs and wants. In this study, participants note a larger age differences between partners. Women engage in these relationships for the purpose of obtaining material benefits. The men they target are often rich and much older than the university students. The interviews suggest that there is absence of love in these relationships, partners only engage in these relationships to get benefits from each other, sex for a blesser and money for a blessee. As there is absence of love in blesser-blessee relationships, the duration is shorter than normal relationships, once a blesser get what he wants, he ignores or leaves the current blessee and looks for another one. Also, as it was found that blesser normally engage with multiple blessees, they sometimes fail to attend or support all of them the same, so once the support is not provided anymore, the relationship dies. Factors that promote these relationships were revealed in this study. As students come from different backgrounds, survival needs have been one of the main factors that has pushed some of the students to engage in these relationships. The study found that the high cost of tuition and limited bursaries put a great deal of pressure on students. In addition, the exorbitant costs of accommodation and other educational needs were additional factor that pushed students to engage in these relationships. Peer pressure and pressure from social networks to enjoy a luxurious lifestyle were the last factors that the study revealed. As these relationships involve sex in exchange for money, the study revealed the risk factors associated with blesser-blessee relationships. Blesser were found to have more power than the blessees and the reason for this results from them having more money. The power has enabled blesser to exploit these young women as they know that they are desperate. They were found to be controlling and violating these young women and as a result their risk of HIV or STI were heightened. The study has found possible solutions that will be helpful to both those engage and not, which include information provision by government, parents and the university to young women. Those who are already involved can know how to protect themselves and those who are not can know the other alternatives of making money and or protecting themselves.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

In sub-Saharan Africa, the majority of people are facing high levels of poverty and inequality and as a result, this has caused young women to engage in sexual relationships with rich, older men to get money (Choudhry et al., 2014, Dunkle, 2004, Stoebenau et al., 2016). However, studies suggest that there are other reasons for these types of relationships. The aim of this study was to understand the blesser-blessee relationship from the perspective of first-year university students. This study attempts to explain the factors that lead female students to engage in blesser-blessee relationships.

5.2 Discussion

The study has found that there are a number of reasons as to why students engage in blesser-blessee relationships. Often blesser are men that are rich and older and provide material benefits in exchange for sex. The blessees are usually young women who are not financially stable and therefore engage in sexual intercourse with blesser for material gain. The relationships are based on the exchange of sex for money and other material benefits. The desire for money and material benefits have motivated students to engage in these relationships. The rising cost of tuition, accommodation and peer pressure has encouraged students to engage in blesser-blessee relationships. However, in order to know the implications of blesser-blessee relationships, it was vital to first understand the factors promoting these relationships. First-year male and female students were interviewed in this study. Some male participants were confused about how these relationships are different from sex work. However, the majority of participants stated that these relationships are different because within blesser-blessee relationships, partners get the chance of knowing each other whereas sex workers are involved with different men and do not get to know them.

Blesser-blessee relationships are a form of transactional sex since there is an exchange of sex for money and other material benefits. Transactional sex is defined as a non-marital and non-commercial sexual relationship where sex is exchanged for money and material benefits (Stoebenau et al., 2016, Wamoyi et al., 2016). Transactional sex occurs between two partners who have economic differences (Kassa et al., 2018, Ranganathan et al., 2017, Stoebenau et al., 2016). Transactional sex can be practiced by partners of the same group but in most cases, there is an age difference of about 5 to 10 years between partners (UNAIDS, 2018, Kaute-Defo, 2004). The findings for this study show age-disparities between partners and the blessees are often younger than their partners (blessers).

Within blesser-blessee relationships, partners become involved with each other because there are benefits associated within these relationships. The benefits that the blessees receive include monetary and material benefits and blessers receive sexual pleasure benefits. According to the participants, there are age differences between partners, with the age gap usually be 10 years or more. Blessers are the one who are said to be older than their partners (blessees). The study found that there is absence of love in blesser-blessee relationships, participants mentioned that partners become involved with each other not because they have both developed feelings, they only engage in these relations because of money and material benefits for the blessee and sex for the blesser. However, participants have suggested that one partner may develop feelings for another partner. Generally, blessees would develop feelings for their blessers. Participants suggested that these relationships would last for a short period of time because blessers tend ignore their blessees once they have gotten what they want from them. However, this is not surprising, as in most cases partners do not love each other and such behaviour is not unexpected. Mgwaba and Maharaj (2018) stated that informal or casual relationships normally last for a short period of time.

Peer pressure was the main factor for students to engage in these relationships. The majority of respondents stated that students engage in these relationships because of the pressure they get from their peers. Peer pressure is socially constructed and individuals within society behave and act in certain ways which normalizes and sustains certain behaviours. As a result, people are then encouraged to act in the same way as their peers. First-year students are new to the university environment and they are easily influenced by other students. They see their

peers on campus flourishing and living an expensive lifestyle and they desire to have the same lifestyle. Many students who are living such a lifestyle are involved in blesser-blessee relationships whereas others come from families that are financially stable. The majority of participants reported that students on campus get pressure from their peers who wear branded clothing, own the latest digital technologies, wear expensive hair extensions and go to fancy clubs and restaurants. Many students want to experience this however, this may not be financially possible as some students get an allowance from their parents and others receive an allowance from NSFAS (financial assistance from the government). Such allowances do not permit the student to have such an expensive lifestyle therefore, students resort to blesser-blessee relationships in order to attain a higher standard of living. Studies have shown that in sub-Saharan Africa, peer pressure has been the main motivating factor for young women who engage in transactional sex, as they want to enjoy the same standards as their peers (Chatterji et al., 2005, Moore et al., 2007, Kolbe, 2015). Logie (2017) pointed out that, in most cases, young people consider friendship as something important and that is why they get influenced easily by those close to them.

Poverty is a major challenge in SSA and is a factor that is fuelling transactional sex (Tade and Adekoya, 2012). In this study, poverty was another factor that has influenced students to engage in blesser-blessee relationships. Many studies found that young women and men who are vulnerable in SSA are engaged in transactional sex (Biddlecom, 2007, Mabala, 2006, Padian et al., 2011). This has resulted in many young women entering sexual relationships with older rich men in order to escape poverty and meet their basic needs.

The cost of tuition fees has been another factor promoting these relationships in this study. First-year students are faced with more issues because they are new to the university environment and they do not have the same information as existing students. Not every university student receives financial assistance from the government as many do not qualify. Others are put on the waiting list and there are some students that have no knowledge of how to apply for such funding. As a result, these students end up engaging in these relationships because they find this is an easy way of addressing their problems. The study suggests that blesser play a role in providing these students with money and with this money they were able to pay for their tuition fees. Studies have found that the rising cost of tuition fees, limited

scholarship and sponsorships have caused students to engage in relationships with older rich partners to get financial assistance (Daly, 2017; Luke, 2005).

Thobejane et al. (2017) pointed out that blesser-blessee relationships in South Africa are perpetuated by social networks. People who use social networks normally expose their lavish lifestyles which usually places more pressure on female students. This is a lifestyle that is attractive to students but it is also a lifestyle that many students cannot afford. The study has revealed that some students end up engaging in these relationships because they do not have the means to afford such a lavish lifestyle, and they know that once they are engaged with these blessers, they will be provided with money. It has been a norm in South Africa that men are responsible for being the providers. Daniel and Logie (2017) pointed out that more young women have the mentality that when they are in a sexual relationship their partner should provide for them. That is why more young women engage in relationships with older rich men because they want to be financially supported by them since those of a similar age do not have money, are still at university or unemployed.

The study has also found that there are risk factors associated with blesser-blessee relationships. The major risk factor found in this study is that women who are engaged in relationships with blessers have a high risk of being infected with HIV/STIs. Blessers find it so easy to manipulate and control students because they know that they are financially desperate. Students find it difficult to practice safe sex with their blessers because they are obliged to follow the requests of their blessers. Others are afraid that these men will leave them and find new blessees. The study has found that the majority of blessers are controlling and as a result, the blessees are scared to communicate with them. Studies have found that violence in transactional sex occurs when vulnerable women do not provide sex to their partners (Kuate-Defo, 2004, Kristin and Rachel, 2007), they also get raped by their partners when they refuse to have unprotected sex with them (Atwood et al., 2011, Dunkle et al., 2004).

Most blessers are likely to have multiple sexual partners. One of the participants involved in this type of relationship stated that blessers engage in relationships with many partners and as

a result, they do not spend much time with each partner. A study conducted in KwaZulu-Natal suggested that it is acceptable for men have multiple sexual partners. This was practiced as a sign of manhood (Varga, cited by Nshindano and Maharaj, 2008). This practice was constructed within the African society and has continued to be a norm among African men. With such behaviour, these men are likely to have STIs or HIV. Nshindano and Maharaj (2008) suggests that individuals with concurrent sexual relationships are at high risk of contracting STIs. A study by Wamoyi et al. (2016) shows an increase of about 50% HIV risk among women engaged in transactional sex. Studies reveal that young women who engage in sexual intercourse at earlier ages with older men are more likely to be at risk of contracting HIV because these relationships do not last long and as a result women end up changing partners more frequently (Hindin and Fatusi, 2009, Kalmuss et al., 2003, Zaba et al., 2009). The participants also reveal that some students do engage in relationships with multiple blessers because they want each blesser to play a different role, and at the same time they want to be loved and be given time and attention. Usually their main boyfriends were the ones that were playing that part.

Another issue evident in this study is that some students who are involved in these relationships experience poor academic performance. The participants stated that even if the students have assignments to do or a test to study for, they always feel the need to put their blessers needs first because of the benefits they receive. Such behaviours contributes towards students performing poorly in university and as a result, the career of these students may be disrupted because of their failure to perform well with regards to their education. A study conducted by Misra and McKean (2000) found that students who are involved in transactional sex are usually exploited by their partners because they have to respond to the demands of their partners. Many of the women engage in these relationships because they are desperate. They do not enjoy or feel any pride in what they are doing. Aspects of control, violation, and abuse in these relationships places stress and pressure on students and this also impacts negatively on their academic performance (Misra and McKean, 2000). Partner violence against women is socially constructed and it is prevalent in patriarchal societies, and results from unequal power relations that allows men greater dominance over women (Jewkes, 2002). In this study it is rooted from unequal economic relations between partners. Blessers have more money than their partners, they are more powerful than their partners. The blessers use their power to abuse these young women as they know that most of them are

vulnerable. Partner violence against women is socially constructed and it is prevalent in patriarchal societies. (Jewkes, 2002). In this study it is rooted from unequal economic relations between partners. The study found that as much as those who engage in such relationship are provided with the money and any other luxurious things they want but because of the stigma and all the issues mentioned above including violence and health problems, such as relationships ended up being stressful to those involved in these relations.

The information provided above explains that while the students involved in these relationships appear to be living a great life, they are not always happy with what they are doing, because they are paying with their bodies. They have to have sex with men they do not love. As much as the agreements are created by two partners, this does not mean they are both happy with the arrangement. The students who engaged in these relationships are the ones who face many issues, as their involvement is not something they like to do or are proud of doing. One participant stated that their bodies are being used, that they lose who they are, and that people will not know what happens behind closed doors. This suggests that they do not want other people to know what happens as they are scared of being judged. These young women may be depressed at some point because doing something they do not like is stressful, which becomes worse if they experience abuse in that relationship.

5.3 Recommendations

There is limited communication between parents and children. It has become a norm for Black parents not to discuss sex-related topics because of cultural and traditional African perspectives and norms. Reports from this study suggests that parents still find it difficult to discuss issues related to sex with their children. Schools do provide knowledge about sexuality however, it is important for parents to communicate openly with their children so that young adults are empowered to make better choices.

A study by Tade and Adekoya (2012) found that some young women are engaged in transactional sex because of the pressure they get from their parents. Wamoyi and Wight (2014) noted that some young women are motivated to engage in such relations due to the

lack of their parents' love as they feel that they do not care about the needs of their children. The study has recommended that parents should love and support their children. They should show love to their children in different ways. If parents can be able to give such support to their children, they will feel free to share and discuss any issue with their parents.

Family members and friends have a big role to play in influencing each other. Sisters, cousins, mothers and friends talk about how men should treat and provide for their women. As cultural norms did not allow women to work nor to go to school, men were then given the role to support their women financially. The majority of women have continued to practice this behaviour currently because they are influenced by the previous generation. Studies have shown that men in society are regarded as providers to their partners and women as financial and material receivers (Morrell et al., 2012; Stark, 2013; Swidler and Watkins, 2007). Also, Jewkes and Morrell (2012) show similar results about how most African women believe that when they are in relationships they should be treated well and be provided with money by their partners.

The study recommends that students should empower themselves and they should stop relying on men and exercise their dependence. Parents should play a part in encouraging their girl children not to rely on men to provide for them and avoid praising men as providers. Students need to work hard to attain their goals. In order for them to get bursaries they need to study hard so that they can achieve good results and qualify for bursaries or scholarships that will pay their tuition fees, accommodation, meals and stationery. It is also recommended that students should always make good choices when choosing friends because friends play a big role in influencing each other. As more Black parents are still faced with the issue of being unemployed, the government should create more jobs so that parents will be able to support their children in university.

As many students are living far away from their homes, and they live there without any supervision from their parents. As a result, some take advantage of this opportunity to engage in risky behaviours because they know that their parents will not find out. The study has recommended that the university develop programmes that will help students understand

these relationships so that they will know the consequences and act more responsibly. Harmful gender-related practices and sociocultural norms that spread risk behaviours should be addressed. UNAIDS (2018) stated that HIV programmes should be more visible in places where transactional sex is practiced and in places where the level of HIV is high.

Some of the promoting factors for women to engage with blessers may be new but the practice of adolescent and young women engaging in sexual relationships with older men is not new in South Africa. Therefore, it is recommended that all women be told about how to get help when one is experiencing violence, when one is being rape or forced into unsafe sex and to be educated about the prevention treatment such as PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) and PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis). The provision of knowledge that many are lacking will be very helpful especially to those who are already involved and to those who wish to engage in blesser-blessee relationship because they will be able to know how to protect themselves from violence, HIV and other sexual and reproductive health problems. The issue of lack of funding agencies that protect women against violence (Moyo and Brobbey, 2017), agencies that train and educate women on how to seek for help when they are raped or beaten by their partners (Edberg et al., 2017), and those that will empower women economically has been the reasons why young women are found engaging in relationships with older men and also why there is a continuation of violence among women in South Africa. To address this, all stakeholders including government, organisations, private sectors and society as a whole need to work together in finding new strategies that will deal with violence, sexual and reproductive health problems and other issues facing women in South Africa.

5.4 Conclusion

This study was about understanding blesser-blessee relationships from the perspectives of students at the UKZN, Howard College. The factors that encouraged students to engage in these relationships include poverty, rising cost of tuition fees and peer pressure. The majority of students engaged in these relationships because of the desire for material benefits such as expensive hair, phones, branded clothing, etc. and others engaged because they wanted to meet their survival needs. Blessers were found to be violent, powerful and abusive to their partners. Participants stated that it is unlikely for blessers to use a condom during sex with

students especially after spending lots of money on them. Students involved in these types of relationships are at risk of HIV or STIs infection. The study revealed that these men are more likely to engage in sexual relationships with multiple partners. The students felt that as they are given so much by these blessers that they need to meet the demands of these blessers. They feared that if they do not do what is expected, the blessers will leave them and find other partners. This is threatening as these students are dependent on these men.

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Appendix 1: Individual Interview Guide

Researcher: Nompumelelo Doyisa

Research topic: Blesser-Blessee Relationships: Perspectives and experiences of students at Howard College, University of KwaZulu-Natal

The understanding of Blesser-blessee relationships

1. What do you understand about the blesser-blessee phenomenon?
2. When did you first hear about blesser-blessee relationships?
3. Do you know what causes students to engage in blesser-blessee relationships?
4. Do you know what causes Black students or young women to become more involved in blesser-blessee relationships than other races?
5. What is the difference between a blessee and a prostitute?

Benefits (Financial and material/resources)

6. What do students or young women gain from engaging in blesser-blessee relationships?

Challenges (Health, power and unfaithful)

7. What are the challenges or risk factors found in blesser-blessee relationships?
8. Why students or young women faces violence in blesser-blessee relationships?
9. What causes students or young women engaged in blesser-blessee relationships have multiple partners or exchange partners more often?
10. What do you think drives rich older men (blesser) to engage in sexual relationships with young women?
11. Why does the majority of people are against with the behaviour of young women engaging in sexual relationships with rich older men (blesser)?
12. Why does young women involve in blesser-blessee relationships keep these relationships as a secret?

Solution

13. What role does the society needs to play regarding this behavior about blesser-blessee relationships?

14. What other views or advice would you like to contribute regarding blessing-blessee relationships?

Appendix 2: Focus Group Interview Guide

Researcher: Nompumelelo Doyisa

Research topic: Blesser-Blessee Relationships: Perspectives and experiences of students at Howard College, University of KwaZulu-Natal

What is blesser-blessee relationships?

Why does students engage in blesser-blessee relationships?

What are the risk health factors or gender imbalances found within these relationships?

Why does young women involve in these relationship have multiple partners?

What are your views about blesser-blessee relationships?

Appendix 3: Gatekeepers Letter



27 July 2018

Ms Nompumelelo Prudence Doyisa (SN 214537218)
School of Built Environment and Development Studies
College of Humanities
Howard College Campus
UKZN
Email: 214537218@stu.ukzn.ac.za maharajp7@ukzn.ac.za

Dear Ms Doyisa

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), towards your postgraduate degree, provided Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note the title of your research project is:

"Blessed-Blessee Relationships: Perspectives and experiences of students at Howard College, University of KwaZulu-Natal".

It is noted that you will be constituting your sample by conducting semi-structured interviews, and/or focus groups with first year male and female students on the Howard College campus.

Please ensure that the following appears on your notice/questionnaire:

- Ethical clearance number;
- Research title and details of the research, the researcher and the supervisor;
- Consent form is attached to the notice/questionnaire and to be signed by user before he/she fills in questionnaire;
- gatekeepers approval by the Registrar.

You are not authorized to contact staff and students using 'Microsoft Outlook' address book. Identity numbers and email addresses of individuals are not a matter of public record and are protected according to Section 14 of the South African Constitution, as well as the Protection of Public Information Act. For the release of such information over to yourself for research purposes, the University of KwaZulu-Natal will need express consent from the relevant data subjects. Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours sincerely



**MR S S MOKOENA
REGISTRAR**

Office of the Registrar

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 8005/2206 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 7824/2204 Email: registrar@ukzn.ac.za

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Appendix 4: Ethical Clearance Approval



13 August 2018

Ms Nompumelelo P Doyisa 214537218
School of Built Environment and Development Studies
Howard College Campus

Dear Ms Doyisa

Reference number: HSS/0481/018M

Project title: Blesser-Blessee Relationships: Perspectives and experiences of students at Howard College, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Full Approval – Full Committee Reviewed Application

With regards to your response received 02 August 2018 to our letter of 16 May 2018, the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted FULL APPROVAL.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Prof S Singh (Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Professor Pranitha Maharaj
cc Academic Leader Research: Prof Oliver Mtapuri
cc School Administrator: Ms Angeline Msomi

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
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Appendix 5: Informed Consent Form

My name is Nompumelelo Doyisa a Master of Population Studies student from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Howard Campus, from the School of Built Environment and Development Studies

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research about blesser-blessee relationships: perspectives and experience of university students. The aim and purpose of this research is to understand the new phenomenon of blesser-blessee relationships and the effects it has on students. The study is expected to enroll 15 individual participants and two focus groups at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. It will involve the following procedures: the study will focus on individual interviews and focus group interviews, both female (both those who are involved in blesser-blessee relationships and those who are not involved but who knows about these relationships or who have close friends who are involved in these relationships) and male students who are 18 years and older. The duration of your participation if you choose to enroll and remain in the study is expected to be an hour or less.

The study may involve the following risks and/or discomforts: Participants, especially those involved, may experience emotional feelings for example, if they have once faced gender violence or any types of abuse by their partners. We hope that the study will create the following benefits: University students will know that engaging in blesser-blessee relationships is dangerous because it may lead to students being at risk of HIV and STI infections or being at risk of any kind of abused or control by their partners. The researcher must disclose in full any appropriate alternative procedures and treatment etc. that may serve as possible alternate options to study participation.

If the participant will feel discomfort or show emotional feelings, the researcher will tell the participant that he/she is allowed to withdraw at any time. If students experience any stress they will be referred to the campus health clinic for counselling.

The information you provide will only be used for the purpose of this study and will be treated anonymously and confidentially. If you should agree to participate in in-depth interviews, you will be requested to maintain confidentiality of what is discussed. Your participation is voluntary, and the students are free to withdraw at any stage for any reason. The decision not to participate will not result in any form of disadvantage to you and will not incur penalty.

The researcher will make sure that the information collected (voice recordings) is stored in a secure place where access requires security codes. The researcher's laptop will also have security codes and the files containing information from participants will be hidden in a safe folder. The good thing about voice recording is that it captures an accurate report. The researcher wants to use both methods because she does not want to see herself in a position where information will be missing, however, the goal is basically to protect the data that will be collected. The researcher will also ensure that there will be no collection of identification information of the participants (name, surname, address and email address). It will be better to use, for example, participant A, participant B...

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number - HSS/0481/018M).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher Nompumelelo Doyisa at Tower UKZN residence Room E303, cellphone Number: 078 300 1646, Email Address: 214537218@stu.ukzn.ac.za or zamabika1@gmail.com or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private

Bag

X

54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

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CONSENT (Edit as required)

I have been informed about the study entitled Blesser-Blessee Relationships: Perspectives and experiences of students at Howard College, University of KwaZulu-Natal by Nompumelelo Prudence Doyisa

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study that the information will help students to know the negative result of engaging in blesser-blessee relationship.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

I have been informed about any available compensation or medical treatment if injury occurs to me as a result of study-related procedures.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at 214537218@stu.ukzn.ac.za or call 078 300 1646.

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

(Where applicable)