Original Article

Effect of Transactional Sexual Relationship on Youths in A South African University

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ABSTRACT

Reports are emerging on media about the phenomenon of transactional sexual relationship among youth especially at Universities in South Africa. The extent to which such relationships might facilitate unsafe sexual practices and increased risks for both young men and women, in contacting the deadly disease HIV and AIDS together with other sexually transmitted diseases remains an important question in the light of the current challenges of HIV and AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa. However, the objective of this research was to understand the perceptions of youths about the aftermath or consequences of youth engagement in transactional sexual relationship. A Proportionate stratified sampling method was adopted, where respondents were chosen from each of the four faculties at the University of Zululand to reflect all the faculties at the University. Structured Questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents. Unplanned pregnancy, contracting HIV/AIDs and STDs, academic failure and stigmatization are the common effects from the research. About 69.7 percent of the respondents affirmed that engaging in transactional sexual relationships may affect the academic performance of students negatively. Respondents, 76.3 percent agreed that transactional sexual relationship can lead to one contracting HIV and AIDS, while 86.2 percent of the respondents agreed that engaging in transactional sex can lead to unplanned pregnancy. Young women and young men should be encouraged to take measures that reduce the risk of engaging in this behavior by practicing safe sex.

Keywords: Effect, HIV/AIDs, Transactional Sex, Relationship, 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). Transactional sex, known as “sugar daddy” relationships in Sub-Saharan Africa, 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. Samara describes transactional sex as “Something for something love” while Scott et al describe it as “Friends with benefits relationships”. Transactional sex is different from prostitution, which is non-marital and multiple-partnered and involves exchange of sex for cash. Although transactional sex is usually non-marital and can be multi-partnered, it is different from prostitution in that participants are construed as ‘girlfriends’ and ‘boyfriends’ and not ‘prostitutes’ and ‘clients’, and the exchange of gifts for sex is part of a broader set of obligations that might not involve a predetermined payment. Lehmiller et al argued that a friend with benefits relationship includes the friendship component prior to sexual activity, that with some individuals a brief introduction at a party may qualify as a developing friendship, whereas others may require the friendship to have been in place for several years before considering the inclusion of sexual activity. Over the last decade, there has been much publicity about young women becoming progressively more sexually inclined and that at an early age. Fiction and the media portray young people as gradually unrestrained and as becoming sexually active without considering the aftermath of their
actions i.e. pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. In Africa the sexual transmission of HIV and AIDS has remained overwhelmingly predominant. Sexual contact is the major means by which HIV and AIDS transmit through individuals, groups, communities and nations. Anyone who is sexually active or engages in transactional sex can be easily infected with HIV and AIDS. Gukurume stated that “Universities and Colleges have been labeled as “hotspots” for transactional sex and, by extension, incubators for the spread of HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe.” Most authors that wrote on transactional sexual relationship always talked about the motivating factors that encourage men or women to engage in the relationship. Few authors have actually taken time to look at the consequences of engaging in transactional sexual relationships apart from the common knowledge that a transactional sexual relationship is the major source of transmitting HIV and AIDS,6, 12, 13 This study focused on the effects of transactional sexual relationships on youth, particularly, how they affect their academic and social life as well as examined how transactional sexual relationships influence youth prospective choice of committed relationships at the University of Zululand. Most transactional sexual relationship research has focused on issues such as prevalence, how people defined transactional sexual relationships, and what kinds of activities occur within the context of such relationships. Little is relatively known about some of the more consequential issues. This research is going to look out for the aftermath of youth engagement in transactional sexual relationship.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The University of Zululand campus is located at KwaDlangezwa in the province of Kwa-Zulu-Natal, South Africa, twenty kilometers (20km) south of Empangeni and thirty five kilometers (35km) south of Richards Bay. The University of Zululand was established in 1960 as a college affiliated to the University of South Africa. Since then it has radically developed from a so called 'bush college' to a full-fledged University.

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 students of age ranges between eighteen to twenty five years were selected randomly from each faculty, summing it up to one hundred and sixty respondents as a whole. Out of the 160 questionnaires administered, eight questionnaires were not used because some vital information was not filled. Structured Questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents.

The questionnaire used in this study was in English language since it is a University environment and it took around 20 minutes to fill in. The questionnaire contained the demographic information, effects of transactional sexual relationship, youths’ general perception on transactional sexual relationship, and 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.

Statistical Analysis

Data obtained from the field was cleaned, coded, and key-punched into the computer using Microsoft Excel. For instance, the responses anticipated are “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “not sure”, “agree” and “strongly agree”. The researcher captured the data and 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 researcher made use of an expert to analyze the data collected using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequencies of responses were tabulated and analyzed to determine frequencies, percentages and relationships within variables. Null hypothesis was also tested.

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.
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 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.

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.
Table 1. Effects of transactional sexual relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in transactional sexual relationship can affect one academically</td>
<td>38(25.0%)</td>
<td>68(44.7%)</td>
<td>26(17.1%)</td>
<td>16(10.5%)</td>
<td>4(2.6%)</td>
<td>152(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in transactional sexual relationship can make a student drop out of University</td>
<td>34(22.4)</td>
<td>44(28.9)</td>
<td>35(23.0)</td>
<td>31(20.4)</td>
<td>8(5.3)</td>
<td>152(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional sexual relationship can lead to one contracting HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>13(8.6)</td>
<td>12(7.9)</td>
<td>24(15.8)</td>
<td>67(44.1)</td>
<td>13(8.6)</td>
<td>152(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a great risk of getting STD and HIV/AIDS when one engage in transactional sexual relationship</td>
<td>50(32.9)</td>
<td>66(43.4)</td>
<td>15(9.9)</td>
<td>14(9.2)</td>
<td>7(4.6)</td>
<td>152(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a great risk of getting STD and HIV/AIDS when one engage in transactional sexual relationship</td>
<td>50(32.9)</td>
<td>54(35.5)</td>
<td>24(15.8)</td>
<td>17(11.2)</td>
<td>7(4.6)</td>
<td>152(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional sexual relationship can lead to unplanned pregnancy</td>
<td>72(47.4)</td>
<td>11(7.2)</td>
<td>8(5.3)</td>
<td>2(1.3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>152(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in transactional sexual relationship can hinder one from having a committed relationship</td>
<td>59(38.8)</td>
<td>72(47.4)</td>
<td>11(7.2)</td>
<td>8(5.3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>152(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a great probability of not using condom when one engage in transactional sexual relationship</td>
<td>39(25.7)</td>
<td>58(38.2)</td>
<td>46(30.3)</td>
<td>6(3.9)</td>
<td></td>
<td>152(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in transactional sexual relationship can make other student look down on you</td>
<td>63(41.4)</td>
<td>36(23.7)</td>
<td>16(10.5)</td>
<td>6(3.9)</td>
<td></td>
<td>152(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends with benefits relationship can lead to emotional abuse</td>
<td>35(23.0)</td>
<td>29(19.1)</td>
<td>7(4.6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>152(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in transactional sexual relationship can hinder one from getting marry in future</td>
<td>21(13.8)</td>
<td>54(35.5)</td>
<td>39(25.7)</td>
<td>18(11.8)</td>
<td></td>
<td>152(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis

There is no correlation between young men and women perception and their actions pertaining to transactional sexual relationship at the study area.

Table 2. Correlation results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Perception</th>
<th>Dropping out of school</th>
<th>Contracting HIV/AIDS</th>
<th>Probability of not using condom</th>
<th>Other student looking down on one</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>249**</td>
<td>-200*</td>
<td>.142**</td>
<td>-.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.080</td>
<td>.297</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>152</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.10 level (2-tailed).

The result as presented in Table 2 revealed a positive and significant relationship between total youth perception about transactional sex and their actions in terms of dropping out of school and probability of not using condom at 1% and 10% significant level respectively. On the other hand, there was a negative but significant relationship between total perception about transactional sex and the possibility of contracting HIV/AIDS. Young men and women seems not to be bothered about their friends and peers looking down on them as there was no significant relationship between their perception and their peers looking down on them. The result as presented in Table 1 revealed that engaging in transactional sexual relationships may affect the academic performance of students negatively. While majority 69.7% affirmed it, 13.1% of the respondents disagreed. The remaining 17.1% were not sure. 51.3% agreed that engaging in transactional sex can make a student drop out of school while 25.7% disagreed. 76.3% agreed that a transactional sexual relationship can lead to one contracting HIV and AIDS while the remaining 13.8% and 9.9 disagreed and were not sure, respectively. 86.2% of the respondents agreed that engaging in transactional sex can lead to unplanned pregnancy while the remaining 7.2% and 6.6% of the respondents were not sure and disagreed, respectively. 63.9% of the respondents agreed that engaging in transactional sex can hinder a committed relationship while 30.3% were not sure, the remaining 5.9% disagreed.

In order to get deeper insight into the responses received to the question that a transactional sexual relationship can hinder one from having a committed relationship, a null hypothesis testing was done. The respondents were asked if engaging in transactional sex can hinder one from getting married in future. The result as presented in Table 1 revealed that the majority 37.5% of the respondents disagreed that engaging in transactional sex can hinder future marriage, although it is slightly higher than those who were not sure (35.5), while the
remaining 27% agreed that it will hinder future marriage. This shows that engaging in transactional sex may not hinder one from getting married in future.

Hypothesis - There is no correlation between transactional sexual relationship and one choice of having a committed relationship at the University of Zululand

Table 3. Correlation Result of Hypothesis 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Perception</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Perceived (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.866</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result of the question “there is a great risk of getting STD and HIV/AIDS when one engages in a transactional sexual relationship” as presented in table 3, revealed that there was a great risk of contracting STD and HIV/AIDS when one engages in a transactional sexual relationship. While 68.4% affirmed it, 15.8% of the respondents disagreed. The remaining 15.8% were not sure. This substantiated the point in the previous table (Table 1) that engaging in transactional sex may lead to one contracting STD and HIV/AIDS.

**DISCUSSION**

Most transactional sexual relationships research focused on issues such as prevalence, how people define transactional sexual relationships, and what kinds of activities occur within the context of such relationships. Little has been said about some of the consequences of engaging in such relationships such as what engagement in transactional sexual relationship can lead to. Below are some of the effects of engaging in transactional sexual relationship as identified by the respondents in this study.

**Stigmatization**

The majority of the respondents in this study agreed that transactional sexual relationships lead to stigmatization. This is related to what Amo-Adejei et al. noted in their study, that beyond the close knit group of friends who were engaged in transactional sexual relationships, almost all their respondents concealed their relationships from “other” friends and families for fear of stigmatization, discrimination and name calling. They said that women that are involved in transactional sexual relationships are often considered to be “shashe” (a spoilt female) which made some participants not to disclose their identity so as not to be given this tag, with its potential stigma. Strebel et al. also noted that the terms used to describe the young women who have relationships with taxi drivers (another form of a transactional sexual relationship) were largely derogatory, and they were strongly condemned in local communities. Even though a transactional sexual relationship is a common phenomenon on the University Campus, those that do engage in it do not want other students to know they are involved. This is because of the stigma (other students looking down on them or calling them names). One of the respondents in this study commented that “…..your dignity is at stake.” Another respondent also commented that “…..it can be detrimental to one’s reputation.”

**Academic Failure**

The respondents in this study expressed the view that engaging in transactional sexual relationships often makes students not to perform well in their academic programmes. They emphasized that this set of students usually misses classes because they need to attend to the demand of their sexual partner/partners. One of the respondents in the comment said “…..transactional sex lead to lack of concentration on studies which leads to failure.” Another respondent also commented “….they are
failing their modules that is why we have many students in the University who are repeaters of modules.”

Dropping out of School
The issue of dropping out among University students needs not be overemphasized. Salient issues that lead to this phenomenon need to be critically examined and given adequate attention. Respondents in this study expressed the view that students that engage in transactional sex don’t normally have enough time to concentrate on their school work which sometimes makes them to drop out of school (Table 1). This was also confirmed by Kassa et al.,16 A respondent noted “...after having many sex partners, some learner end up dropping out of school.” Another respondent also commented that “.....they might not finish their degree.”

Contracting STD and HIV/AIDS
It is a common knowledge that STD and HIV/AIDS is majorly contacted through unsafe sex which transactional sex majorly permits. According to Gukurume11 a transactional sexual relationship is the engine driving the spread of HIV and AIDs. Some of the respondents in this study noted that because of the money, gift or material gain that accrued from transactional sex, many students don’t mind having unsafe sex with the full knowledge that they may contact STD or HIV/AIDs (Table 1). Here is the comment of one of the respondents “transactional sex in University can lead to high risk of infection with HIV/AIDs.” Consistent with current literature, participants agreed that condom use is low among relationships where great amounts of gifts are exchanged. Several participants agreed to the difficulty of young women insisting on condom use with partner/partners as men dislike using condoms (Table 1). This increases their risk of contracting HIV and AIDs.

Unplanned Pregnancy
The respondents in this study agreed that transactional sexual relationships sometimes lead to unplanned or unwanted pregnancies. 17 Students that engage in transactional sexual relationship usually do it because of gifts (in kind or cash). This made it almost impossible for them to negotiate the use of condom and that increases the risk of having unwanted or unplanned pregnancy, particularly when expensive and much cherished gifts are involved (Table 4). One of the respondents in this study commented that “......it can lead to them getting unplanned pregnancy”.

CONCLUSION
In summary this researcher established that factors like Academic failure, contracting HIV and AIDs, dropping out of school, unplanned pregnancy and stigmatization among others were the direct negative effect of engaging in transactional sexual relationship.

RECOMMENDATION
A transactional sexual relationship was determined in this study to be a major means of transmitting or contacting STDs or HIV and AIDs; we therefore recommend that effective enlightenment campaigns be developed by the university management, targeted at young women and men, that acknowledge the existence of transactional sexual relationships in higher institutions and publicizing the dangers of engaging in it without considering safe and protected sex.

LIMITATIONS
The research only focussed on the youth at the University of Zululand kwaDlangezwa, therefore, the findings drawn cannot be generalized to all the youth in all Universities. The other challenge was the unwillingness of some of the respondents to fill in the questionnaire, many of them considered questions to be numerous.

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Conflict of Interest
None declared
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