



The Motivations of Youth Involvement in Transactional Sexual Relationship in a South African University

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ABSTRACT

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The phenomenon of transactional sexual relationship among youth in sub-Saharan Africa especially at Universities in South Africa is becoming rampant these days. What really lure youth into engaging themselves in this act needed to be identified. However, not many researches have been undertaken on this issue, especially regarding the perceptions of youths about this phenomenon. Thus this research provided some preliminary findings on the factors that motivate youth to engage in transactional sexual relationship at the University of Zululand. Proportionate stratified sampling where respondents were chosen from each of the four faculties at the University of Zululand to reflect all the faculties at the University was used. This was complemented by the use of direct observation method. Findings: that youth engage in Transactional sexual relationship because they were motivated by expensive gifts (jewelries, cell phones, laptops, hairdos etc), peer pressure, money, modernization, poverty, and parental poverty.

KEYWORDS:

Motivation, relationship, transactional sex, Youth.

INTRODUCTION

Transactional sexual relationship is defined as the exchange of sex for money, gifts, services or other favours (best known to the partners involved) (Amo-Adjei et al., 2014; Masvawure, 2010; Poulin, 2007; Hunter, 2002). It is known as “sugar daddy” relationships in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is also refers to sexual relationships between older (usually richer male) partners and younger (usually socially and/or economically lower status female) partners, including adolescents popularly known as sweet sixteen (Poulin, 2007; Luke, 2005). Samara (2010) describes it as ‘Something for something love’ while Scott et al., (2014) describe it as “Friends with benefits relationships”.

Transactional sex has been described between different types of partners (homosexuals, bisexuals, lesbians, and heterosexual). Transactional sex relationships are characterized by older men involving in a sexual relationship with young women that are less advantaged financially or materially. In these relationships there is often an exchange of gifts such as clothing, jewelries, fine hairdo, wrist watch,

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cell phone, tablet etc. and support for entertainment and food for sexual relations (Samara, 2010). These older men are often, but not always, in positions of power over the women. Transactional sex has also been described in relationships among youth of equal or near equal age (Chatterji et al., 2004; Kaufman and Stavrou, 2004). In relationships among youth, transactional sex has been described often in the context of casual partnerships (Kaufman and Stavrou, 2004; Samara 2010); exchange of gifts and money has also been described as a dynamic of regular partnerships (Dunkle et al., 2007; Jewkes et al., 2009; Maganja et al., 2007)

Luke (2005) argues that economic change, peer, financial and family pressure create a power imbalance within a relationship and that gift giving of any kind within a relationship directly affects young women’s ability to negotiate sex. Literatures indicate that condom use is one crucial aspect of HIV prevention in which young women have limited, or no control over; and that most young women are obliged to have sex with men who offer them gifts and are less likely to advocate condom use with these partners (Hallman, 2004; Luke & Kurz, 2002). The more gifts are given, the weaker the young women feel in terms of being able to abstain from sexual interactions. Young women begin to feel that the men want something in return for their gifts and hence feel obliged to sleep with them (Strebel et al., 2013).

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The motivations for young women participating in transactional sexual relationships are numerous and interlinked. In a study in Tanzania, young women described themselves as lucky to have been created women since they could exploit their sexuality for pleasure and material benefits, and described men as stupid to pay for goods (vaginas) they could not take away (Amo-Adjei et al., 2014). Hunter (2002) stated that older partners in transactional sexual relationships have been described as old rich fools, only good for financial exploitation. Transactional sex can go beyond survival, with young women attempting to construct identities that will enable them fit better into affluent society. Young female university students may become involved in transactional sex with the aim of achieving “flashy lifestyles” manifested in hairdos, stylish clothing, western foods (e.g. pizza and burgers), cell phones, lap tops and other expensive gifts (Amo-Adjei et al., 2014).

There are, however, varied perceptions about what the exchange of gifts, in whatever form, connotes in transactional sexual relationships. For instance, while men may perceive gifts as baits, women may choose to consider them as tokens of love and as a sign that a relationship is progressing (Masvawure, 2010). Around the world, university campuses are constructed as spaces of sexual exploration (Adam and Mutong, 2007; Seloilwe, 2005). Sexuality is part of students’ experiences in school manifested in personal friendships, relationships and social interaction. A number of studies at university campuses (Scott *et al.*, 2014 ;Amo-Adjei et al., 2014; Masvawure, 2010; Gukurume, 2011) have further illustrated the salience of transactional sexual relationships for the purposes of status and material gain (including access to clothes, cell phones, driving in smart cars, wearing fashionable shoes, jewelries, and so on). Few studies have documented the experience and motivation of young men and women who engage in transactional sexual relationships.

In a world of facebook, Twitter, reality show, Whatsapp and Hollywood films, the millennial generation is faced with an ever-growing sense of social comparison, especially when exploring their attractiveness and sexuality and wanting to compare themselves with their peers and media celebrities and live a high standard of living beyond their means on a continuous basis. Youth love affluence and, if their parent or sponsors can’t afford their ever growing demands/wants, they tend to look elsewhere to meet these growing demands/wants, by engaging in transactional sexual relationships.

The sexual behaviour of young people has long been of great concern, finding reasons and various factors that motivate youths into engaging in transactional sexual relationship in the University will help to combat depression, anxiety, disorders, alcohol use, relationship difficulties, and stress experienced by these youths, and to develop educational programmes and intervention strategies that will address

health problems and every other side effects linked to transactional sexual relationship (Pilcher, 2005).

The consumerist nature of young women, the need to secure good jobs or to acquire material benefits of various kinds ranges from basic needs to obtaining expensive fashion accessories (e.g. clothes, hairdo, jewelries, cellular phones), prestigious outings (e.g. invitations to dine at restaurants and attend cinemas), may drive young women to engage in transactional sexual relationship which will eventually expose them to HIV and AIDs infection. This study looked out for the motivation of youth engagement in transactional sexual relationship such as; what it is that prompts people to engage in this form of relationship in the first place, and what motivates the continuation of a transactional sexual relationship over time.

METHODOLOGY

In choosing the respondents in the study, stratified sampling was used from the targeted population. Stratified sampling was undertaken to allow a greater probability of each student in the various faculties a chance of participating in the study. Stratified sampling was used where the researcher divided the whole university students into the existing four faculties (Faculty of Art, Faculty of Science and Agriculture, Faculty of Education and Faculty of commerce, Administration and Law) in the University and selected respondents from each faculty. Proportionate stratified sampling, where forty respondents were selected randomly from each faculty, summing it up to one hundred and sixty respondents as a whole. Structured Questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire used in this study was in the English language since it is a University environment and it took around 20 minutes to fill in. There were five different sections in the questionnaire. The first is the demographic information which contains six questions. The next section addresses the factors that motivate youth to engage in transactional sexual relationship and contains fourteen (14) questions. The last section deals with youth general perception on transactional sexual relationship and contains nine (9) questions while the last part contains three open ended questions on transactional sexual relationships.

Ethical approval was granted by the Institutional Research Review Committee at the University of Zululand KwaDlangezwa Campus. The students were approached in classrooms and in student dormitories at the University. The students who agreed to participate in the survey were required to sign a consent form on the front page of the questionnaire that also included the explanation and justification of the survey.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

One of the theoretical frameworks used in the study is social exchange theory

SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

Social exchange theory is all about intrinsic rewards (Blau, 1964), and it is among the conceptual paradigms useful for understanding the transactional sexual relationship phenomenon. However, social exchange theory entails unspecified obligations, and, as the benefits do not have an exact price in terms of a single quantitative medium of exchange, the nature of the return cannot be bargained (Bock and Kim 2002). Social exchange theory proposes that social behavior is the result of an exchange process. It may be the best way to understand effort–reward relationships and the sense of fairness (Tsai and Cheng 2012).

Can you think of a person that used to be your close friend but who you cannot see any longer? How many persons have left your life, even though they were at some point very close and important to you? It is a reality of life that not all friendships or romances last forever. Why does one stay connected to some person but not to others? Social exchange theory suggests that the relationships one chooses to create and maintain are the ones that maximize rewards and minimize costs. The basic idea here is that relationships that give the most benefits for the least amount of effort are the ones we value the most and are likely to keep long-term. Social exchange theory suggests that we feel positively or negatively about our relationships because of a combination of the following three factors:

1. Cost benefit analysis;
2. Comparison level;
3. Comparison level of alternatives.

COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Cost benefit analysis is a process for calculating the value of a relationship in terms of potential rewards and costs. The potential costs of a relationship are those things that are negative such as: being needy, irritating actions, irritating habits, etc. The rewards or benefits of a relationship are those things that are positive such as: desirable personality traits, affluence, physical attractiveness, etc. This cost benefit analysis is the economic model that can predict or keep track of our net rewards and the overall value of the relationship. For example, if a young lady is trying to decide between three potential suitors. She may decide to conduct a cost benefit analysis and determine the initial value of each potential relationship by subtracting the perceived costs from the perceived benefits. She chooses the suitor with the best results, she may dislike his age, his drinking habit, and quick temper but feels that the benefits [he is good-looking, rich, caring, and fun to be around] outweigh the costs.

COMPARISON LEVEL

According to social exchange theory, one uses a cost-benefit analysis at the beginning of a relationship to help decide whether to start it, and one also continues to use cost-benefit analysis as the relationship develops to decide to continue it.

The same is true of the other two components of social exchange theory: comparison level and comparison level of alternatives. Comparison level refers to the expectations for the relationship based on past experience. Basically, one compares the costs and benefits of the current relationship to the costs and benefits of past relationships. Some person has a high comparison level and expects a high number of rewards.

For instance, the young lady mentioned above may be used to having rewarding relationships with boyfriends that pay a lot of attention to her, give her gifts, and treat her well. She will expect her relationship with the new suitor to be similar. If it is not, one can predict that she may rethink her decision of dating him. On the other hand, another lady may have a much lower comparison level. One could predict that this second lady would be much happier in the same relationship because her expectations are not as high.

The major exchange concepts can be classified as falling into the following broad categories: Rewards, costs, and resources. Social exchange theory makes use of the concepts of rewards and costs [which were borrowed from behavioural psychology] and resources [which were borrowed from economics] when discussing the foundation of the interpersonal exchange. Rewards and resources refer to the benefits exchanged in social relationships. Rewards are defined as the pleasures, satisfactions, and gratifications a person enjoys from participating in a relationship. Resources, however, are any commodities, material or symbolic, that can be transmitted through interpersonal behaviour and give one person the capacity to reward another. The costs of social exchange relationships can involve punishments experienced, the energy invested in a relationship, or rewards foregone as a result of engaging in one behaviour or course of action rather than another.

COMPARISON LEVEL FOR ALTERNATIVES

According to social exchange theorists, satisfaction with a relationship alone does not determine the possibility that a relationship will continue. The concept of comparison level of alternatives, defined as the minimum level of outcome a person will accept from a relationship in light of available alternatives [explaining individuals' decisions to remain in or leave a relationship]. The comparison level of alternatives is an individual's assessment of the outcomes available in an alternative to the present relationship. When the outcomes available in an alternative relationship surpass those which are available in [the present] relationship, the probability increases that person will leave the relationship (Source: <http://family.jrank.org/pages/1595/Social-Exchange-Theory-Major-Contemporary-Concepts.html#ixzz3hl7g0cd9>).

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Analysis and interpretation of data means studying the questionnaires in order to determine inherent facts or

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meanings. Data obtained from the field was cleaned, coded, and key-punched into the computer and analyzed. For instance, the responses anticipated are “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “not sure”, “agree” and “strongly agree”. The researcher assigned numbers to responses to easily identify the response to each question. Number 1 to “strongly disagree” number 2 to “disagree” number 3 to “not sure” number 4 to “agree” and number 5 to “strongly agree”. The data collected was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequencies of responses were

tabulated and analyzed to determine frequencies, percentages and relationships within variables. The three open ended questions at the end of the questionnaire were tabulated under various themes and explained in the discussion.

RESULTS

The data collected was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The values of responses were tabulated and analyzed to determine frequencies, percentages and relationships within variables.

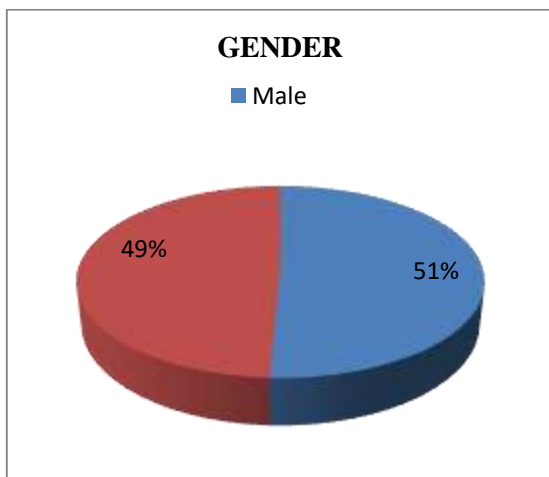


Figure 1: Gender Distribution of Participants

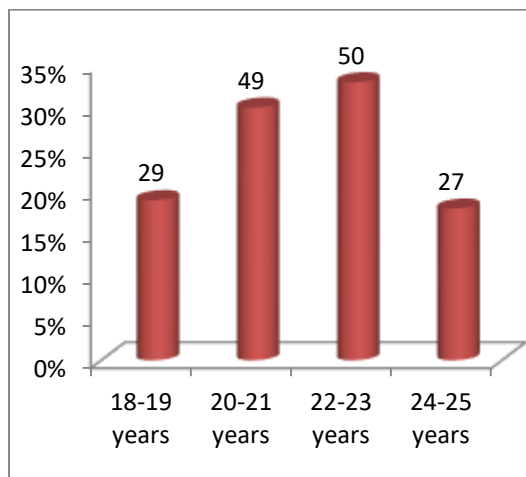


Figure 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Of the total sample of the respondents 51% were males, and 49% of the respondents were females as shown in figure 1. Figure 2 showed that majority 50(33%) of the respondents

were aged 22-23, while the least numbers of respondents, 27(18%) were aged 24-25.

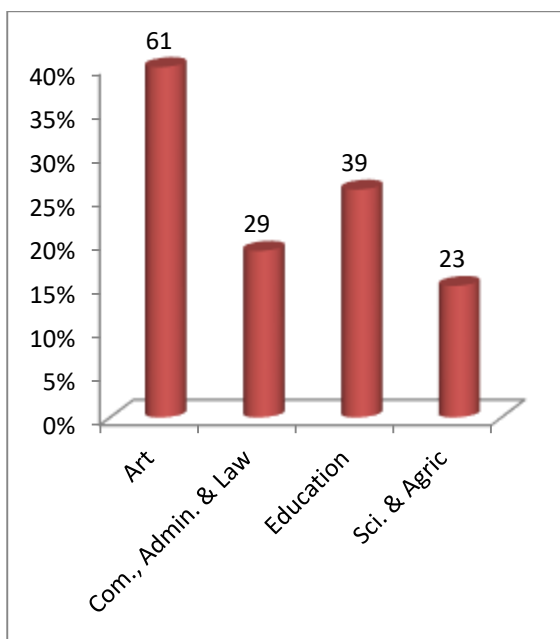


Figure 3: Faculty of Respondents

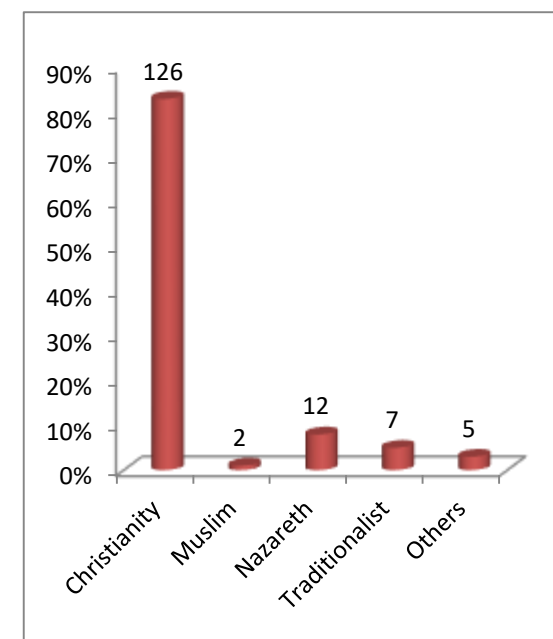


Figure 4: Religious Background of the Respondents.

Figure 3 showed that all the Faculties in the university were represented. Majority 40% of the respondents came from the Faculty of Arts while the least, 19% came from the Faculty

of Commerce, Administration and Law. In Figure 4 majority 83% of the respondents were Christians.

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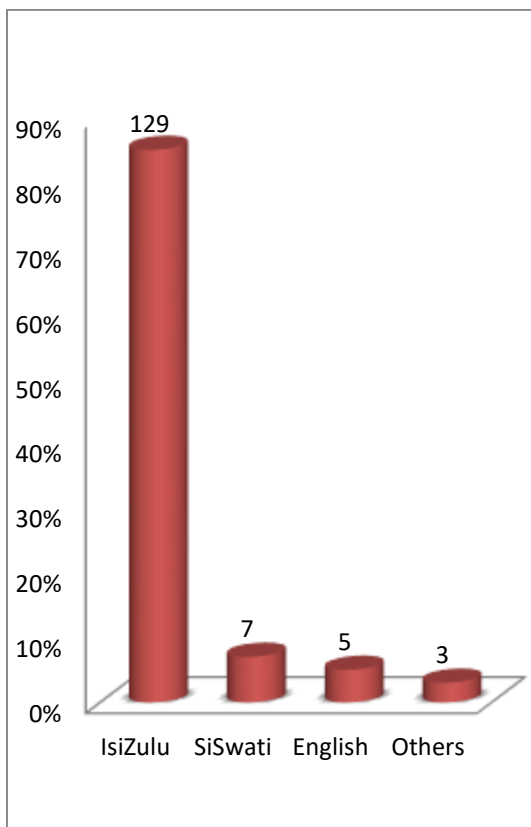


Figure 5: Language of the Respondents

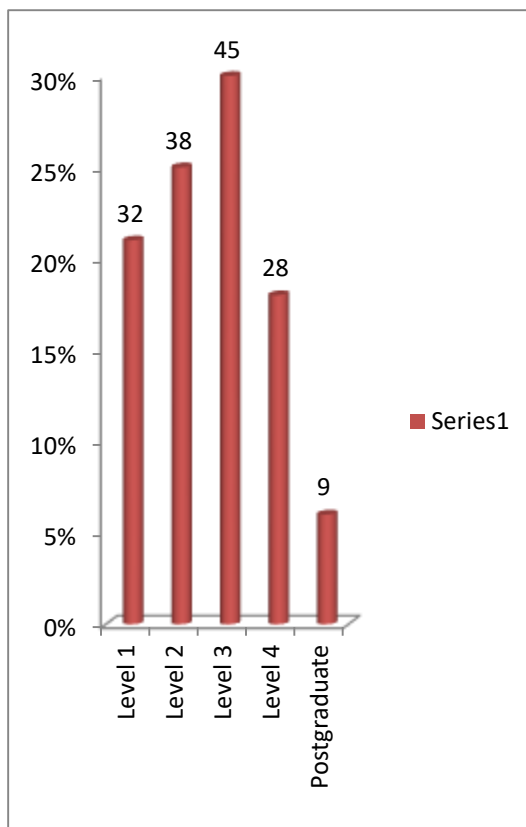


Figure 6: Level of the Respondents

The majority, 85% of the entire respondents as shown in figure 5 speaks IsiZulu. Figure 6 showed that all the various levels of student in the University of Zululand KwaDlangezwa Campus were represented.

Motivating Factors

The table below shows the motivating factors that encourage youth to engage in transactional sexual relationship

Table1.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Those who engage in transactional sexual relationship do it for the gift they will receive	(22) 14.5%	(46) 30.3%	(58) 38.2%	(19) 12.5%	(7) 4.6%	(152) 100%
Students engage in transactional sexual relationship because they need money	(24) 15.8%	(46) 30.3%	(37) 24.3%	(36) 23.7%	(9) 5.9%	(152) 100%
Friends encourage each other to engage in transactional sexual relationship	(20) 13.2%	(61) 40.1%	(33) 21.7%	(30) 19.7%	(8) 5.3%	(152) 100%
Young men engage in transactional sexual relationship because they want sex	(42) 27.6%	(56) 36.8%	(29) 19.1%	(12) 7.9%	(12) 7.9%	(152) 100%
Girls that engage in transactional sexual relationship do it because they want to live big(use expensive phone, jewelries, hairdo etc.) on campus	(53) 34.9%	(53) 34.9%	(30) 19.7%	(10) 6.6%	(6) 3.9%	(152) 100%

THOSE WHO ENGAGE IN FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS RELATIONSHIPS DO IT FOR THE GIFTS THEY WILL RECEIVE

This study found evidence suggesting that people actively choose to engage in transactional sexual relationships because of the various gifts accruing from such relationships (Table 1). A study in rural Uganda revealed that 75 per cent of female participants stated that expectation of gifts was the main reason they had sex at their last intercourse Moore and Biddlecom, 2006. This confirmed the comment of one of the respondents in this study that ... *Men say I'll buy anything for you.* Another respondent also commented that ... *once they get a person who doesn't give them gifts they break up with them.* Gifts in transactional sexual relationships are primarily motivated from the giver's side by a desire to secure or maintain sexual access and from the receiver's side by a desire to generate resources (Deane et al., 2015). Gift is a motivating factor that influences youth decision of engaging in transactional sexual relationship (Watt et al., 2012).

STUDENTS ENGAGE IN FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS RELATIONSHIP BECAUSE THEY NEED MONEY

The respondents were asked if money is a motivating factor that influences students' engagement in transactional sexual relationships. The result, as presented in Table 1. shows that the majority of the respondents (46.1 percent) agreed. This shows that money is one of the motivating factors that encourage youth involvement in transactional sexual relationships. This is in line with the report of Maganja et al.,(2007), that women engage in transactional sexual relationships in order to extort money from men.

In Kenya, Longfield et al., (2004) found that, in some cases, as little money as the equivalent of 25 cents was enough to convince a young woman to engage in a transactional sexual relationship, which implies that the primary motivation to engage in transactional sexual relationship may be financial. There was general consensus among youth that the decision to engage in transactional sexual relationships is made in the context of insufficient opportunities for them to earn an independent income. Madlala (2007) also noted the idea that things today are costly, and that transactional sex could be used in an instrumental manner to secure relationships that were financially rewarding. This is related to the comment of one of the respondents in this study that ... *it is easy access money/ easy way of getting money.* Another respondent also commented that ... *nowadays it is all about money.*

FRIENDS ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER TO ENGAGE IN TRANSACTIONAL SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP (PEER PRESURE)

In answering the question "friends encourage each other to engage in transactional sexual relationship", as presented in table 1, the respondents agreed that peer pressure is a

motivating factor for youth engagement in transactional sexual relationships as 53.3 percent agreed, 21.7 percent were not sure and 25.0 percent disagreed. The intermediary role of friends in motivating entry into transactional relationships through discussions on the practice was also reported in Amo-Adjei et al, (2014); they noted that peer pressure is a significant motivating factor for engaging in transactional sexual relationships. This shows that peer pressure plays a very vital role in motivating youth engagement in transactional sexual relationships.

The role of friends in motivating entry into transactional sexual relationships cannot be overlooked. Longfeild (2004) noted that young women brag to their friends about their partners' generosity with money, gifts, and outings, this results in their peers feeling excluded from social circles and compels them to engage in transactional sex in order to "fit in" (Damske et al, 2017). A respondent in this study commented that "... *peers would encourage one another because they want to fit in and look cool.*" Another respondent commented that ... *it is because they are pressured by their friends or their peers.* Peer pressure played a crucial role in influencing youth decision to engage in transactional sexual relationship (Table 1).

YOUNG MEN ENGAGE IN TRANSACTIONAL SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP BECAUSE THEY WANT SEX (SEX ADDICTION)

The response to the question "young men engage in transactional sexual relationship because they want sex", as presented in table 1, shows that 64.4 percent agreed; 15.8 disagreed while 19.1 percent are not sure. This shows that sex addiction is one of the motivating factors that influence youth engagement in transactional sexual relationship. This is further buttressed by Scott et al, (2014) who noted that men will value "easy access to sex" as a more important motivation for entering transactional sexual relationship.

Respondents expressed their view that one of the major motives of engaging in transactional sexual relationships is to have sex without the burden of having a committed relationship. This confirmed the report by Maganja et al., (2007) that some men just have the attitude of engaging in sexual relationship with various women in order to satisfy their sexual desire/urge. Research has shown that youth's primary reason for initiating transactional sexual relationships is sexual desire (Cockcroft et al., 2010; Maganja et al., 2007; Wight et al., 2006).

In a study conducted by Shefer et al., (2012), some male participants stated that sexual gratification is men's primary and sometimes only motivation for pursuing cross generational relationships. They explained that most men believe that sex and happiness are synonymous. This is also related to the comment of one of the respondents in this study that ... *just to fulfill their emotions anytime and anyhow.*

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Another respondent also commented that ...*guys want only sex so that they are able to be happy as men.*

GIRLS THAT ENGAGE IN TRANSACTIONAL SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP DO IT BECAUSE THEY WANT TO LIVE BIG ON CAMPUS (FANCY OR LUXURY GOODS)

In answering the question “Girls that engage in transactional sexual relationship do it because they want to live big (use expensive phone, jewelries, hairdo etc.) on campus”, the majority of the respondents (69.8 percent) agreed, 10.5 percent and 19.7 disagreed and not sure respectively. This confirmed what Gukurume (2011) noted about university students, especially female students that they are so obsessed with these so-called “labels” or luxuries goods and can do anything to access them. The respondents agree that fancy or luxury goods normally known as “labels” has forced youth, especially female students, to engage in transactional sexual relationships. Desire for fancy and luxurious goods such as expensive cell phones, jewelries, fashionable clothing, expensive shoes, fashionable hairstyles, fast food, etc. is an essential motivating factor for youth engagement in transactional sexual relationship so as to show off in front of friends and peers (Table 1). A respondent in this study commented ... *To get fancy stuffs that they can't afford.* Another respondent also commented *the main reason behind this thing of youth engaging in friends with benefits relationships is because they want to live fancy life.*

MODERN TECHNOLOGY

Modern gadgets like television, cell phones (Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twoo, Hangout, Skype, Tango, etc.) serve as motivation to engage in transaction sexual relationships (Dube 2016). Youths find it very easy to practice what they see on these modern gadgets. In a study conducted by Zembe et al., (2013), young women cited television images, modern technology, and local or international young, successful female celebrities as role models that influence their decision to engage in transactional sexual relationships. These celebrities were said to put young women “under pressure” to pursue images of wealth, style and success through sexual relationships. One of the respondents in this study commented that ...*youth is pressured by the media, so they long to be just like the girls or boys with expensive clothes and money.* Another respondent commented that *the youth are motivated by the movies they watch....*

COMPETITION

Competition is one of the factors that motivate youth engagement in transactional sexual relationships. Girls want to show off their wear i.e. dresses, jewelries, and hairdos while boys do have fun and do show off their charisma by the number of girls they have sex with (Choudhry et al., 2014).

This is closely linked to peer pressure as youth always have a competitive spirit, wanting to show off to their peers how many gifts or money they have acquired by participating in transactional sexual relationships (Amin et al., 2013). A respondent in this study commented that “*there is competition; one will want to compete with rich people....*”

CONCLUSION

In summary the researcher identified that factors like expensive gifts (car, expensive holiday trip, expensive clothes, jewelries, etc.), peer pressure, money, competition (Girls want to show off their wears i.e. dresses, jewelries, and hairdos while boys want to show off by the numbers of girls they have sex with), sex addition (a means of satisfying one sexual urge without having a committed relationship), modern technology among others motivate youths involvement in transactional sexual relationship at the University of Zululand KwaDlangezwa Campus.

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