

TRANSACTIONAL SEX RELATIONSHIPS IN FICTION: THE
DISINTEGRATION OF
WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION THROUGH THE BLESSER/BLESSEE
CULTURE IN SELECTED AFRICAN NOVELS

A RESEARCH SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF

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ABSTRACT

The hashtag #blessed started trending several years ago on different social media platforms when women claimed to be beneficiaries of blessers. The latter was what the new hashtag denoted and not the often biblical meaning of ‘blessed’ which is to receive favour from God. The hashtag thus falls under the contemporary phenomenon known as transactional sex relationships, colloquially known as the blessers, blessees, sugar daddies, sugar babies and side-chicks. Since this is a new phenomenon, this study aimed to interrogate the multiple layers of transactional sex relationships in fiction and how they possibly contribute to the disintegration of women’s emancipation. The study which was essentially a qualitative desktop study employed purposive sampling to select and analyse four novels by southern African writers: *The Blessed Girl* by Angela Makholwa (2018), *Bare: #The Blesser Game* by Jackie Phamotse (2017), *Sweet Medicine* by Panashe Chigumadzi (2016), and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1* by Yvonne Maphosa (2019). Employing the postcolonial paradigm of Africa writing-back-to-self advocated by Mwangi (2009) and a critique of Lipstick Feminism, the study analysed how the writers aesthetically present literary devices describing the unrefined data about transactional sex relationships. In addition, the study analysed how the transactional sex relationship culture encouraged the possible disintegration of women’s emancipation. The study contributes to the understanding of the self-reflexive catalytic events that lead to transactional sex relationships and their consequences in Africa, without singular attribution to the West. The findings indicate the following: firstly, the authors wrote extensively and without inhibition about transactional sex relationships using visual imagery more than euphemisms whilst presenting a variety of issues that are considered taboo. The following key issues were identified as the primary sources of transactional sex

relationships: women's agency, consumerism, modernity, poverty, parental influence or encouragement, peer pressure, gendered norms, grade adjustments to pass, and guaranteed job offers. Depression, trauma, abuse, and isolation were some of the issues found to be the psychological, physical and social consequences of transactional sex relationships. Significantly, the study found that the advancement of Lipstick Feminism towards the application of make-up and women using their sex appeal as empowerment has contributed to the commodification of transactional sex and thus the disintegration of women's empowerment. The findings of the study corroborate the existing social studies' findings on the phenomenon and provide vital information for future studies. The study recommends future studies to employ Mwangi's (2009) postcolonial paradigm of writing-back-to-self to examine the other taboos revealed in this thesis; skin and private part bleaching, depression, indecent public exposure, polyamory, black tax and men who have sex with men (MSM). The study concludes that the transactional sex relationship culture contributes to the disintegration of women's empowerment.

Keywords: blesser, blessee, side-chick, transactional sex relationships, disintegration, women's empowerment

DECLARATION

I, Emelda U. #Gawas, hereby declare that this study is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work, or part thereof has not been submitted for a degree in any institution of higher education.

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Signature

April 2023

Date

DEDICATION

To my siblings: Uendjie, Loopy and Duncan

and

My children: Joshua /Ucham and Zoëy /Ucham

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I would like to thank God for the wisdom in Christ Jesus to apply my mind and make a meaningful contribution to earthly knowledge.

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Image 2: A pictorial description of how the blesser system works

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

- Gawas, E., Kangira, J., & Mlambo, N. (2022). #Blessed: The disintegration of women's emancipation through transactional sex relationships in selected works of fiction. *Journal of African Languages and Literary Studies*, 3(2), 71-87.
- Gawas, E., Kangira, J., & Mlambo, N. (in press). #Blessed: A self-reflexive postcolonial reading of the emerging issues of transactional sex relationships in selected works of fiction.
- Gawas, E., Kangira, J., & Mlambo, N. (in press). #Blessed: An exploratory analysis of allusion as a literary device in the description of transactional sex relationships in selected works of fiction

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Research regarding transactional sex has significantly shaped interrogations on blessers, blessees, sugar daddies, sugar babies and side-chicks in recent years (Mampane, 2018). Social science research has investigated and primarily substantiated the belief that transactional sex is immoral, promotes prostitution and advances the spread of HIV and AIDS (Wamoyi et al., 2019b). On the contrary, other scholars have argued that transactional sex relationships should be seen as an effort by women to be industrious and provide for themselves (Bandali, 2011; Moodley & Ebrahim, 2019; Wamoyi et al., 2019b).

The following quote, which relates explicitly to South Africa, implies that transactional sex enables young women to distinguish themselves from poor peers and to maintain a lifestyle they would usually not be able to afford: “In poverty-stricken township contexts, fashion is hotly pursued by many young people identifying with the allure of the middle class” (Bhana & Pattman, 2011, p. 965). However, there’s limited research to determine whether transactional sex, which is common in numerous sexual relationships, is considered exploitative as a practice (Stoebenau et al., 2016).

Other categories of transactional sex relationships involve sugar mummies and men who have sex with men (MSM). However, the present study sought to analyse transactional sex relationships in which women are the receivers of material benefits

and support, and how these relationships contribute to the disintegration of women's emancipation. In addition, it also sought to analyse the disintegration of women's emancipation through the blesser/blessee culture, colloquially known as the blessers, blessees, sugar daddies, sugar babies and side-chicks in the selected African novels.

Geisler (2004) contends that women's emancipation was a matter of economic independence, which would be guaranteed by women being integrated into the workforce. However, the scholar critiques that women's habit of dependence, being passive and the burden of tradition serve as the greatest obstacle to women's emancipation. In addition, consumer culture plays a vital role in transactional sex relationships and could be considered a contributing factor to the disintegration of women's emancipation as women go to extremes in maintaining their appearance with popular clothing and make-up brands as well as body modification such as skin bleaching to keep their blessers satisfied.

The analysis of the literary representation of transactional sex relationships in African fiction has been limited and mainly researched in isolation. The purpose of the current study was to investigate how transactional sex relationships contribute to the disintegration of women's emancipation. The study focused on the following novels: *The Blessed Girl* by Angela Makholwa (2018), *Bare: #The Blesser Game* by Jackie Phamotse (2017), *Sweet Medicine* by Panashe Chigumadzi (2016) and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1* by Yvonne Maphosa (2019).

1.2 Statement of the problem

The purpose of the study was to investigate how transactional sex relationships colloquially known as the blessers, blessees, sugar daddies, sugar babies and side-chicks phenomenon contribute to the disintegration of women's emancipation. The hashtag #blessed trended on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram in 2016, when women claimed to benefit from blessers (Mampane, 2018; Varjavandi, 2017). According to Mampane (2018), "[t]his is a sort of transactional sex" in which "older, wealthy men (the "blessers") seek to attract young women (the "blessees") with money and pricey gifts in exchange for sexual favours (p. 1)" and international shopping trips (Varjavandi, 2017). This hashtag denoted that the privacy attached to discussing sexual relations was no longer relevant as women used social media to share private relationship details although not explicit. The open discussion of sexual intercourse has primarily been taboo in Africa, let alone the contemporary phenomenon of transactional sex relationships (Burgoyne & Drummond, 2008; Ngubane, 2010; Tamale, 2008). Although the taboo still exists, some contemporary African novelists have written extensively and without inhibition about sexual issues. The aforementioned is echoed by Mwangi (2009, Preface, para. 1), who advances that these novelists use self-reflexive strategies to point to circumstances that are changing in society and discuss issues that would typically be considered taboo. Furthermore, McRobbie (2009, as cited in Marchetti, 2020, para. 5) advances that "the consumer culture is playing a vital role in the undoing of feminism" as the phenomenon of transactional sex relationships is also based on consumer culture evidenced in women who go to extremes in maintaining their appearance to keep their blessers satisfied. Novelists such as Makholwa (2018), Phamotse (2017), Chigumadzi (2016) and

Maphosa (2019) have broken the barriers of sexual taboos. However, the focus of the study was not on how much these writers succeeded in writing about issues that are taboo but rather on how transactional sex relationships contribute to the disintegration of women's emancipation. The study also interrogated how the narratives of these writers could be read self-reflexively to help solve local problems that pertain to transactional sex relationships in Africa.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The study sought to address the following objectives:

- 1.3.1 Examine how the selected novels innovatively employ literary devices and aesthetics for the representation of transactional sex relationships, colloquially known as the blessers, blessees, sugar daddies, sugar babies and side-chicks phenomenon;
- 1.3.2 Examine the catalytic incidents in the selected novels that lead to the initiation of transactional sex relationships;
- 1.3.3 Explore the social issues that emerge due to the existence of transactional sex Relationships in the selected novels;
- 1.3.4 Analyse the manner the transactional sex relationship culture portrayed in the selected novels may encourage the possible disintegration of women's emancipation; and
- 1.3.5 Explore the possible character behaviour transformations and the experiences that lead to such transformations.

1.4 Significance of the study

The study's thrust, transactional sex relationships, is an emerging theme in contemporary African literature, thus contributing to the development of knowledge within the local and international scholarly research body. Additionally, the study breaks new ground by using the critical lens of the post-colonial theory, not in its conventional sense but from a new paradigm, the 'writing-back-to-self perspective as pioneered by Mwangi (2009). The study also analyses transactional sex relationships through a critique of Lipstick Feminism. In this light, the research makes a significant reference tool for scholars and other academics who apply the post-colonial theory to African literature in their works. The study could also allow scholars from other African countries to compare outputs on transactional sex relationships in the selected novels to the literary output of their respective countries.

1.5 Limitations of the study

The study focused on critically examining four African English novels that are representative of transactional sex relationships. An interview with the authors would have been beneficial but was impossible due to time constraints. Important information about transactional sex relationships in literary texts by authors who were not selected for the study might have been omitted. Another limitation was that only texts with an element of transactional sex relationships involving women as receivers of material support and other benefits were selected and studied. Further, the literary fiction study was content-analysed, employing the post-colonial paradigm of writing-back-to-self and Lipstick Feminism as theoretical lenses to support the arguments. The postcolonial paradigm was used because the postcolonial theory is Eurocentric and

has been criticised in its application to the African context. Lastly, the findings may not be generalisable to all African societies because the novels may have represented the experiences of the societies in which they are set.

1.6 Delimitations of the study

The scope of the study was limited to Southern African novels, specifically four South African novels and one Zimbabwean novel, to make the research manageable. In addition, fiction written in other languages was outside the scope of the study; thus, only fiction written in English was considered. Lastly, the study's findings and conclusions were based on the literary representation of characters and the environment in the selected literary texts and may not be applicable to other literary texts with similar thematic concerns.

1.7 Research methods

1.7.1 Research design

This research was primarily a desktop study that focused on the content analysis of selected contemporary African literary texts in English. Qualitative literary research was appropriate for this study because of its reliance on non-numerical data. This design also enabled the researcher to provide textual descriptions of transactional sex relationships categorised as blessers, blessees, sugar daddies, sugar babies and side-chicks.

1.7.2 Population

The population of the study was all contemporary African literary fiction in English, representative of transactional sex relationships and written by both men and women.

1.7.3 Sample

The sample for this study consisted of the following African novels written in English: *The Blessed Girl* by Angela Makholwa (2018), *Bare: #The Blessor Game* by Jackie Phamotse (2017), *Sweet Medicine* by Panashe Chigumadzi (2016) and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1* by Yvonne Maphosa (2019). The novels were purposefully selected because of their thematic connection and character depiction. Purposive selection in this context thus implies that only African novels written in English and representative of transactional sex relationships were studied.

1.7.4 Procedure

The researcher acquired the four selected African novels and conducted an in-depth reading and critical analysis of the texts by applying the selected theoretical framework. The researcher then analysed the texts guided by the five objectives of the study respectively. A critical discussion and analysis of the selected literary texts were then conducted for this study.

1.7.5 Data analysis

The study employed qualitative content analysis and used the thematic approach to analyse the four novels. The literary analysis was based on Mwangi's (2009) post-colonial paradigm of 'writing-back-to-self.' The study adopted two key paradigms by Mwangi; firstly, the local forms of oppression in the selected novels were identified. Secondly, the emerging realities were explored to categorise the data from the four

novels into themes in line with the research objectives. The categorised findings formed the discussion and led to conclusions and recommendations.

At the outset, the researcher read the novels to obtain a general impression. The researcher revisited the research objectives and re-read the novels in-depth while bookmarking the relevant data that addressed the first objective. The researcher then bookmarked the recorded data on an excel sheet according to themes. Afterwards, the researcher analysed and interpreted the excel sheet data before repeating the process for all the novels and each of the remaining research objectives.

The researcher adapted Biggam's (2008) data analysis process, as illustrated in Figure 1, to describe, analyse and interpret the collected data. The researcher also identified similarities and differences from the data and linked the literature review findings to the texts' findings.

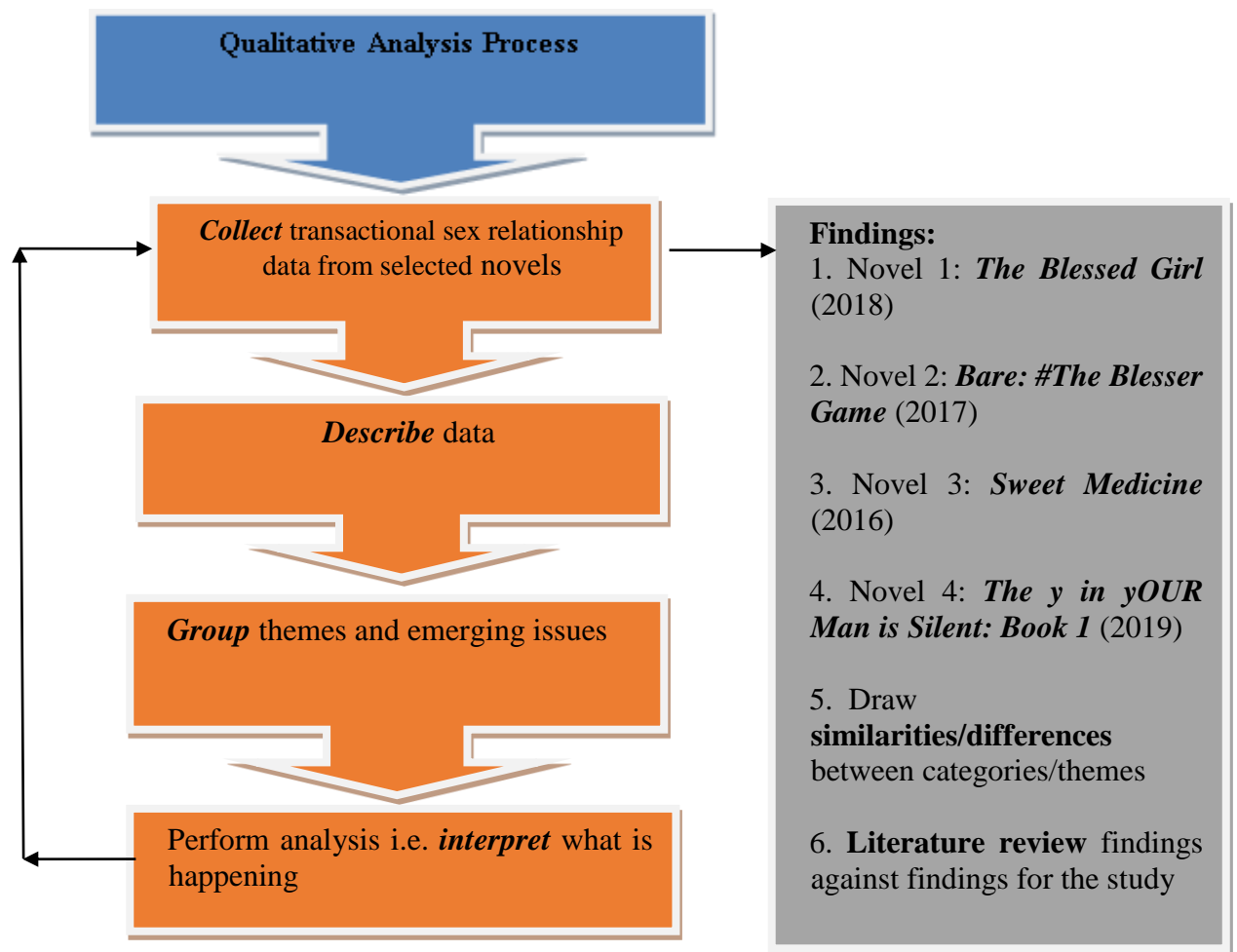


Figure 1. Data analysis process illustration adapted from Biggam (2008)

1.8 Research ethics

The researcher obtained permission from the University of Namibia’s research ethics committee. An ethical clearance certificate was issued by the Centre for Research and Publications. The research was a desktop study and thus did not involve any human participants. In this light, the study was limited to the analysis of secondary data which did not include confidential, private or sensitive records or records outside the public domain. However, three of the selected texts stipulate that permission should be obtained from the publisher and thus, the researcher obtained written permission via

email and Twitter from the relevant parties. The researcher also avoided plagiarism by observing the correct APA citing practices and acknowledging all sources.

1.9 Chapter Outline

The study comprises seven chapters subdivided into titles and subtitles. Chapter One, as the introduction, provides the background of the study, statement of the problem, the objectives, the significance of the study, limitations and delimitations, the methodology and research ethics.

Chapter Two is a literature review that discusses four key areas. Firstly, the review explains and defines critical concepts that pertain to transactional sex relationships such as blessers/blessees, sugar daddies and sugar babies, amongst others. Secondly, the review seeks to ascertain the primary cause(s) of transactional sex relationships and the social issues that ensue from such relationships. Central to the study's argument is the debate around the possible disintegration of women's emancipation and the extent to which transactional sex relationships could have encouraged such disintegration. Finally, the review explores the post-colonial theory with Mwangi's (2009) paradigm of writing-back-to-self and gives a critique of Lipstick Feminism.

Chapter Three examines the literary devices employed aesthetically in the selected novels by presenting the unrefined descriptive data of transactional sex relationships. The chapter presents descriptions of the blesser and blessee culture in detail and whether their characters develop within the novels. It further explains how this

character development could contribute to the debate on the transactional sex phenomenon.

The two analytical chapters of the study are Four and Five. Chapter Four, through the critical lens of the post-colonial theory, analyses the catalytic incidents that lead to the initiation of transactional sex relationships and the social issues that emerge due to the existence of these relationships in the selected novels. This chapter probes the social, cultural and economic factors that lead to the development of transactional sex relationships and the social, physical and psychological issues that emerge from these relationships.

Chapter Five, through a critique of the Lipstick Feminism theory, analyses how the transactional sex relationship culture could encourage the disintegration of women's emancipation in the novels. This chapter critiques Lipstick Feminism and how it appears to inadvertently contribute to the disintegration of women's emancipation. The chapter also presents character behaviour transformations and the experiences that trigger them in the novels.

Finally, Chapter Six summarises and concludes the study's findings by underscoring their connectedness to the primary theoretical frameworks. The chapter also presents the study's contribution to knowledge and makes recommendations for future research.

1.10 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, significance, limitations and delimitations of the study. It also described the research methods, including the design, population, sample, procedures and data analysis. The chapter then presented the research ethics and the outline of the chapters. The next chapter reviews the relevant literature that relates to the existing controversies and gaps in the existing body of knowledge on transactional sex relationships.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the relevant literature to assess the existing controversies and identify the gaps in the existing body of knowledge on transactional sex relationships. Firstly, for a better understanding of the transactional sex relationships phenomenon, the review defines critical concepts such as blessers/blessees, sugar daddies and sugar babies, amongst others. Secondly, the review seeks to ascertain the causes of transactional sex relationships and the resultant social concerns. Central to the study's argument is the possible disintegration of women's emancipation and how transactional sex relationships could have encouraged such disintegration. Finally, the review explains the postcolonial theory of writing-back-to-self and gives a critique of Lipstick Feminism.

2.2 Critical concepts and definitions

2.2.1 Transactional sex definitions

One of the most critical concepts central to the current study is transactional sex, hence this section discusses different scholarly definitions to contextualise the study. Hunter (2002) defines transactional sex as exchanging favours, gifts or money for sexual activity. Although this can be likened to prostitution, Hunter (2002) argues that transactional sex is not categorised as commercial sex work because the people involved are identified as “boyfriends or girlfriends and not as prostitutes” (p. 100). According to Choudhry et al. (2015), transactional sex in which money or gifts is exchanged for sex means different things in sub-Saharan Africa. These scholars posit that transactional sex could mean a committed relationship, an acknowledgement of

respect, an expression of affection, an obligation fulfilled, or maybe a display to impress other men.

According to Formson and Hilhorst (2016), "[d]efining transactional sex is not a straightforward task... it means *sex provided in exchange for something*, but the literature shows that interpretations of transactional sex are culturally determined and constructed" (p. 7). Additionally, Wamoyi et al. (2019b) define transactional sex as "noncommercial, nonmarital sexual relationships, motivated by the implicit assumption that sex will be exchanged for material support or other benefits" (p. 368). Given the above varied definitions, the study preferred the use of the latter. Firstly, Wamoyi et al. (2019b) explain that transactional sex is non-commercial because sex work is negotiated in advance, paid for immediately, performed tactfully, and framed as a commodity for exchange, not in the broad gender expectation of the man being the provider. Secondly, these scholars assert that transactional sex is non-marital. They argue that in contrast to transactional sex relationships, marriage is upheld in society as a sacred institution with a different level and type of commitment between the partners, which leads to the duration of the marriage.

Another definition of transactional sex relationships is blessers and blessees. The blesser/blessee designation originated in 2016 when the hashtag #blessed spread virally on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and women claimed to be beneficiaries of blessers (Mampane, 2018; Varjavandi, 2017). Mampane (2018) argues that "[t]his is a form of transactional sex in which older rich men ("blessers") tend to entice young women ("blessees") with money and expensive gifts in exchange for sexual favours (p. 1)" and overseas shopping trips (Varjavandi,

2017). The scholar further claims that the older men are often married, and the relationships with these young women are secret extramarital affairs.

Moodley and Ebrahim (2019) further contend that 'blessed relationships' and 'sugar daddy relationships' are different because the former "brings together the nexus of technology, sexuality and economics within a consumerist environment" (p. 22). They claim that the origin of the term blesser is in the social media environment, hence it is primarily used online rather than in academic texts. Moodley and Ebrahim (2019) also posit that blessed relationships can be considered a popular culture phenomenon that started as a fashionable social trend contextualised with looks and materialism with a luxury lifestyle as its defining feature. Their research makes a clear distinction between blessed relationships and sugar daddy relationships while for the blesser sex is not always the motivating factor, sugar daddies prioritise sex. Moodley and Ebrahim (2019) conclude that the blesser can pay exorbitant amounts amid cheaper options but often wants a beautiful trophy (woman) to accompany him on trips.

All the scholars mentioned above (Choudry et al., 2015; Hunter, 2002; Formson & Hillhorst, 2016; Wamoyi et al., 2019b) seem to agree that transactional sex refers to intercourse that is given or provided in exchange for something. Nonetheless, their definitions have slight differences. According to Choudry et al. (2005), such relationships could mean different things, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. On the other hand, Formson and Hillhorst (2016) argue that defining transactional sex relationships is complicated because definitions are culturally determined and constructed.

In Zimbabwe, the blessee, sugar baby or side-chick is referred to as a ‘small house’. “Small house is a colloquial and derogatory term that describes a married man’s quasi-polygamous, informal, long-term, secret sexual relationship with another woman” (Mushinga, 2015, p.1). According to another scholar, a small house (smaller than the main house who is the formal bride) is an informal, long-term, and covert romantic relationship with a woman who is not a man's lawful spouse practised in a smaller house in a different neighbourhood (Mutseta, 2020). In certain situations, these unions result in children. Mutseta asserts that “[m]en and women in small house unions are publicly monogamous but covertly polygamous and formally single but secretly wedded respectively” (p.149). Mutseta (2020) further concludes that although some small house relationships have opened up new opportunities for some people to enjoy life and have given them a great sense of optimism, they have also had negative effects and have become a source of frustration for those who remain in these unions, thus creating a cruel bond.

Mushinga’s (2015) study explores the small house concept in Zimbabwe with a focus on the reasons why economically independent women engage in sexual relationships with men. Mushinga further investigates the complexity of multiple meanings women attach to being a small house as she expounds that being a small house cannot only be attributed to poverty, lack of empowerment or sexual agency because high socioeconomic class women who are financially secure also deliberately and voluntarily enter into these highly stigmatized partnerships (Mushinga, 2015). Mushinga (2015) distinguishes three types of small houses: the temporary small house, the ‘no money, no honey’ small house and the *que sera sera* small house. The women in the temporary small house relationships described their relationships as temporary

because they were waiting for ‘Mr Right’ and would abandon the relationship if they found a partner that wanted to marry them. These women had no children, were never married and were in their late 20s or early 30s. The ‘no money, no honey’ small houses mainly comprised of divorcees or single mothers in their late 20s or late 30s. Their “terms and conditions included having a financially stable man who would be able to provide for and maintain their lavish lifestyles” (p.53). *Que sera sera* means ‘what will be, will be’ in Spanish and was popularised by the singer Doris Day in 1956. The women in the *que sera sera* small house category had no stance for the relationship but were in love and thus followed the terms and conditions set by the men. Mushinga (2015) concludes that small house relationships defy easy categorization because they are a fusion of traditional romantic relationships, solid marriages, and post-modern cosmopolitan open relationships.

Thus, given the diverse nature of the definitions, this study preferred the one provided by Wamoyi et al. (2019b) which views transactional sex relationships as sex given in exchange for something and posits that these relationships are neither prostitution nor marital. Additionally, to further clarify their definitions that relate to the blesser/blessee culture, Varjavandi (2017) adds 'overseas shopping trips' to his explanation of the blessed relationships, whilst Mampane (2018) remains distinct by adding the adjective ‘expensive’. Thus, although sugar daddy relationships may have been defined in the past by giving gifts, the distinction from blessed relationships is that the gifts given are expensive.

2.2.2 Sugar daddy

The term *sugar daddy* originated in 1908 when Adolph Spreckles, an heir to the Spreckles Sugar fortune, married a woman who was 24 years his junior (Willard, 2013). According to Willard (2013), the woman started addressing Adolph as 'my sugar daddy,' however, the term was only colloquially used by 1926 to refer to a man who offered money to a younger woman for companionship or intimacy. A more elaborate definition of a sugar daddy is provided by Kuate-Defo (2004):

the name given to elder men...having sexual relationships with young girls...in exchange for money and/or material goods, drinks, gifts, clothes and favourable treatment including favours in many aspects of life such as education, employment and payment of tuition fees, financial support for living costs, and other kinds of support. (p.15)

In a subsequent study, Luke (2005) also provides a shorter definition of a sugar daddy as an adult male who exchanges gifts or large amounts of money for sex from younger women. Although Willard provides the term's origin, Kuate-Defo (2004) provides a holistic definition that incorporates all the different aspects a sugar relationship can entail.

2.3 Causes of transactional sex relationships and their emergent social issues

2.3.1 Possible causes of transactional sex relationships

This section discusses the different social studies research findings on the causes of transactional sex relationships. Hunter (2002) distinguishes three factors that lead to transactional sex. First is the access to the most profitable sectors of the formal and informal economy and resources like housing which position men to be economically

more privileged than women. Secondly, Hunter adds that a high value is placed on men having multiple sexual partners because men approve of it as part of a tolerated masculine norm. Lastly, is the agency of women in transactional sex relationships to access power and resources, and this is corroborated by (Bandali, 2011; Maganja et al., 2007).

Contrasting the idea of agency above, Braun (2018) argues that patriarchal structures are strengthened instead of being weakened by this female agency that exploits transactional sex relationships. On the other hand, Mpolomoka (2019) concurs that female agency reproduces patriarchal norms, but it also disrupts them. Furthermore, according to Leclerc-Madlala (2003), urbanisation, consumerism, and wealth disparities could be linked to transactional sex in the African context and could become a norm in the future. This scholar further states that the fluctuating nature of the economy has given rise to new patterns of sexual behaviour, and women use transactional sex relationships to pursue images portrayed in the media. Studies conclude that women use their agency to exploit transactional sex relationships to fulfil their modern needs fuelled by the media and globalisation (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Swartz, 2017).

Stoebenau et al. (2013) conducted the first known quantitative study to test how the consumption of modern goods is associated with risky sexual behaviour among the youth in rural areas, peri-urban and urban areas in Madagascar. The study established that having multiple partnerships is associated with a youthful lifestyle characterised by clubbing, consuming alcohol, using technology and meeting up with foreigners, whilst women also engage in transactional sex to keep up with fashion. In another study, Zembe et al. (2013) underscore the fact that the acceptance of transactional sex

is linked to poverty and modernity. Modernity is an important factor because of the women's "preoccupation with money, fashion and alcohol" (p. 5). Also, studies have confirmed that the items exchanged for transactional sex include: money, education, clothes, food, alcohol, basic needs at home and cell phones, amongst others (Kuate-Defo, 2004; Zembe et al., 2013).

According to a study conducted in Botswana by McIlwaine and Datta (2004), transactional sex relationships are linked to poverty, and the need to survive. Another study conducted in South Africa by Varjavandi (2017) corroborates this finding. However, the focus group discussions noted that transactional sex also enabled girls to afford mobile phones and sneakers and made them feel part of a global culture (McIlwaine & Datta, 2004; Swidler & Watkins, 2007). According to Masvawure (2010), previous studies have almost exclusively focused on poverty and the economic inequality of women as leading causes of transactional sex relationships. However, the phenomenon takes on multiple forms and young women also use their agency coupled with various strategies to avoid reciprocating with sex. Thus, Shefer et al. (2012) assert that a reflexive and critical awareness of transactional sex by critiques is imperative because of the multiplicity and complexity that accompanies such exchanges.

Another qualitative study conducted in Tanzania by Wamoyi et al. (2011) aimed to understand the cultural beliefs associated with transactional sex. Surprisingly, this study revealed that transactional sex relationships were a practice accepted by parents and young people. Although parents encouraged their children to abstain, they also tolerated transactional sex relationships. In some instances, "[m]others often encourage their daughters to find boyfriends, albeit boyfriends with money" (Braun,

2018, p. 26). A similar study was conducted by Maclin et al. (2015), who found that some mothers encouraged their daughters to engage in transactional sex to earn money for the family whilst others discouraged the practice. A crucial point in analysing the different causes of transactional sex is accepting that it is a valid variant of human conduct; therefore, it might be futile to stigmatise sugar daddies when the conditions that push young women to engage in transactional sex relationships still exist (Brouard & Crewe, 2012).

Groes-Green (2013), using a postcolonial feminist framework, discusses transactional sex between *curtidoras* (young women) and *patrocinadores* (older white men) in Maputo, Mozambique. According to the scholar the erotic power of the *curtidoras* in transactional sex relationships is described as mutually dependent and often forms emotional attachments. Groes-Green (2013) discusses what is termed a "gendered triad of reciprocity" (p. 106) which is referred to as a postcolonial view of transactional sex. Groes-Green explains that the *curtidoras* receive erotic knowledge from their elderly female relatives in exchange for sharing the profits from the *patrocinadores* (older men) with their mothers, aunts, and sisters to buy necessities for the children and male members of the family. According to Groes-Green (2013), this erotic knowledge is referred to as "putting a man in the bottle" (p. 106) and entails seducing a man and invoking his desire, followed by satisfying the man in private through good hygiene, vaginal contractions and the application of love potions and charms. Groes-Green further states that the aforementioned is derived from the ancestral world and is thus regarded as sacred knowledge. Thus, considering the 'gendered triad of reciprocity,' it is conceivable that transactional sex could be regarded as helping households because women are not merely using transactional sex for material gain. Still, the benefits of

this triad arrangement reach other members of these households in the form of supplying for their basic needs.

In yet another study, Stoebenau et al. (2016) classify sub-Saharan women's participation in transactional sex under three paradigms: "sex for basic needs, sex for improved social status and sex for material expressions of love" (p. 186). The aforementioned paradigm highlights gendered poverty as instrumental in restricting women's choices and thus leading to transactional sex. This paradigm portrays women as vulnerable victims with limited choices who end up choosing to exchange sex for the support of their basic needs. Stoebenau et al. (2016) also add that the second paradigm is an expansion of the first because some critiques have noted that the exchange of transactional sex is not limited to basic needs and that women were not passive victims. Stoebenau et al. (2016), summarise the second paradigm as the growth of economic disparities and the increased importance attached to acquiring material goods for social mobility. Finally, the last paradigm "draws attention to the centrality of gift exchange in romantic relationships and emphasises the expectation of a gendered flow of resources from men to women" (Stoebenau et al., 2016, p. 190). The third paradigm expands on the previous two by adding two notions; firstly, money and love are intricately linked in romantic and transactional sex relationships. Secondly, the gendered belief that men should provide financially and materially persists. According to Stoebenau et al. (2016), this belief is an important area that needs to be critically addressed in transactional sex relationship studies.

Several studies identify peer pressure as a contributing factor to young people engaging in the risky sexual behaviour of transactional sex for improved social status. The young people feel pressured to compete with their wealthier counterparts to attain fashion items that are pursued by others and to distinguish themselves from their reality of poverty (Bhana & Pattman, 2011; Groes-Green, 2013; Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Stoebenau et al., 2013). The studies discussed above that investigated risky sexual behaviour also confirm peer pressure as a contributing factor to the initiation of transactional sex relationships.

For instance, in a recent study, Mampane (2018), distinguishes socio-behavioural, socio-cultural and socioeconomic factors contributing to women engaging in transactional sex relationships. The scholar highlights several factors under the socio-behavioural category which include precocious sex, peer pressure, multiple concurrent partners and HIV-related complacency. Mampane explains that women engage in precocious sex for two reasons, namely, they are curious about sex, especially in rural areas where talking to elders about sex is taboo, and for economic reasons. Mampane (2018) substantiates previous findings by Dunkle et al. (2004b), Hallman (2004), Hunter (2002), and Nkosana and Rosenthal (2007) who identify peer pressure as another socio-behavioural factor motivated by financial and material gain. Mampane further explains that although having multiple concurrent partners increases the risks of contracting HIV, it gives the women a chance to be married by their boyfriends, who would then take over the responsibility of supporting them. Mampane's final factor, multiple concurrent partners and HIV-related complacency reflects on this. Thus, according to Mampane, women become complacent about contracting or transmitting HIV.

As mentioned above, Mampane (2018) claims that women resort to transactional sex relationships because of socio-cultural factors. Mampane identifies and explains two socio-cultural factors. Firstly, gender norms contribute to the formation of transactional sex relationships and HIV risk because there is a cultural expectation that men should be economic providers. Secondly, he adds that age-disparate and intergenerational relationships are glamorised as a blessee/blessee phenomenon, although it comes at the risk of HIV.

Mampane (2018) also explains the two socio-economic factors. First is the poverty of being uneducated and unemployed which is likely to cause young women to engage in risky sexual behaviour like transactional sex relationships for money. The second factor involves migration from rural to urban areas in search of employment. According to Mampane, this may also cause young women to engage in transactional sex relationships for basic needs like food and shelter.

In conclusion, according to the studies above, the following key issues are the causes of transactional sex relationships: agency, consumerism, modernity, poverty, parental influence or encouragement, peer pressure, and gendered norms. Firstly, women are not helpless victims but have agency which they use to access power and resources to fulfil their modern needs. On the contrary, this agency is not used for the women's benefit, instead, they strengthen patriarchal structures. Sometimes the women use the same agency to avoid reciprocating with sex. Secondly, modernity and consumerism contribute to the inception of transactional sex relationships. The images portrayed in

the media often make young women aware of their modern needs which are linked to a youthful lifestyle of alcohol consumption, using technology and keeping up with fashion trends. Poverty is the third causal factor which plays a critical role in initiating transactional sex relationships. Parents often accept and approve of such relationships because the young women involved earn money to support their families. Peer pressure has also been identified as the fourth critical issue contributing to transactional sex relationships because young women are pressured to attain trending fashion items that link with modernity and consumerism. Finally, the gendered expectation of men being the providers because it is a culturally accepted practice also leads to young women engaging in transactional sex relationships.

2.3.2 Causes of transactional sex relationships among university students

Social studies research has also examined the causes of transactional sex relationships among university students, and this section reviews the literature. According to Masvawure (2010), in Zimbabwe, sugar daddies are referred to as *Big Dhara*, which derives from the Shona word *mudhara*, meaning older men. Masvawure (2010) explains that the term is used for wealthy business people, directors, politicians and ministers. Masvawure's study interviewed university students that would not be considered poor because they had other people supporting them financially to determine their reasons for engaging in transactional sex. The responses suggest that these relationships are not always about financial need – even though money and material resources are the key features. The notion of being 'flashy on campus' appears to be central as "... the term refers to the desire to be seen and to be visible on

campus through the conspicuous consumption of particular luxury goods...”
(Masvawure, 2010, p. 861).

Masvawure (2010) also found that eating at upmarket restaurants was essential to *Big Dhara* relationships which meant that the student was spared the humiliation of eating in the dining hall. Eating in the dining hall was a mark of poverty; thus, eating at upmarket restaurants also allowed them to assert themselves as belonging to a different class. Shefer et al. (2012), similarly conducted a feminist qualitative study at a South African University in which poverty was also provided as the main reason for engaging in transactional sex. The providing partner was given the title of "minister of finance" (p. 443) "minister of transport" and "minister of recreation" to allude to the kinds of material benefits that men offer their female sexual partners" (Swartz, 2017, p. 93). However, other students viewed transactional sex as immoral.

In their study, Idris and Bukar (2016) used snowballing with 50 students from three universities. Of the 150 students some were interviewed whilst others preferred to fill out questionnaires. Idris and Bukar assert that women could exploit men for material gain just as men are perceived as sexual predators. The study found that safe sex negotiations for these women were motivated by the need to avoid pregnancy and not to protect themselves from Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs).

Studies conducted at Benin and Botswana universities concur that it is common practice for students to sleep with their professors or lecturers for higher grades, secure jobs and meet their financial needs (Albers et al., 2017; Eller, 2016; Kaute-Defo,

2004). According to Eller (2016) often, the man proposes and consent for the student is complicated because “while the acceptance of that proposition implies certain benefits, refusal implies consequences” (p. 748). Eller argues that if the student believes that refusing the proposal jeopardises her marks, such a proposition creates pressure and is sexual harassment. Pursuing this line of thought, Albers et al. (2017) explain that the practice of sleeping with lecturers to attain better marks is referred to as "sexually transmitted grades" (p. 173).

A recent study by Glasscoe (2020) investigated the local knowledge and understanding of transactional sex amongst university students. The study sample was taken from two universities comprising both heterosexual and homosexual participants who were either providers or beneficiaries. According to Glasscoe (2020), the following different colloquial terms emerged from the focus group discussions of the study, although they were described as fluid:

*Ben 10s are young male students that engage in transactional sex with older women or sugar mommies.

*Blessers/Blessees are the terms commonly used. The blesser is not necessarily older whilst the sugar daddy often is older. A previous study by Moodley and Ebrahim (2019) also states that the primary aspect of the blesser/blessee relationship is money and not age.

*Budbae is coined from bud (uncle) and bae (boyfriend or girlfriend). Both bud and bae are terms of address in which bud (*buthi*) which means uncle is added for respect because the term refers to an older provider.

*Barbie girls/trophy girls refer to the young female beneficiary of transactional sex. *Transactional sex is referred to as the industry or profession.

Glasscoe's (2020) study confirmed and disproved the older men/younger women assumption and found that other consequences of transactional sex relationships are emotional dangers such as divorce, betrayal and deceit.

The findings of the causes of transactional sex relationships at universities relate to those under the general causes of transactional sex relationships. In conclusion, the studies at universities found that students want to be considered prestigious or flashy (modernity) by their peers (peer pressure) through eating at upmarket restaurants (consumerism) and belonging to a different class (peer pressure). However, a distinctive cause of transactional sex relationships at universities is that students engage in these relationships to obtain higher grades and secure jobs. It is thus evident that a significant knowledge gap still exists in how the transactional sex relationship culture could be considered a contributory factor to the disintegration of women's emancipation, which is the current study's objective.

2.3.3 Geographical contexts of transactional sex relationships

Examining the causes of transactional sex relationships at university could also be considered context, however, this section reviews the literature on the urban and rural contexts. In a subsequent study, Leclerc-Madlala (2008), a leading scholar, makes seminal contributions to transactional sex. The scholar proffers that qualitative studies on age-disparate relationships have been conducted in rural and urban settings of sub-

Saharan Africa to determine what motivates women to enter into transactional sex relationships. However, it should be noted that the assumption by some studies that transactional sex is synonymous with age-disparate sex is inaccurate as similar-age partners can also have a transactional sex relationship (Kaufman & Stavrou, 2004; Jewkes et al., 2012; Stoebenau et al., 2016).

Leclerc-Madlala (2008) observed that all studies conducted in the rural settings of Zambia, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania and Malawi established that the lack of the following essentials contributes to age-disparate relationships: access to education, access to health services and employment. In addition, Mampane's (2018) study in rural South Africa revealed that socio-cultural, socio-behavioural and socio-economic factors contribute to the susceptibility of young women to transactional sex and the risk of HIV infection.

Furthermore, different scholars note that urban area studies in South Africa, Soweto and Botswana found the motivating factors for transactional sex to be material gain and peer pressure that emerges from the desire to match peers (Dunkle et al., 2004b; Hallman, 2004; Hunter, 2002; Leclerc-Madlala, 2008; Nkosana & Rosenthal, 2007). Concurring, Kaufman and Stavrou (2004) and Dunkle et al. (2004b) found that their socioeconomic disadvantage often made women agree to have sex without a condom to be paid more.

In conclusion, the contrast between transactional sex in rural and urban areas is geographically evident. As mentioned earlier, urban women are interested in material

gain (modernity) and the peer pressure that emerges from the desire to match peers in status (consumerism). In contrast, rural girls engage in transactional sex relationships because they want access to education, health services and employment.

2.3.4 Cultural taboos that cause transactional sex relationships

This section reviews the literature that presents the cultural taboos that lead to transactional sex relationships. Such taboos include the positive and negative attributes of sexual culture, the discussion of sex and the complexity of women's sexuality.

According to Tamale (2008), one of the leading scholars of culture and sexuality, positive and negative attributes are carried by the sexual culture in contemporary Africa. However, she explains that only the negative like disease and violence are often highlighted, and the whole subject of sex is concealed in taboo and secrecy. Furthermore, Tamale (2008) argues that patriarchal societies regulate women's sexuality by keeping women in the domestic sphere as either good wives or mothers dependent on their husbands, who are the breadwinners.

In addition, Burgoyne and Drummond (2008) observe that cultural taboos on sex discussions in many African countries have made women uncomfortable when seeking information about HIV, STDs and condoms. Ngubane (2010) reiterates those mentioned above when he states that any sex-related topic is traditionally taboo in most African communities because sex is regarded as a private subject that is not appropriate for public discussion. Since “the topic of sexualities is often wrapped in silence, taboos and privacies, researchers need to hone specific techniques and

methods to reveal invisible, silenced and repressed knowledge” (Tamale, 2011, p.17). Tamale also explains that numerous acts of different sexualities are often criminalised or stigmatised.

In a subsequent study, Tamale (2014) argues that "through the intersection of religions, statutory law and reinterpreted traditional customs, the complexity of African sexualities (particularly those of women) is instrumentalised, controlled and regulated by the patriarchal state (p.150). Tamale (2014) identifies three aspects, sin, taboo and criminalisation, in constructing sexuality and how African people experience it, which results in regulating and controlling it. However, Tamale (2014) adds that serious attention has been drawn to the analysis of issues related to sex on the African continent by African scholars, although it is still a work in progress. Taboos regarding sexual issues are common in Africa, especially for unmarried women.

2.4 Transactional sex relationship and its emergent issues

This section first reviews the social studies literature on the different issues that encompass transactional sex relationships. These include age, economics, gender imbalances, gift-giving, exploitation and masculinity. This section also goes on to review the literature on transactional sex relationships in African fiction.

2.4.1 Age, economics, and gender imbalances in transactional sex relationships

The focus of this review is on how age, economics and gender imbalances contribute and or relate to transactional sex relationships. Luke and Kurz (2002) argue that age, economics, and gender imbalances have traditionally been the norm in heterosexual marital relationships in Africa. However, they add that these imbalances have become

more noticeable throughout Africa because of the fluctuating social and economic conditions, which could have negative consequences for the transmission of HIV and AIDS, especially for adolescent girls. Hence, Luke and Kurz (2002), using a conceptual framework, recognise that “sexual activity is not just an individual attribute, but a behavior negotiated between two partners within a wider social, cultural and economic context” (p.5). They conducted a study focusing on age and economic imbalances as different types of power disparities in sub-Saharan African sexual relationships. They explain the limited negotiating power of adolescent girls regarding cross-generational and transactional sexual relationships as they are portrayed either as active agents that are in control of their decisions and resultant behaviour or as passive victims for whom broad socio-cultural and economic forces are at play.

Luke and Kurz (2002) explain that they are portrayed as active agents because adolescent girls have motivations for being in sexual relationships that are personally beneficial, especially if money and gifts are an incentive. Furthermore, young women actively participate in decisions regarding sex because they get a sense of power from exploiting their sexuality (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Luke & Kurz, 2002; Poulin, 2007). Luke and Kurz (2002) also discovered that girls choose to be in sexual relationships with older men because they offer better financial rewards. The decision to use or not use condoms could be part of the girls' strategy to attract male partners who, according to Kuate-Defo (2004), will marry the young girl or support her financially if she falls pregnant.

As stated earlier, the girls are also portrayed as passive agents. This is because of various outside influences such as peer pressure and a pre-existing system of gender inequality that influences the girls' ability to challenge the terms of the sexual relationship (Hunter, 2002; Luke & Kurz, 2002; McIlwaine & Datta, 2004). The passivity is problematic as it often leads to unsafe sexual practices. Luke and Kurz's (2002) study concludes that sexual relationships between adolescent girls and older men are imbalanced. The imbalance results from the fact that the men are older and have higher economic status giving them more power, whilst the young age of the girls is a pointer to reverence and ignorance. Another conclusion is that the girls can negotiate the formation and discontinuance of the relationship if they no longer receive gifts. However, in the relationship, the men seem to control the conditions for sexual intercourse, such as whether condoms or contraceptives will be used (Luke & Kurz, 2002). This conclusion is corroborated by McIlwaine and Datta (2004) who note that young girls find it difficult to negotiate the use of contraceptives. Previous research has indicated that transactional sex relationships support a change in partners because transaction varies during the relationship, with quantities given being more at the beginning of a relationship (Wamoyi et al., 2010).

In contrast to the studies mentioned above in which transactional sex discourses focus on women, Jewkes et al. (2012) conducted a cross-sectional study that interviewed a sample of 1 645 sexually active men aged 18-49 years. The study found that although previous discourses exhume women's power and liberation, men viewed themselves in a conservative gender role in which they felt the need to provide financial and material support.

In conclusion, one of the emergent issues of transactional sex relationships is the risk of young women contracting HIV and Aids. Their limited negotiating power further increases this risk because the men are often older and thus revered and economically advanced. This tends to put men in charge regarding decisions about sexual intercourse and condom use. The immediate implication here is that the younger and more uninformed the women are, the more vulnerable to being taken advantage of, and thus have no real agency. Another emergent issue is how transactional sex relationships advocate for a change in partners because of the amount of money received at the beginning of the relationship. The money received at the beginning is often more than when the relationship had progressed for a while. Seemingly, this promotes a culture of promiscuity as the women tend to move from one relationship to another, however, not casually but move upward on the prescribed blesser levels.

2.4.2 Gift-giving in transactional sex relationships

In addition to age, economics and gender imbalances, another key factor in transactional sex relationships is giving and receiving gifts. According to Hunter (2002), transactional sex and prostitution have the following similarities: they are non-marital, often with multiple partners, and signified by giving gifts or cash. However, he argues that transactional sex relationships are distinct in that the partners are referred to as girlfriends and boyfriends, not prostitutes. Female and male relationship constructions in public health, when addressing HIV and Aids, typically hold that a monetary exchange between a woman and a man is synonymous with prostitution (Wardlow, 2004), whilst Kuate-Defo (2004) opines that such an exchange exploits poor women. Poulin (2007), however, counters that Western notions of prostitution

influence both views as exchanges may take on a new meaning when assessed from a different cultural perspective. On the other hand, Kaufman and Stavrou (2004) posit that the relational foundation for many young people in South Africa is the exchange of gifts for sex. They add that gift-giving in like-aged partners, although pervasive, is rarely discussed, which is a form of leverage that entitles partners to sexual intercourse. Kaufman and Stavrou (2004) conducted a study that used focused group discussions with participants aged 14-22 and found that many associated money or cash with prostitution. Their study concluded that gift-giving has always been a part of relationships and will perhaps continue to be, however, the consequences of accepting gifts might have changed as gifts influence the sexual decisions young people make.

Subsequent studies found that gadgets like cell phones, fashionable hairstyles and clothes, pedicures and manicures were used to achieve flashiness as they were noticeable to other students (Kamndaya et al., 2016; Masvawure, 2010). The students thus feel part of a certain class because of their consumption habits and apart from being hinged on class (Shefer et al., 2012), consumerism is also a direct motivation for young people to engage in transactional sex (Kamndaya et al., 2016). Haddad (2018) explains the consumerist culture by categorising the blessings “[b]lessing” at Level 1 includes airtime and data, and as the levels increase, so does the amount of blessing, from clothes and luxurious goods (Level 2) to cars and iPads [sic] (Level 3), to overseas trips (Level 4)” (p. 7).

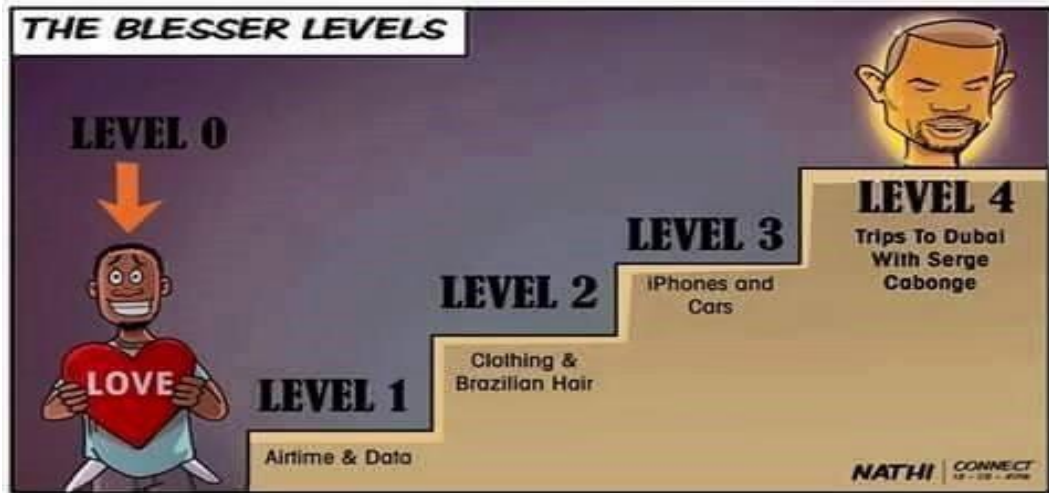


Image 1: A comic illustrating the stages of being #blessed

Haddad's (2018) blesser levels are what Ngubane (2016), a South African cartoonist illustrates in image 1. According to Garsd and Crossan (2017), Serge Cabonge, mentioned in level 4 of the comic, is a Congolese national who lives in South Africa, a self-proclaimed blesser who claims to have 10-12 girlfriends that he blesses. However, in the Cheeky Palate show hosted by Phat Joe in 2020, the guests of which Serge Cabonge was one, discussed the #MenAreTrash hashtag, and he pronounced his withdrawal from being a blesser because the phenomenon had been trending negatively (1Magic, 2020). Another illustration (image 2) that succinctly captures the blesser levels was created by Kruger (n.d. as cited in Stephens, 2016). The image gives an elaborate explanation of how the blesser system works. The levels explain the gifts the blesser are able to give the blessees. A level one blesser is only able to provide basic gifts like money for transport, airtime and fast food whilst a level three blesser is able to provide the best gifts that money can buy.

How the Blesser system works



Image 2: A pictorial description of how the blesser system works

Concerning gift-giving, a study conducted in Tanzania found that it was demeaning for women if there was no transaction while receiving gifts was a form of validation of their worth from their partners (Wamoyi et al., 2011). The researcher concurs with Wamoyi et al. (2011) that there is a need for further enquiry on women knowing the

limits between “knowing their worth, being proud of it, and exploiting it” (p. 12). However, women seem to be aware of their worth and would like to use their bodies to their advantage. Additionally, transactional sex is considered a new form of bride wealth (Wamoyi et al., 2011; Wight, 2006). In this case, gifts intended for a young woman would end up being similarly circulated among the family like a bride price would have been shared (Braun, 2018). According to Wamoyi et al. (2011), “[b]ride wealth was a way that gifts or money for sexual access changed hands in many traditional African cultures” (p. 7), although it used to be paid to the parents and not directly to the young women as is the practice today.

In essence, an emerging issue about gift-giving is that the consequences or conditions of accepting gifts have changed as young women make sexual decisions based on the gifts they receive. Even though gift-giving has always been and will always be part of relationships, whether, among like-aged partners or intergenerational partners, these decisions are not always safe as the women could contract HIV and Aids or fall pregnant, among other consequences. In contrast, another emerging issue is that women's agency combined with the knowledge of their self-worth encourages women to use their bodies as a commodity to make money or sustain their luxurious and lavish lifestyles. Whilst this could be considered emancipated women empowering themselves, the challenge is, can it still be a form of empowerment when it comes with dire and undesired consequences?

Another emerging issue is that transactional sex relationships dilute cultural practices that have been held sacred for years because it is a new form of bride wealth. However,

the money is given directly to the young woman instead of to her parents as was the norm traditionally. A practice seen as honouring the parents of the young women has been replaced with the young women receiving the money and often with the parents' permission, who are often also beneficiaries of her transactional sex relationship.

2.4.3 Is transactional sex exploitative?

Thus far, the section reviewed the literature on age, economics, gender imbalances and gift-giving relating them to transactional sex relationships. The present section assesses the literature on whether transactional sex relationships can be considered exploitative or not. Wamoyi et al. (2019a) examine social norm perspectives to determine whether transactional sex is exploitative. The study revealed that the gendered expectation that the man should be the provider persists, and previous studies conducted by (Bandali, 2011; Mampane, 2018; Shefer & Strebel, 2012) corroborate this finding. Another cultural norm is reciprocity, "the idea that if you receive something from someone, you should give something in exchange" (Wamoyi et al., 2019a, p. 6-7). Lastly, is the globalisation norm which is coupled with peer pressure and the desire for a modern lifestyle.

Wamoyi et al. (2019a) assert that transactional sex is not exploitative because many of the participants of the study described exploitation as sex with a girl without her consent or the use of force to have sex with someone. Both the male and female participants believed that it is exploitation when a man does not provide for a girl or uses her without any benefit to her. Additionally, Bandali (2011) states that the exchange of sex for resources enables the confrontation of gender norms by women

when they choose to earn an income in this manner and thus prove to be self-efficient and autonomous. Bandali further argues that being passive and dependent on marriage is a norm and some women exchange sex for resources to escape this norm and thus challenge the accepted female norms.

Furthermore, concerning whether transactional sex is exploitative or not, using the social exchange theory, Baumeister and Vohs (2004) analyse sex as a female resource for social exchange. Their study suggests that sex is a female resource because cultural systems endow female sexuality whilst male sexuality is treated as worthless. Baumeister and Vohs' (2004) research indicates that there is little to no exchange value attached to male sexuality while female sexuality demands a high but fluctuating price. The study further states that men consider sex a principal benefit and thus describe it as such, whereas women do not consider sex as a benefit. The study concludes that when sex is a primary resource to obtain a good life, then women should increase the exchange value. Baumeister and Vohs' conclusion seem to encourage women to exploit their sexuality for high-value exchanges.

In conclusion, great value is placed on the sexuality of women whilst the sexuality of men receives little value. Additionally, men consider sex as a benefit while women do not consider it a benefit. In this regard, transactional sex enables women to assert themselves against gendered norms by choosing to earn a living, using their bodies and thus proving to be self-efficient. However, what women do not realise is that they are indeed only self-efficient and not self-sufficient because they still need men to engage in transactional sex in return for money, gifts or resources. Considering what

the women's movement fought to achieve over the years, this could be considered the disintegration of women's emancipation. The movement fought for a dignified position for women in a society where they could be counted as equals to men and pursue any career they desired. Yet, through the blesser/blessee culture, women are reverting to the same men for money, gifts or resources. According to Gawas et al. (2022), the blesser/blessee culture keeps women in an inferior position to men and keeps patriarchy alive despite local and international efforts to promote equality.

2.4.4 Sugar daddies and sugar babies

Furthermore, this section reviews the literature on sugar daddies, and sugar babies, another designation for blesser and blessee and is also categorised under transactional sex relationships. Brouard and Crewe (2012) critically examine the phenomenon of sugar daddies and sugar babies in South Africa. They posit that exchange and obligation are transactional and inherent in all relationships, including marriage. They further argue that the sugar daddy and sugar baby relationship is interdependent and that the sugar daddy is not a predator, just as the sugar baby is not a victim. As such, Brouard and Crewe (2012) argue that their independence is rather a reflection of their relationship and the intimacy that has been formed, which is socially acceptable. They conclude that a crucial starting point is accepting that transactional sex is a valid variant of human conduct. Notably, it might be futile to stigmatise sugar daddies when the conditions that push young women to engage in transactional sex relationships still exist. Therefore, several actions need to be taken to normalise these relationships: patriarchy should be challenged whilst creating favourable conditions for enhanced

gender equality, and openness to discuss sex and issues that pertain to sexuality and fidelity should be promoted (Brouard & Crewe, 2012).

Fazlinovic et al. (2017), in a report about *sugar dating* in Namibia, argue that a consequence of *sugar dating* is that it keeps women in a subordinate position in society despite local and international efforts to promote equality. They further argue that *sugar dating* enables young women to buy desired material objects for themselves, but this does not necessarily equate to empowerment. The latter statement highlights the thrust of the current study which seeks to examine to what extent transactional sex relationships empower women.

Haddad (2018), further contends that blessees or sugar babies use their bodies as commodities to fulfil their immediate desire for material and luxury items whilst embracing patriarchal structures of inequality. She argues that social media is a by-product of neoliberal capitalism and blessees or sugar babies use it to demonstrate "a new form of sacral consumption that seems to embrace gender inequality and ignore potential vulnerability to HIV" (p. 15). Her study concludes that a woman's body, sexuality and need for intimacy are in the realm of taboo.

This section concludes that women use their bodies as commodities, posted on social media, to receive the proper attention from a sugar daddy/ blesser that will meet their modern needs for material and luxury items. Consequently, women continue to strengthen patriarchal structures of inequality. However, not all age-disparate relationships should be problematised as they do not all fall under the blesser/blessee or sugar daddy/sugar baby category, but are relationships in which individuals have chosen to be with a younger/older partner and not because of material resources,

money or gifts in exchange for sex. If all age-disparate relationships are to be problematised and some of these relationships result from choice, it raises the question of the role of hedonism in transactional sex relationships.

2.4.5 Transactional sex or hedonism?

A lifestyle that prioritises personal pleasure above everything else is called hedonism. Hedonists live their lives in pursuit of pleasure, ignoring crucial things that do not make them happy to acquire their pleasure (Valufi & Astuti, 2020). Weijers (2012) concurs that hedonism is unique and philosophically intriguing because it maintains that pain and pleasure are the only things of ultimate importance.

According to Matthen (2018, as cited in Valufi & Astuti, 2020), aesthetic hedonism is when we acquire mental well-being in life by focusing on looking physically attractive. Aesthetic hedonism is described as the pursuit of happiness through the pursuit of beauty (Karlia, 2018). This essentially means that people who believe in aesthetic hedonism will be happy when looking physically attractive. The essential goal, which is attained in any way, is to be beautiful. People who practice aesthetic hedonism are rarely able to appreciate the beauty in others (Matthen, 2018, as cited in Valufi & Astuti, 2020). In contrast, according to Weijers (2012), selfish hedonism is hedonistic egoism. Those who embrace it go to any length to obtain either material or spiritual happiness. Weijers further posits that they also disregard ethics in pursuit of what makes them happy and also don't seem to mind how their pursuit of happiness affects others.

In their analysis of Jane Austen's novel *Persuasion*, Valufi and Astuti (2020) conclude that there are two types of hedonism. The first is egoistic hedonism which includes taking pride in one's nobility, engaging in extravagant activities for pleasure, and

spending money on luxury items - sometimes despite being in debt and having the desire to appear wealthy regardless of one's financial condition. The second type is aesthetic hedonism which includes placing a high value on looks, insulting others physically, and prioritising physical attractiveness above attitudes and actions. Thus, considering the above definitions of hedonism and their distinctions, the current study attempts to address the question: is it possible that the blessee's lifestyle could be a hedonistic desire?

2.4.6 Transactional sex relationships and masculinity

Having assessed the literature on sugar daddies and sugar babies in the section above, this section reviews the literature on masculinity and its role in transactional sex relationships. Several studies suggest that men in sub-Saharan Africa derive masculinity from providing for and protecting their families (Barker & Ricardo, 2005; Lwambo, 2013; Turner, 1999). On the contrary, Shefer and Strebel (2012) theorise that having multiple sexual partners is evidence of men's masculinity.

In a critical review of men's constructions of intergenerational sexual relationships, Shefer and Strebel (2012) critique the absence of focus on understanding older men's positions and understanding the need for a "nuanced account of the complexities of men's performances of sexuality which will move beyond depicting all the men as inevitable perpetrators of unequal sexual relationships with younger women" (p. 7). They emphasise the importance of self-reflexive research that does not inherently problematise all intergenerational sexual relationships.

2.4.7 The negative consequences of transactional sex relationships on health

The results of a study conducted at a Nigerian university by Azumah et al. (2018) show that participants in transactional sex relationships experience a range of adverse health outcomes, including STIs, high risk of pregnancy and childbirth, and risky premature births. A study by Baumeister et al. (2017) in Detroit focused on transactional sex relationships among men (MSM). The participants who admitted having transactional sex scored higher for symptoms of depression and anxiety, and they also used alcohol and marijuana more frequently. Furthermore, transactional sex has been linked to an increased risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, as well as other unfavourable outcomes for sexual and reproductive health, such as intimate partner abuse, sexual coercion, higher alcohol consumption and unplanned pregnancy (Wamoyi et al., 2019a). The other sexually transmitted infections are validated by scholars such as Azumah et al. (2018) and Wilson et al. (2014). Other scholars validate the higher risk of unwanted pregnancy, sexual violence and drug abuse (Atwood et al., 2012; Dunkle et al., 2004a, 2004b).

Premised on the studies cited above, this section concludes that there are manifold negative consequences of engaging in transactional sex relationships. The physical effects include a high risk of contracting HIV, sexually transmitted infection, unwanted pregnancies and risky premature births whilst the psychological effects include depression and anxiety. The social effects include sexual violence and alcohol and drug abuse.

2.4.8 Transactional sex relationships in African fiction

The last literature review under the category of transactional sex relationships and their emerging issues is African fiction. Ofofu (2013) assesses the concept of sugar daddies and sugar mummies in Amma Darko's *Not Without Flowers* using the critical lenses of the Womanist and African Feminist's literary perspectives. Ofofu (2013) is one of the scholars who condemn transactional sex relationships because she categorises them as prostitution.

Stobie (2018) argues from the postcolonial feminist perspective when she explores the relationship of a blessee in Panashe Chigumadzi's *Sweet Medicine*. Stobie's analysis concludes that in urban settings, the existence of women is often coupled with poverty, women often do not have varied choices, and this results in negative effects.

Fasselt (2018) conducted a postfeminist reading of Angela Makholwa's *The Blessed Girl*, a genre fiction of African chick-lit written in the form of a memoir. The novel employs deception and trickery for the advancement of the heroine or the protagonist. Fasselt (2018) further states that Makholwa's novel centralises the class differences in the blesser/blessee relationship, describing it as an economic transaction more than a romantic one. In a podcast, Cochrane and Sawlani (2019) assert that African writers no longer exclusively produce serious and political novels but like Makholwa writes fun stories with serious undertones using *The Blessed Girl* as an example. They further elucidate that although Makholwa's story is funny in its description of sugar daddies and life in Johannesburg as a blessee, there are narratives of mental health issues, family history and the impact of apartheid on post-independent South Africa.

Frieslaar (2021) conducted a theological study to investigate the contributing factors to young women engaging in transactional sex relationships amongst others in the context of the church. The main claim of the study was that the "blesser-blessee" phenomena contribute significantly to a patriarchal, shame-centred culture that objectifies women and that this culture is the fundamental cause of violence against women. The study aimed to empower women to become free from the adverse effects of the blesser-blessee phenomenon and how the church should respond in assisting them. The research employed the narrative approach to "engage with the living human 'documents' (the young women who were interviewed)" (p.7) which included Jackie Phamotse, the author of the semi-biography #Bare: The Blesser's Game (2017). The study concluded that transactional sex relationships contribute to violence against women.

In a subsequent study, Frieslaar and Masango (2021) conducted a study to examine how transactional sex relationships contribute to Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). The central argument of their study was that the church should be acting decisively to combat the scourge of GBV and IPV. Phamotse, in an interview with Frieslaar, referred to the rape incidents she narrated in her novel (Frieslaar & Masango, 2021). According to Frieslaar and Masango (2021), the key outcome of the study was to provide the church with a framework for pastoral care and healing techniques to aid in the recovery of young women and their transition from shame to self-worth.

Ndlovu (2016) employs Butler's notion of precarity and general feminist approaches to examine *Sweet Medicine* by Panashe Chigumadzi (2016) in an essay review. Ndlovu

explains that Chigumadzi interrogates the complications of traditional and Christian patriarchal ideals in such crises by framing her work via the politically engineered collapse of the Zimbabwean economy. Ndlovu (2016) concludes that the kind of syncretism that Chigumadzi's narrative appears to support is the uncritical embrace of religious variety that seems to benefit various people as needed.

Lastly, transactional sex relationships in fiction have been labelled as prostitution or economic transactions. It is evident from the dearth of literature on transactional sex relationships in African fiction that it is a topic that has been researched in isolation and not in-depth. The social studies and fictional studies scholars reviewed concur that poverty and economic circumstances lead to transactional sex relationships in sub-Saharan Africa. However, a significant knowledge gap exists in how the blesser/blessee culture could be considered as possibly contributing to the disintegration of women's emancipation. These women go to extremes such as skin bleaching, breast and rear enhancements, and sexual intercourse without protection to keep their blessers happy. Although the refutation of this argument may be that women have the right to use and transform their bodies in any way they desire, the question remains whether they would have all the physical modifications done if their economic circumstances were different. Furthermore, another significant gap is that social studies research primarily focused on HIV and Aids as a consequence of transactional sex relationships without examining the socially emergent issues of physical or psychological consequences. This study thus intends to contribute to an attempt to close the aforementioned knowledge gaps by analysing four African novels

using the critical lenses of the postcolonial theory and a feminist critique of Lipstick Feminism as fictional issues often reflect our societies or vice versa.

2.5 The disintegration of women's emancipation

The emancipation of women is a concept that has been addressed for centuries. In the context of this study, and to better understand and answer the question whether transactional sex relationships contribute to the disintegration of women's emancipation, it is essential to explain the history of the concept first.

According to Amadi and Amadi (2015), movements that advocated for gender emancipation date back to the 1840s in the United States of America. They explain that this was when the seed for the first Women's Rights Convention was planted because the World Anti-Slavery Convention held in London had refused to seat Mott and other delegates because they were women. Moreover, eight years later, the dream to address women's issues by Stanton (a wife of an anti-slavery agent) and Mott (a Quaker preacher) materialised when they held the Seneca Falls Convention in the United States of America. The convention drew a crowd of 300 people, including 40 men, and because no women felt capable of chairing the proceedings, Mott's husband chaired. The resolutions were unanimously passed except for women's suffrage (Amadi & Amadi, 2015).

Amadi and Amadi (2015) note that 100 years later, the United Nations (UN) started to support the rights of women through its Charter, which declared in Article 1 "to achieve international cooperation...in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion (p.15). The two scholars continue to explain that in Africa, more

specifically Eastern Nigeria, the Aba women held riots in 1929, which was one of the early efforts of women's emancipation in Africa. The following table summarises global gender summits/conventions and resolutions that were aimed at advocating for the emancipation or empowerment of women.

Table 1: Summarised global gender summits/conventions and resolutions

Year	Summit/Convention	Resolution
1948	Universal Declaration on Human Rights	“All humans beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” ... “everyone is entitled to the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, ... birth or other status.”
1975	The first World Conference on Women held in Mexico City. Declared as International Women’s Year.	1979-1985 was declared the UN Decade for Women, and a Voluntary Fund for the Decade was established.
1979	The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), was adopted which is often described as an international Bill of Rights for Women.	The Convention set up 30 articles as well as an agenda for national action to end discrimination. The Convention targets culture and tradition as influential forces shaping gender roles and family relations, and it is the first human rights treaty to affirm the reproductive rights of women.
1980	The second World Conference on Women held in Copenhagen.	Called for stronger national measures to ensure women’s ownership and control of property, as well as improvements in women’s rights with respect to inheritance, child custody and loss of nationality.
1985	The third World Conference to review and appraise the achievements of the UN Decade for Women, held in Nairobi.	157 governments were participating and adopted the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies to the Year 2000. It was ground-breaking in that it declared all issues to be women’s issues.
1995	The fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing.	Adopted the Beijing Platform for Action and asserted women’s rights as human rights and committed to specific actions to ensure respect for those rights (affirmative action).
2000	In the aftermath of the Millennium Declaration of September, gender issues were integrated in many of the subsequent Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Goal No 3 and Goal no 5.	MDG 3 – promote gender equality and empower women MDG 5 – reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio

2010	UN women formed	Accelerate progress in meeting the needs of women and girls globally.
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Reprinted from: (Amadi & Amadi, 2015, p.17)

In addition to the data captured in the table, a decade later, in 2020, UN women staff can be found over 90 countries and,

[w]hether it's girls learning coding, women farmers using new climate resilient seed stock, small enterprise owners accessing large scale value chains, women candidates being trained to run successfully for office, discriminatory laws being abolished, women negotiators bringing essential constructive compromise to peace tables, or provision of psychosocial care for women survivors of violence; millions of women have acquired new skills, been supported through adversity, and gained strength and courage through learning their human rights. (Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2020, para, 4)

Despite global efforts for the emancipation or empowerment of women, as tabulated and explained above, some literature has continued to reflect the prevailing inequality. Tamale (2001) is one scholar who argues that marginalised groups like women are disadvantaged in an era of economic globalisation, especially African women who are on the outskirts of the global village. Tamale explains that new ideas are thus required for the struggle for women's emancipation. Geisler (2004) further contends that women's emancipation was a matter of economic independence, which would be guaranteed by women being integrated into the workforce. However, she critiques that women's habit of dependence, being passive and the burden of tradition they carry serve as the greatest obstacle to women's emancipation. The greatest challenge for

another scholar Bentley (2004) to women being treated right (legally) in South Africa is that women's legal rights are yet to be mirrored in action because rights exist primarily on paper. On the other hand, Tamale (2001) suggests that economic equality could be redressed by availing different options for women by facilitating access to resources. The suggestion is that a Basic Income Grant (BIG) would allow women to choose their circumstances and not remain economic hostages of certain situations.

In a subsequent study, Tamale (2008) pursues the discussion when she asserts that the solutions that could sustain many African women for their oppression, subordination or exploitation are not in the law but rather in the careful deployment of cultural norms and values. Tamale argues that culture should be approached not as a ritual but as a dynamic that examines the link between its positive characteristics and the emancipation of women.

Lastly, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as described by Amadi and Amadi (2015), targeted culture and tradition as enforcers of gender roles, yet 41 years down the line, as outlined in the reviewed literature, gendered norms are still a prominent issue enforced by culture and tradition. The cultural expectation persists that men are the providers, and they continue to play this role whether it is within a transactional sex relationship or a committed relationship. Studies in the review suggested that men in sub-Saharan Africa derive their masculinity from providing for and protecting their families, which is another gendered norm. Thus, regarding culture and tradition, much still needs to be done to see the CEDAW articles come to fruition, and this might take longer if women do not find fault with the cultures and traditions practised.

The 1995 fourth World Conference on women committed to actions that would respect women's rights with the implementation of affirmative action policies to ensure women received equal opportunities to own and control property. However, the women's owning and controlling property was not definite as this would often be determined by inheritance, a good education that would secure a high-paying career or a lucrative business. Due to colonialism, inheritance has not been a reality for black women, whereas education and starting up a business was made possible by affirmative action policies.

In 2020, a decade after the formation of UN Women, Mlambo-Ngcuka (2020) advances that "women have gained the strength and courage through learning their human rights" (para. 4). This could be interpreted as women gaining awareness about their human rights and could have encouraged women to use their bodies as commodities and engage in transactional sex relationships for their benefit and material and financial gain. The researcher concurs with Geisler (2004), who states that women's emancipation would be provided by economic independence, which would guarantee that women had jobs. However, Geisler echoes scholars highlighting the role of the gendered norm that the man is the provider when she critiques women's habit of dependence—this burden of women expecting to be taken care of hinders their emancipation.

The major contributing factor to the disintegration of women's emancipation can be attributed to the economic situation of women. According to the reviewed literature, most women who engage in transactional sex relationships do so for financial reasons,

while some university students from affluent families engage in transactional sex relationships to secure a good job once they have completed their studies.

2.6 Theoretical frameworks

African literature in English has been studied using various theories. The conceptual framework for this study is the post-colonial theory explored using the Feminist theory.

2.6.1 Postcolonial theory

Although the essence of postcolonial theory has primarily been Eurocentrism and writing back to the empire using different perspectives, the main focus of the current study relates to Mwangi's (2009) paradigm shift as explained in the book *Africa Writes Back to Self*. Mwangi (2009) aims to correct the impression disseminated by the conventional postcolonial theory that advances that African literature writes back to the colonial centre and thus proposes that novels be read as writing back to themselves and one another.

Mwangi further argues that the notion that African literature writes back to a European other does not recognise how these works of literature address emergent themes. Mwangi (2009) further examines contemporary African novels that have shifted their focus from issues of external colonialism to a self-reflexive treatment of gender and sexual relations. He argues that postcolonial criticism ignores locally produced texts in favour of other texts from Western publishing houses, however, this is a regular complaint that he intends to go beyond. It is important to note that Mwangi (2009) claims that his criticism of the postcolonial theory is not a rejection of its contribution

to African literature. However, the postcolonial theory is used to argue that contemporary African novelists employ self-reflexive strategies to express a state of being in postcolonial African societies and not to retaliate or negate western discourses.

Mwangi (2009) explicitly states that his main objective is to examine the emerging issues presented in contemporary African novels and not only to rethink the presiding paradigm of 'writing back' to the West. Mwangi explains that the novels, pre-occupied with self-interrogation and themes that focus on relations other than the coloniser and the colonised, undermine the paradigm of 'writing back' to the colonial centre.

According to Mwangi (2009, Introduction, para.9), postcolonial theory can be used and extended to argue that contemporary African novelists use self-reflexive strategies to point to changing societal circumstances and discuss issues that would typically be considered taboo to preserve themselves from censorship. Mwangi expounds on several key issues, namely, local forms of oppression, emerging realities, deconstruction of patriarchy and a critique of the local enactments of the hegemony, of which only two form the basis of the analysis for this study. The study employs postcolonial theory not in its conventional sense but rather as texts 'writing back' to themselves and one another because African literature in English draws attention to its literariness as it endeavours to address the challenges of its local environment.

2.6.2 Conceptual framework of Lipstick Feminism

Lipstick Feminism is a sub-category within third-wave feminism. It is thus essential to situate Lipstick Feminism and to share a brief historical background of how wearing lipstick became an issue in the framework of feminism.

2.6.2.1 Background

According to Gurrieri and Drenten (2019), the wearing of lipstick could be viewed either as heroic or as being in charge of one's sexuality. They argue that the heroic wearing of lipstick as an act of agency traces back to the suffragettes, who were portrayed as manly and did not comply with gender roles. Gurrieri and Drenten (2019) further explain that in response to this portrayal, to defy and appal men, the suffragettes, wore red lipstick, leading to retailers co-opting red lipstick as a sign of women's rebellion.

However, according to Gurrieri and Drenten (2019), today, lipstick is used as a tool of patriarchal capitalism to gain women's consent for their oppression. They further posit that the beauty industry has conditioned women to focus, work on and change their appearance to achieve a dominant feminine ideal, resulting in an unhealthy obsession with body image.

2.6.2.2 Third-Wave Feminism

Self-proclaimed feminists, Baumgardner and Richards (2004), analysed the state of contemporary feminism in an essay. In the essay, they advocate for the return to femininity and the use of feminine products like make-up, stilettos and G-strings. They further argue that the number of girls engaging in activities previously presumed

to be masculine is evidence of how girls responded to the second-wave feminist challenge to rise to their potential. However, according to Baumgardner and Richards (2004), this challenge confused them because they had to prove they could do male tasks. Therefore, they consider it to be the progression of feminism that younger third-wave women embrace girliness and power. Baumgardner and Richards (2004) claim that the second-wave feminists promoted:

the notion that to be a "good girl", you had to master "boy" things. That girls should do that while rejecting femininity, *go to work, play sports, and be tough, but don't do it while wearing nail polish, pink uniforms or crying.* (p. 60)

The two scholars further argue that although this was the agenda of the second-wave feminists, another concern also needed to be addressed, that is, what the value of femininity means for girls. Furthermore, Baumgardner and Richards (2004) contend that the use of make-up by women is not because of the influence of the marketplace or of the male gaze but rather a form of self-decoration without any other insinuations. They further explain that accepting consumerism, for second-wave feminists, is mistakenly equivalent to rejecting feminism, but for third-wave feminists, this is not the essence of their feminism.

Baumgardner and Richards (2004) explain that Debbie Stoller is one of the first third-wave feminists that theorised about *girlie feminism*. According to them, Stoller's premise was that something does not need to be masculine to be valued in society but should rather be comfortable bringing what is considered feminine into masculine spaces. The scholars conclude that without exalting male roles or traditional

femininity, the goal of third-wave feminism is to present a balance between the two where feminists can express themselves comfortably.

Subsequent studies by Butler (2009) and Snyder (2008) contend that third-wave feminists are born with the privileges that first and second-wave feminists fought for; therefore, gender equality today seems like common sense. Snyder (2008) explains three arguments central to third-wave feminism that distinguishes them from second-wave feminism. Firstly, third wavers feel entitled to equality and self-fulfilment and thus advocate for a new feminism that addresses the challenges they face within the diverse societal contexts. Secondly, they claim to be "less rigid and judgemental than their mothers' generation, which they often represent as antimale, antisex, antifemininity, and antifun" (p.179). In addition, they feel entitled to interact with men as equals and claim sexual pleasure as they desire. Lastly, Snyder (2008) states that third-wave feminism is depicted as inclusive and racially diverse. Even though this inclusivity of multiple identities complicates the feminist analysis, it is necessary to address the various experiences of young people. Butler (2009) concludes that post-feminism offers women new opportunities for agency and freedom, which requires them to abandon the criticism of patriarchy and engage in feminine practices while chasing social mobility, entitlement, enjoyment and success.

The 'equal opportunity feminism' does not identify with radical feminism and thus encourages young women to adopt a post-feminist ideology (McRobbie, 2009, as cited in Butler, 2009).

According to Keller (2011), one of the tenets of third-wave feminism is to make feminism fun. However, the third wave's individualistic framework has been critiqued as advancing individual women rather than women as a group or feminism as a social movement. Keller (2011) argues that this individualised feminism often offered by editors does not consider structural barriers of sexism, racism and classism, which are all crucial factors that shape girls' lives.

According to Chardon (2013), the traditional and stereotypical view of feminism seems to be rejected by third-wave feminism. Chardon further observes that the beauty industry, popular culture, and the media perpetuate the societal standards placed on women. This means that society and culture have created an image of what feminism should look like, which translates to being desirable sexually and being attractive using beauty products. Chardon (2013) concurs with McRobbie (2009), who explains that the same cultural system of beauty expects women to constantly judge and berate themselves by comparing themselves to the rigidly defined ideal of what feminine beauty should be.

According to Chardon (2013), practices such as plastic surgery and vaginal grooming have commodified the quest for corporeal perfectionism. Chardon further adds that the empowerment of women through sexual freedom is emphasised by popular culture and the media. Chardon's reasons that young women can exploit their sexual power can be attributed to different narratives and images sold in popular media. The media's portrayal of the sexual empowerment of women is often degrading and seems aimed at acquiring male attention, and popular culture gives the impression that women are having more casual sex that is considered a non-issue (Chardon, 2013).

Harrold (2014) maintains that there is new feminism popularly known as third-wave, girly, or lipstick feminism, for which little research has been conducted. According to Harold, femininity and beauty are linked in patriarchal societies, which has perceptual implications for feminism. Additionally, the opposition of beauty and femininity by feminism could be equated to feminism's unsuitableness for heterosexual relationships. Harrold (2014) concludes that a stereotype exists that feminists are unattractive; thus, for third-wave feminists, embracing beauty and fashion is deemed a feat of empowerment.

In examining a topic related to feminism, Baker (2017) analyses glamour and its role in feminism by analysing material practices like applying lipstick, wearing stilettos and drinking cocktails. Baker states that natural beauty no longer has cultural significance as a technique of feminism or capitalism, whilst for both aspects, the material practices of glamour work as a resource or source of subordination.

The ongoing debates centred around make-up and clothing are often regarded as a tool of patriarchal oppression. However, according to Waters (2007, as cited in Curtis and Cardo, 2018) feminists have argued that this has left many women feeling alienated from the movement as the requirements were too rigid when they ought to be allowed to use their bodies as they wish.

A recent study by Aune and Holyoak (2018) observes that third-wave feminism emerges in a post-feminist context in which feminism is considered unnecessary. Another study by Gurrieri and Drenten (2019) corroborates the aforementioned stating that postfeminism argues that the goals of feminism have been achieved, and the focus

has shifted from feminist tenets of the past to the vitality of individual empowerment, sexual agency and freedom.

2.6.2.3 Lipstick Feminism

The researcher analysed the selected texts through the lens of a feminist critique of Lipstick Feminism, which is a "third-wave feminist movement that supports the idea of accepting and embracing femininity to help women's empowerment" (Marchetti, 2020, para. 1). However, Marchetti (2020) asserts that Lipstick Feminism has been criticised for promoting patriarchy and the objectification of women's bodies. This study aligns its analysis with the concerns raised by McRobbie (2009) in her book *The Aftermath of Feminism: Culture and Social Change*, as cited in Butler (2009) and, more recently, Marchetti (2020).

According to Marchetti (2020), Lipstick Feminism primarily argues that traditional feminism does not encourage women to pursue what is traditionally seen as feminine because of its negative attitude towards femininity. Marchetti further states that women depriving themselves in this manner is seen as oppressive and an obstacle to women's liberation. Further, Lipstick Feminism argues that the power of femininity gives women the correct tools to steer into the dominant culture. As such, Marchetti (2020) adds that wearing make-up and profiting from their sexual appeal make women feel empowered.

Marchetti (2020) further observes that feminists like Chimamanda Adichie have encouraged women to wear make-up and high heels as this does not conflict with holding feminist values because if women take control of their sexuality and image, they empower themselves and other women. However, according to Marchetti (2020),

Lipstick Feminism is controversial because of three main criticisms. First, it is seen to help the “reproduction of the patriarchal system and promote the objectification of the female’s body” (para.3). Second, Lipstick Feminism lacks a response to how the media portrays women as well as the frenzied sexualisation of women in popular culture. Lastly, Lipstick Feminism is a feminism that is practised in isolation and thus renders a feminist political agenda useless.

McRobbie (2009, as cited in Butler, 2009), in response to Baumgardner and Richard’s (2004) essay, critiqued girly feminism, also known as lipstick feminism, arguing that it can change the attitude of young women and, in so doing create a problem. McRobbie refutes Baumgardner and Richards (2004) repertoire as not just feminine-focused but also advances capitalism which takes advantage of this market based on women starting to earn more. McRobbie (2009) further contends that Baumgardner and Richards (2004) essentially offer an anti-feminist view in a post-feminist context which is evidenced by the disrespectful nomenclature of "girly", which demeans the older generation of feminists. In addition, McRobbie (2009) argues that the current discourse of empowerment, which replaces feminism, disempowers women.

McRobbie (2009, as cited in Marchetti, 2020) raises a concern that current cultures are perpetuating the dismantling of feminism as a movement amongst which consumer cultures encourage the undoing of feminism. McRobbie critiques the current cultural forces, specifically the neoliberal consumer culture and how it psychologically impacts women. According to McRobbie, the consumer culture contributes to the disintegration of women's empowerment because although it seems as though it grants women endless possibilities and freedom, it essentially sustains new forms of gender power. In concluding the critique of Lipstick Feminism, McRobbie introduces the

idea of post-feminist masquerade, which is gender power that is body-oriented and reproduces masculine dominance. McRobbie explains that it is gender power that perpetuates the idea that women are free to wear what they want, fight, and have casual sex (like men), which in essence is a victorious gesture for the revival of patriarchy. In conclusion, McRobbie (2009) notes that Lipstick Feminism supports the neoliberal consumer culture because it encourages women to consume more and promotes individualism rather than collectivism.

The focus of the current study is to critique how Lipstick Feminism reproduces the patriarchal system and promotes the objectification of women's bodies. First, it encourages women to be seen as feminine by wearing make-up. Second, Lipstick Feminism argues that using their sexuality for profit makes women feel empowered. Similarly, the focus of transactional sex relationships is on appearance and sex appeal. The study will thus scrutinise how Lipstick Feminism, through the advocacy of the objectification of the women's body vis-a-vis make-up and sex appeal, possibly contributed to the disintegration of women's emancipation.

2.7 Chapter summary

This chapter reviewed the relevant literature related to controversies and gaps in the existing knowledge on transactional sex relationships. The chapter explained and defined critical concepts that pertain to transactional sex relationships, such as blessers/blessees, sugar daddies and sugar babies, amongst others. Thus, transactional sex is sexual intercourse that is given or provided in exchange for something but is neither prostitution nor marital. The distinction between sugar daddy and blessed relationships is that the gifts given in the latter are expensive. However, the similarity in both types of relationships is that the sugar daddy and blesser are older.

The chapter also reviewed the primary cause of transactional sex relationships and the social issues that emerge from these relationships, as presented in both social and fictional studies. The reviewed literature revealed the causes of transactional sex relationships which include, agency, modernity, poverty, peer pressure and gendered norms. In addition, the literature also raised the question of whether hedonism could be attributed to the blessee's lifestyle.

Then the chapter reviewed the different issues that emerge from transactional sex relationships. The first emergent issue is how transactional sex relationships advocate for a change in partners because the money received at the beginning of a new relationship is often more, and this change in partners seems to promote promiscuity. Another emergent issue of transactional sex relationships is the risk of young women contracting HIV and Aids, which is influenced by the fact that women make sexual decisions based on the gifts they receive; thus, the gift has the potential to influence whether they will practise safe sex or not. Another emergent issue is how transactional sex relationships dilute cultural practices because the bride price is paid to the young woman instead of her parents, as was the practice in the past.

The chapter also reviewed the development of women's emancipation and how transactional sex relationships could be seen as contributing to their disintegration. Transactional sex could be considered a way in which women assert themselves against gendered norms by choosing to earn a living, using their bodies and thus proving to be self-sufficient. However, women are only self-efficient and not self-sufficient because they still need men to engage in transactional sex, which keeps women in an inferior position to men and keeps patriarchy alive despite local and international efforts to promote equality.

Finally, the review explored two theories: the postcolonial theory, not in its conventional sense but as texts writing back to themselves and one another. The review also explored Lipstick Feminism, situating it under third-wave feminism to critique its advocacy for women to wear make-up and profit from their sexual appeal as a possible contributing factor to transactional sex relationships. The next chapter responds to the first research objective that examines how the selected novels innovatively employ literary devices and aesthetics to represent transactional sex relationships.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERARY DEVICES OF TRANSACTIONAL SEX IN SELECTED CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN FICTION

3.1 Introduction

The study's first objective is to examine how the selected novels innovatively employ literary devices and aesthetics to represent transactional sex relationships, colloquially known as the blessers, blessees, sugar daddies, sugar babies and side-chicks' phenomenon. This chapter thus aims to answer the first research objective by describing the recognisable features of transactional sex relationships as presented in the selected literary texts. The chapter achieved this by first providing synopses and author background of the selected literary texts, followed by descriptions of the transactional sex relationship culture and the depiction of the blessees and blessers as individuals. The researcher presented the results for the four texts instead of one text at a time, for consistency and comparison of the data. The chapter then analyses the literary devices employed to aesthetically present the unrefined descriptive data for transactional sex relationships. The researcher selected the literary devices based on transactional sex representation in the selected novels with the aim to draw similarities and differences between the devices in the novels. The chapter concludes with how the presented data contributes to the debate on the phenomenon.

3.2 Synopses and author background of the selected literary texts

This section presents a summary and an author background for each selected literary text in the following order; *The Blessed Girl*, *Bare: #The Blesser Game*, *Sweet Medicine* and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*.

3.2.1 Synopsis and author background of *The Blessed Girl* by Angela Makholwa

The cover of *The Blessed Girl* is glitzy and portrays the blessee looking up as if to say the sky is the limit. She reflects her blessed status by holding an unlimited credit card in her hand. She is wearing make-up but ironically seems to be wearing her natural hair and not a Brazilian weave. The author's name is written with silver letters, whilst the novel's title is written with gold letters, symbolising wealth, money or abundance in this context.

The Blessed Girl (2018) is a story about Bontle Tau, a young South African woman who narrates her story of how she has lived a blessed life. She makes her living through multiple, concurrent relationships with older wealthy men. In the story, Bontle Tau describes her life growing up and how she fell pregnant at the age of 14 because her mother forced her to sleep with one of her shebeen customers. Thus, growing up, she related as a sister to her son because she and her mom decided to hide the boy's maternity from him since Bontle was too young to be a mother and had to return to school. Bontle describes her exploits with her blessers, the lush life, expensive gifts, exclusive parties, the holidays and drug use, among others. She also describes her tumultuous relationship with her mother, her struggle with depression, her accident, her miserable life in a wheelchair and her death.

In an interview about *The Blessed Girl* with SABC News (2018), Makholwa explains that she explores the good, the bad and the ugly of when a woman decides to use her looks to acquire the lifestyle she desires (SABC News, 2018). In response to what she is trying to highlight in the book as a writer, she explains that a writer does not dictate to people how they should live their lives but “you mirror life as accurately as possible

and allow the reader to determine for themselves what they take out of the book” (SABC News, 2018). In addition, Makholwa explains that the phenomenon is not new but has escalated in recent years because of the pressure of social media which assists in creating an illusion of the lifestyle. She further explains how in the past women would be sugar babies in private but today they have to publicise it. Makholwa concludes that writing about Bontle gave her more empathy for women living the blessed lifestyle (SABC News, 2018).

3.2.2 Synopsis and author background of *Bare: #The Blessor Game* by Jackie Phamotse

This section describes the book cover and provides a synopsis of the second novel studied, Phamotse’s (2017) *Bare: #The Blessor Game #The Breeding of an Underdog* and a brief explanation about the author. The novel will henceforth be referred to as *Bare: #The Blessor Game*. The title and cover of the novel suggest being naked or vulnerable. The person exposes truths about their body, sexual relations, and money. *Bare: #The Blessor Game* (2017) is a story about Treasure Mohapi. The story summarises Treasure’s life, growing up with her parents and siblings. Treasure witnesses the physical and verbal abuse lashed out at her mother by her father and is delighted when she is sent to boarding school to complete her high school. Treasure, although lonely, is a focused straight-A student at school who loses her virginity to a friend when she avoids going home to witness the tension between her parents and especially her mother’s deteriorating health. After completing high school, Treasure is raped on two occasions and moves to Johannesburg to live with her friend, who promises to help her make her modelling dream come true. Through Lintle’s boyfriend, Treasure meets Tim Morgan, a married multimillionaire, who sweeps her off her feet with a lavish lifestyle by buying her an apartment in Sandton, an expensive

car, designer clothes and gives her a credit card. Treasure describes how her life becomes centred around Tim, her peculiar friendship with his wife, her estrangement from her family, her painful sexual ordeals, the forced abortion and Tim's controlling nature which makes it difficult for her to leave him. The novel ends with Treasure naked and outside on a sidewalk, thrown out of the car by the blesser.

In an interview about *Bare: #The Blesser Game* (2017) with SABC News (2018) Phamotse explains that she conducted a bit of research to see how people live in Johannesburg and what lures them to Johannesburg and discovered that it's both the good and the bad aspects. She further explains that young people look for instant success and are not educated about social media and its mental effects. Phamotse expounds that the transactional sex relationship phenomenon is over 200 years old and it just keeps evolving. "It has been made a social norm and people start intoxicating themselves to live this life. Tradition has become a cultural cult" (SABC News, 2018). In response to why she decided to document her story, Phamotse explains that South Africans like to hide things which encouraged her to share her story because she thought it could help someone in the same situation (SABC News, 2018). Phamotse concludes her interview by giving young women advice that it is "better to secure your own life and sustain your own life before you are in someone else's. Get an education, work, and have your own identity in any kind of relationship because the blessed life is addictive but women have to be determined to find another way to live because it is not sustainable" (SABC News, 2018).

3.2.3 Synopsis and author background of *Sweet Medicine*

Sweet Medicine is a story set in Zimbabwe and revolves around a young woman, Tsitsi, who, despite having a Bachelor of Economics degree, works as a secretary earning a meagre salary. She takes care of her mother and uncle and is frustrated by the 'hand-to-mouth' lifestyle. Nudged by her long-time friend, Tsitsi decides to seduce her boss (Zvobgo) to become not just the Small House (side-chick) but hopefully the second wife. The story starts with Tsitsi visiting a *n'anga* to get something to help her win back Zvobgo's affections, who seemingly is no longer interested in her. Chigumadzi (2016) employs the flashback technique to narrate how Tsitsi successfully seduced Zvobgo and became his traditional wife after his wife left him. Tsitsi no longer receives physical affection from Zvobgo because he is interested in the new secretary that replaced her at work. Tsitsi decides to look for 'sweet medicine' from a *n'anga* to take care of the new secretary and ensure that she falls pregnant and bare Zvobgo, a son he does not have.

Unlike Makholwa and Phamotse, there is no source available in which Chigumadzi explicitly details her inspiration for writing *Sweet Medicine*. Panashe Chigumadzi is a Zimbabwean-born, South African-raised novelist. According to a review by Murua (2016), her debut novel *Sweet medicine* was inspired by the 2008 economic upheaval in Zimbabwe. The novel powerfully depicts the suffering that Zimbabwe endured during its darkest hour as a nation weaving together economics, religion, witchcraft and sexual relations.

3.2.4 Synopsis and author background of *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

The novel's title summarises the plot because the story is narrated by the side-chick who explains why it is *our* man, which means he belongs to the side-chick and the wife instead of *your* man, which would mean he belongs to the wife alone. The title of the book seems to be addressed to the wife, and the spelling of the *y* in the lower case seems to be a mockery to the wife that her husband is shared; thus, the *OUR* is in upper letters. The writing of the novel's title in this fashion is significant because it already provides the reader with the plot without having read the story.

The y in yOUR Man is Silent (2019) is a story about a young woman, Lastborn but known as Fierce to her friends and blesser. She is from Zimbabwe and has spent eight years at the university since her first degree and is now pursuing a PhD in Chemical Engineering. She falls in love with Elik, an Engineering professor who is older than her. It seems like a beautiful love story until he marries someone else, and she learns about it from social media. The story thus centres around her life as a side-chick to the professor, who is also a multi-millionaire. Maphosa (2019) details the multiple break-ups, reconciliations, the couple's numerous incidents of public indecencies, imprisonments and fights between the wife and the side-chick. By the end of the novel, the blesser divorces his wife and proposes to the side-chick who is pregnant for him. In an interview with King Boaz on earGROUND (2019) about her novel, *The y in yOUR man is silent: Book 1* Maphosa, who hails from Plumtree in Zimbabwe but currently resides in Cape Town, explains what inspired the writing of the novel. Maphosa further explains that she started writing the book to overcome feeling low during her PhD studies as writing has always been an escape (earGROUND, 2019).

She explains that the main character is mirrored after herself and is also doing a PhD and also comes from a background where polygamy is normal but the rest of the story is mirrored after what happens every day. Thus Maphosa, who completed the novel without a title does not support side-chicks but has no problem with polygamy (earGROUND, 2019).

3.3 The transactional sex relationship culture in the selected literary texts

This section discusses the transactional sex relationship culture in the selected literary texts: *The Blessed Girl*, *Bare #The Blesser Game*, *Sweet Medicine*, and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*.

3.3.1 The transactional sex relationship culture in *The Blessed Girl*

In Makholwa's (2018) *The Blessed Girl*, Bontle is the blessee with three different blessers. Makholwa depicts the transactional sex relationship culture as luxurious, describing actual hotels, cars, clothing brands, wine, and champagne in South Africa. The transactional sex relationship culture is made to seem easily attainable and that it should be every girl's dream.

Firstly, Bontle in Makholwa's (2018) *The Blessed Girl* describes herself as saying:

I am currently twenty-four years old; I own two businesses, a fully paid-up penthouse on Grayston Drive in Sandton, right at the heart of Johannesburg's swanky metropolis; and I drive a luxury German vehicle – a convertible no less. (p. 4)

The description in the quote creates the setting of the story by describing Sandton as a large, luxurious and expensive city which creates an impression that it is a neighbourhood for the rich and thus excludes the poor. The description also creates an impression of success achieved at a young age by describing the number of businesses the blessee has, her penthouse and her car at the age of 24. Secondly, Bontle wears, promotes and sells Brazilian hair and only wears designer-brand clothes. She describes women with natural hair and short nails as basic. The word basic implies that women who wear their natural hair with undone nails do not fit into the transactional sex relationship culture. Designer clothes always accompany the hair and nails of the blessee. The transactional sex relationship culture reflected in *The Blessed Girl* also promotes the idea of multiple blessers to ensure a comfortable life. However, the blessers make sexual demands of not using protection according to the level they give the blessed girl, which puts both the blessee and blessers at risk of sexually transmitted infections or unwanted pregnancy. Lastly, Makholwa (2018) portrays social media as vital in the transactional sex relationship culture because it is how blessees promote themselves on different platforms to be seen and contacted by blessers. However, Makholwa (2018) also highlights the price at which the blessed life is attained and its negative consequences.

3.3.2 The transactional sex relationship culture in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*

Corresponding to Makholwa (2018), Phamotse (2017) describes a myriad of themes such as appearance, consumerism, sexual relations and social media in the transactional sex relationship culture, and this section discusses them briefly.

3.3.2.1. The culture of appearance and consumerism in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*

Appearance and consumerism are significant themes in transactional sex relationships. As such, several studies conclude that women use their agency to exploit transactional sex relationships to fulfil their modern needs fuelled by the media and globalisation (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Swartz, 2017). This section briefly introduces how Phamotse's (2017) novel describes appearance and consumerism as part of the transactional sex relationship culture.

The setting of *Bare: #The Blesser Game* is announced when upon her arrival in Sandton, Treasure's friend Lintle informs her that it is a suburb for the affluent in Johannesburg and that one's appearance is crucial. Treasure learns that braids are an unacceptable hairstyle and are thus quickly replaced with a 22-inch Brazilian weave with a frontal lace wig that costs \$300 and more. She also learns that short, dirty nails are equally unacceptable, especially if she is to use her hands to give someone a massage or a blow job. Treasure thus receives a manicure and pedicure to complement her hair. In addition, wearing flat shoes is prohibited, especially not to exclusive dinner parties. Lintle also teaches Treasure 'how to be a lady' (p. 150), what to drink and what to wear.

It is a 'suburb for the affluent' is a statement that immediately excludes the poor from the suburb of Sandton whilst reiterating the importance of appearance for the wealthy. Braids that would typically be affordable for a young woman who is a student or starting in her career are 'an unacceptable hairstyle' as women need to wear Brazilian weaves to associate with the desired crowds. Short nails are linked to women's sexuality because they are not aesthetic enough to give a blesser a blow job or a

massage. The discouragement of wearing flat shoes reiterates Lipstick Feminism's advocacy that wearing heels empowers women. In addition to appearance, Treasure, who has not considered a lesson on what to drink essential, is taught what to drink to fit into the affluent people of Sandton.

Phamotse (2017) provides several examples of the consumerist nature of transactional sex relationships. The examples reiterate Moodley and Ebrahim's (2019) finding that blessed relationships are a popular culture phenomenon that started as a fashionable social trend contextualised with looks and materialism with a luxury lifestyle as its defining feature. Thus, in training Treasure about Sandton's culture, Lintle mentions lists of designer names. She says, "...when it comes to shoes ... Gucci, Miu Miu...Stuart Weitzman, Alexander McQueen, Walter Steiger...Christian Louboutins, Jimmy Choos, Manolo Blahniks, Tom Fords and of course the master Louis Vuitton" (p. 152). Lintle suggests the following designer names; Valentino, Versace, Dior, Armani, Prada, and Chanel, in case Treasure meets a 'minister of finance' who wants to buy her clothes.

After that, Lintle takes Treasure shopping with her boyfriend's credit card and the consumerist nature is portrayed as she buys her stiletto heels that cost the price of two smartphones which Treasure describes as a price that could feed an entire village. After spending "ten thousand...in three hours" (p. 162), Lintle reassures her friend not to worry as her boyfriend has a lot of money because he will be buying an Aston Martin, a luxury British sports car, the following week.

Then when Treasure finally starts dating Tim Morgan, he takes her on random shopping sprees, trips, and game drives with expensive gifts and dinners. Eventually, "Tim became the centre of her world. She was addicted to him and the lifestyle he

came with...[h]e gave her all of his attention and spoon-fed her gifts and money” (p. 174). Thus, Treasure admits getting used to the consumerist lifestyle because her blesser spoils her with money and gifts.

The consumerist nature of the transactional sex relationship culture cuts across all spheres, from wearing designer labels to drinking only specific wines and champagnes to living in posh neighbourhoods in tailor-furnished apartments. Treasure’s blesser, Tim Morgan, confirms this consumerist nature when he tells Treasure, “I’m more than a common boyfriend. I can help you to open a small business and even get you government tenders” (p. 185). He has the money to spend in return for Treasure fulfilling his sexual fantasies and being the trophy girlfriend. The most significant example of the consumerist nature is summarised in the following quote; “Treasure wondered if her friend was really in love or just obsessed with the material benefits...” (p. 158). This quotation is significant because it shows that Treasure was not immediately swept by the opulence presented to her but was still making judgements and questioning her friend’s motives.

The above examples substantiate the literature findings that items exchanged for transactional sex include money, education, clothes, food, alcohol, basic needs at home and cell phones (Kuate-Defo, 2004; Zembe et al., 2013). Consumerism is a direct motivation for young people to engage in transactional sex (Kamndaya et al., 2016). The aforementioned examples also reiterate the agenda of Lipstick Feminism, which proposes that wearing make-up and profiting from its sexual appeal makes women feel empowered (Marchetti, 2020). The designer brands mentioned in the examples like

Lipstick Feminism also promote a consumer culture that encourages women to spend more on what would make them feel empowered vis-à-vis make-up and heels. McRobbie (2009, as cited in Marchetti, 2020) argues that the new form of gender power introduced by Lipstick Feminism perpetuates the idea that women are free to wear what they want, fight, and have casual sex (like men), which in essence is a victorious gesture for the revival of patriarchy. Similarly, the sexual relations in transactional sex relationships described by Phamotse (2017) also relate to the casual sex alluded to by McRobbie (2009).

3.3.2.2 The sexual relations culture in *Bare: #The Blessor Game*

In addition to appearance and consumerism, sexual relations are another integral aspect of transactional sex relationships because of the exchange of sexual intercourse for money or other gifts. In addition to vividly describing the sex scenes, Phamotse (2017) also describes the social context of transactional sex relationships.

The implication is that whoever is involved in the ‘game’ as often referred to in the novel needs to be informed about sex etiquette. This section provides examples that attest to the transactional sex relationship culture. The quote “I hope you're well oiled about sexstyles” (p.143) suggests that one needs to be an expert or schooled in the execution of different sex styles to provide the necessary pleasure and entertainment, which is why people engage in sexual intercourse. This is also captured in the blesser’s words, “We can have dinner there and enjoy a massage in their lovely spa. And...we'll have a suite all to ourselves, so that we can finally BOND” (p.177). It finally dawns on Treasure that the ‘bond’ that he refers to is sexual intercourse in return for

everything he has done for her thus far after having spent months of no sexual intercourse with her blesser, which she considered romantic. Treasure, does not just receive a crash course from her friend Lintle on how to be a lady and how to dress, but she also receives advice on sexual matters; "... listen to him like you're his wife, and make sure you please him well tonight" (p.178). *Like you're his wife* implies that she should allow her blesser to do whatever he desires without objecting. She is also advised that if she makes her blesser happy in bed, Paris could be her next home, implying that her blesser will give her everything she desires. Hence, to maintain her lifestyle and have continued access to money, Treasure "agreed to play out his fantasies, even though the sex was tougher than ever before, and even toxic on some days" (p.266).

Phamotse's (2017) writing also suggests that transactional sex relationships are a culture in which more than two people can be present in the relationship, both men and women. The following quote, "...his appetite was greater than she was. She couldn't control him or who he slept with" (p.291), attests to the primary importance of sexual intercourse and promiscuity being the norm. According to Hunter (2002), having multiple sexual partners is approved by men as part of a tolerated masculine norm. Thus perhaps men do not consider having multiple partners as promiscuity but as a norm. The examples above of sexual intercourse are the crux of why transactional sex relationships are initiated.

3.3.2.3 The role of social media in *Bare: #The Blessor Game*

In addition to sexual relations, social media is an essential part of transactional sex relationships because of the social context in which people feel the constant need to post their lives on such platforms. According to Leclerc-Madlala (2003), the fluctuating nature of the economy has given rise to new patterns of sexual behaviour. Women use transactional sex relationships to pursue images portrayed in the media. Women then perpetuate these same images in the blesser/blessee culture because it is crucial to take selfies of new hairstyles, vacations and what you are wearing for posting on Facebook or Instagram. The following quotes substantiate the above; "...life is only as good as it looks on social media. If it's not on Facebook, it never happened..." (p.165). Another quote that substantiates the importance of social media is:

Treasure realised that to this crowd, sharing pictures was less about sharing moments with friends and more about showing what you had, the people you knew, and how much you could spend in one go. The lifestyle had to be opulent - having countless followers on social media, with thousands of likes and comments and retweets, showed how powerful and influential a person was. Treasure was surprised to find that she wanted a piece of that life, with that kind of power and influence. (p.165)

Thus, the implication is that the number of likes, followers and retweets are directly proportional to living a blessed life. It is not a life that can or should be lived privately because if people on social media have not seen it, it probably is inaccurate or never happened. Phamotse (2017) also intimates that because of the opulent lifestyle one would seem to live and post on social media, society would validate you and treat you with a certain respect.

In light of the above views, the researcher identified social media as one of the most significant and pervasive local forms of oppression according to Mwangi's (2009) postcolonial paradigm of writing-back-to-self. Almost every young person has access to at least one of the social media platforms namely, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or WhatsApp. Transactional sex relationships amongst others are advertised as the norm. Social media is influential because authentic and inauthentic information is readily available, and for young people who do not possess emotional intelligence or cyber security awareness, this could drive them to make unwise decisions. Although these platforms are western inventions, their usage and impact on African youths are undeniable.

3.3.3 The transactional sex relationship culture in *Sweet Medicine*

The transactional sex relationship culture described in *Sweet Medicine* is primarily depicted as existing because of the adverse economic condition in which the country finds itself. The economic circumstances force young women who had different ambitions for their lives to engage in transactional sex relationships to survive. Following this line of thought, McIlwaine and Datta (2004) and Varjavandi (2017), assert that transactional sex relationships are linked to poverty and the need to survive. This is echoed in the conversation between Tsitsi and her best friend, Chiedza, in which the latter justifies their lifestyle. Chiedza argues that there are enough horny old and young men who are willing to pay for her services, thus her reason for exploiting the situation; "You look at me and you judge me.... Why can't this be my profession,

one I have chosen for myself? I tell you, prostitutes are professional in their skills and practise it like the vocation of true apostles...” (p.73).

When Zvobgo no longer shows Tsitsi his physical affection through sex, she contemplates trying to seduce one of his colleagues. However, she soon realises that “[t]hey were all busy with their current Small Houses” (p.75) and would not take care of her mother and uncle the way Zvobgo has done. This is evidence that Tsitsi understands the implications, that is if Zvobgo is to find a new Small House because he is bored with her – who will take care of her mother and uncle? Despite being a graduate, Tsitsi was employed as a secretary because “[a] job was a job. The time for careers and passions was gone. Hunger pangs displaced ambition” (p.86). These dreams are further described as “...dreams of self-actualisation morphed into thoughts of stomach actualisation...” (p.88) because the primary objective of the Small House was to put food on the table, especially for those who depended on her.

Sweet Medicine substantiates a culture described in *The Blessed Girl* and *Bare: #The Blessor Game* because the blessee always desires material possessions. “Tsitsi...wanted things. Things. Things. Many of them” (p.110). Unfortunately, the transactional sex relationship culture has consequences like unplanned pregnancies, which force the blessees to terminate the pregnancies, even if it means doing so illegally and risking their lives. The following example attests to this risky behaviour – “Chiedza, you're so far along this is the third time now - what if you can't have children when you eventually do want them?” (p.168). The aforementioned example also substantiates the findings in the literature review that young women actively

participate in decisions regarding sex because they get a sense of power from exploiting their sexuality (Luke & Kurz, 2002; Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Poulin, 2007). The power to exploit their sexuality is perhaps why Chiedza, who is also in a transactional sex relationship, is not perturbed by continuously having abortions.

3.3.4 Transactional sex relationship culture in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

In describing the culture, Maphosa (2019) focuses on sexual relations, relationships and money as they pertain to the transactional sex relationship. The two critical issues in transactional sex relationships are sexual relations and the exchange of money for it. Maphosa (2019) describes the sexual relations, relationship dynamics and money in transactional sex relationships, which this section discusses below.

Firstly, Maphosa (2019) provides three examples to set the tone for transactional sex relationship culture in which sex and money are explicitly mentioned. In the first example, Fierce, at the age of 18 and while still a virgin, is advised by her friends to sleep with someone who has money because she “was a girl and would have sex anyway, why not do it with someone who had money” (p.9). Mampane (2018) substantiates previous findings by (Dunkle et al., 2004b; Hallman, 2004; Hunter, 2002; Nkosana & Rosenthal, 2007) when he states peer pressure is another socio-behavioural factor motivated by financial and material gain. The aforementioned example is evidence of the paradigm of 18-year-old university students who seem to have concluded that they must have sex, and if they are going to have sex, it must be with someone wealthy. It also shows how casually sexual intercourse is regarded. In the second example, Fierce, at the age of 25, thinks to herself that “[t]here’s nothing as

dangerous as a rich man with good sex! It confuses the hell out of you” (p.250). This quote shows the correlation between a rich man, sexual intercourse and a young woman’s confusion. It means that apart from Fierce enjoying sexual intercourse with the blesser, the blesser’s money is also a motivational factor to have sexual intercourse with him.

In the last example, Fierce’s maternal aunt explains to her why Elik keeps giving her money; “[y]ou’re serving him red velvet cake with a fork and knife! When you’re done with him all he thinks about is taking out his bank card” (p.344). The maternal aunt compares sexual intercourse to a red velvet cake, a delicacy compared to the usual chocolate and vanilla-flavoured cakes. Her explanation implies a connection between how well the blessee gives sexual intercourse and the blesser’s wallet; he gives her money because he is satisfied sexually.

Secondly, Maphosa (2019) also provides examples to set the tone for the transactional sex relationship culture in which she describes relationship dynamics. In the first example, Fierce learned early enough to “[s]tay away from your man’s phone if you want a long happy life!” (p.318) because when she checked, she discovered that she was not the only side-chick. Although the side-chick would have thought that the blesser is *OUR* man, hers and the wife’s, she soon discovers that the blesser has many side-chicks. In addition, because they had been in a relationship for so long, Fierce no longer felt guilty about being a side-chick but felt like she was in a normal relationship. She also thinks, “girls in my situation are not supposed to love the man. Just give him sex and take his money and the job is done” (p.322). Fierce knows her side-chick

position in the life of her blesser; she no longer feels guilty and is fully aware that ideally, their kind of relationship is supposed to be an exchange of sex and money with no emotions involved. The advice Fierce receives from her maternal aunt in the following two examples also attests to the transactional relationship culture that promotes patriarchy; “[i]f he treats you well but sees other women on the side where’s the problem?” (p.336) and “[a] man with many women is respectable but a woman with many men is a prostitute” (p.366). The researcher thus opines that the transactional sex relationship culture keeps women in an inferior position of depending on men financially and keeps patriarchy alive despite local and international efforts to promote equality.

Thirdly, Maphosa (2019) also provides examples to set the tone for the transactional sex relationship culture in which she exchanges money. Fierce’s family members are the ones that primarily attach importance to the value of money. This value attached to money corroborates Groes-Green (2013), who posits that the *curtidoras* (young women) receive erotic knowledge from their elderly female relatives in exchange for sharing the profits received from the *patrocinadores* (older white men) with their mothers, aunts, and sisters to buy necessities for the children and male members of the family.

The following are examples of how Fierce’s family, whom she has always considered cultured and strict, regard money. Her family had “pushed aside the rule book at the first smell of money” (p.333) because the cultures that were upheld in the past, like not bringing a man to your parent’s house unless he was coming to propose, were no longer enforced because Elik was rich. In addition, her maternal aunt advises Fierce,

who does not know that he is married, that she “shouldn’t mind that he’s pitch black because the beauty of a man is not on his face but in his wallet” (p.335). Thus, Fierce alludes to the desire of her parents to own cattle and how she intends to “buy them a whole kraal...No need to wait for a man to bring them home” (p.345) as she would buy them herself when she starts working. This quote shows that the side-chick still has ambitions to work and provide for her family. Her ambitions imply that she is not in a relationship with the blesser because of his money, else, she would have asked for the cattle her parents desire.

3.3.5 Summary of the transactional sex relationship culture in the selected literary texts

The transactional sex relationship or blesser/blessee culture in Makholwa’s (2018) *The Blessed Girl* is described as luxurious, attainable and every girl’s dream. Bontle Tau, the blessee has three blessers, is 24 years old, lives in Sandton, drives a luxury car, has buttock implants and hopes to become a second wife to one of the blessers. In addition, Phamotse’s (2017) *Bare: #The Blesser Game* extensively describes the required appearance to thrive in Sandton, the consumerist culture, sexual relations and social media. Treasure Mohapi, arrives in Sandton after passing her grade 12 with flying colours to pursue a modelling career and not a transactional sex relationship. After being coached about the do’s and don’ts of Sandton by her long-time friend, she inadvertently ends up in a transactional sex relationship. Although she starts as a naïve young woman, she quickly adapts to her new lifestyle.

Interestingly, the economic situation in Zimbabwe leads to the young and educated Tsitsi in Chigumadzi’s (2016) *Sweet Medicine* pursuing a transactional sex

relationship as a means of survival. As such, the transactional sex relationship culture described in the texts above all highlights a desire for material possessions. Lastly, Maphosa (2019), in describing the transactional sex relationship culture, focused on sexual relations, relationship dynamics and money.

3.4 The depiction of blessees in the selected literary texts

This section describes the depiction of the blessees as small houses and side-chicks in transactional sex relationships.

3.4.1 The blessee in *The Blessed Girl*

In Makholwa's (2018) *The Blessed Girl*, Bontle, the dynamic main character, describes herself as having a "honeycomb complexion, ...almond eyes, ... mole on the right corner of my mouth and ...luscious lips" (p.3). She is 24 years old, lives in a fully paid-up penthouse in Sandton, a suburb for the affluent and drives a convertible luxury German car. She has expensive taste and believes every girl should too, but only if a blesser sustains their lifestyle. Her luxurious lifestyle, including clothes, food, penthouse and car, are all sustained by the various blessers. In addition, she has had buttock implant surgery and hopes to have a nose-sharpening operation to have more European features and vaginal rejuvenation surgery to please her blessers. Bontle claims that as a blessee, her aim is not to destroy marriages but to maintain her lifestyle. Therefore, she hoped to become a second wife to one of the blessers, knowing he would not leave his wife.

3.4.2 The blessee in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*

The blessee in Phamotse's (2017) *Bare: #The Blesser Game* is a dynamic character that changes throughout the novel. As a young girl, Treasure longs for her father's affirmation, but her father is no longer the loving father she used to know. She begins to resent her father because of the way he treats her mother. Treasure is raped on two occasions; after which she starts dating a woman because of the pain men inflicted on her. When Treasure arrives in Sandton, she is a young, naïve girl who has been wounded by her life experiences and does not want anything to do with men. Her only interest is a modelling career, but she is introduced to Tim Morgan, who becomes her blesser, and her life takes a different turn. Apart from growing in age throughout the novel, she also changes in stature when she discovers that she is pregnant and goes through the psychological and physical trauma of an unconsented abortion.

The novel ends with Treasure finding herself naked and unadorned outside her apartment with her neighbours watching in disbelief. Treasure thought she was finally economically emancipated, but being naked and outside symbolises her disintegration because she is left with nothing as she owns nothing. She experiences change and growth physically, emotionally and even spiritually. In the end, Treasure describes herself as having lost her innocence, having become greedy and backslidden from her faith in God. However, she remains in a transactional sex relationship with the same Tim Morgan that leaves her naked on the pavement. Treasure, the blessee in Phamotse's (2017) novel, is described as beautiful by others, has ambitions of a modelling career, and comes to Sandton resenting men because her father abused her mother but finds herself in an abusive relationship with the blesser she meets. She is a

dynamic character that changes physically, emotionally and spiritually throughout the novel. In contrast, Bontle, the blessee in Makholwa's (2018) novel, describes herself as beautiful, arrogant and has had buttock implants but is, however, a static character. Another similarity between the two blessees is that they both drive luxury cars and live in apartments in Sandton.

3.4.3 The blessee (Small House) in *Sweet Medicine*

The blessee or Small House in the Zimbabwean context is described as an economics graduate who dreamt of becoming a Reserve Bank governor. Due to the economic conditions, her dream is quickly replaced with a dream of becoming the Woman of the House (wife) or a co-wife to Zvobgo. She realises that the salary she earns from working as a secretary lasts only two days and does not cover all her family's expenses. When Tsitsi seduces Zvobgo, she says, "...I am sure I could make a better wife" (p.100), which indicates that she did not plan to be a Small House but rather something more permanent.

At the beginning of the affair, Tsitsi was sexually clumsy and had "countless consultations with Chiedza, which included watching old porn DVDs" (p.31), and still, she would forget all that she had learned when she was with Zvobgo. The lessons in sexual etiquette are evidence of the blessee's efforts to be sexually skilled and fit to ensure that she pleases the blesser. Zvobgo, who had complained to Tsitsi about the lack of intimacy in his marriage, quickly loses sexual interest when she moves into his house. Tsitsi's attempts to seduce Zvobgo prove futile and the rejection creates restlessness in Tsitsi, leading to insomnia – for which she resorts to sleeping tablets.

The blesser's lack of sexual interest substantiates the argument that the blesser constantly seeks a new thrill, hence, his interest in the new secretary that replaced Tsitsi.

Similar to the blessee in *The Blessed Girl* and *Bare: #The Blesser Game*, Tsitsi “had now made her beauty and upkeep her full-time occupation. She ensured that her hair was always well maintained...” (p.112); she joined a gym to keep fit and dressed like someone who lives in the Main House rather than the Small House. In addition to keeping up her appearance, Tsitsi “...wanted more. Soon, this desire was voiced...” (p.108), and she “also tried her luck with even bigger demands” (p.109) to the extent that she saved a substantial amount of money. Finally, she made Zvobgo feel bad for sleeping in hotels with her until he bought her a flat. A significant finding across the three novels studied thus far is how all the blesser's buy their blessee's flats. In the quotations above, Tsitsi and Zvobgo's relationship is new when she demands a flat which corroborates the finding by Wamoyi et al. (2010) that blesser's give larger quantities at the beginning of a relationship.

3.4.4 The side-chick in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

The 25-year-old Lastborn Fierce Nkomo hails from Zimbabwe and has completed her first degree and her master's, and is a doctoral student in Chemical Engineering. She aspires to build a legacy for her children, “to break boundaries in engineering, to travel the world and to have enough money” to live a comfortable life” (p.345). Fierce also aspires to give her father a good life when she starts working; “in the meantime, he has to accept the hand-outs I get from Elik” (p.355). Fierce has been in a relationship

with Elik for years and loses her virginity to him; however, he gets married behind her back and often cheats with other women. Nonetheless, she is adamant that she “does not believe in marriage” (p.345) and “does not want to be a second wife” (p.370). Fierce regards herself as the side-chick to the blesser. Maphosa’s (2019) preferred nomenclature for the blessee is side-chick, of which the word *chick* connotes youth and innocence. Chicks are usually kept, grown and eaten; similarly, the woman in a transactional sex relationship is referred to as a chick because the blesser keeps her, whilst he has a wife and has sexual intercourse with her. In the end, Fierce admits, “Elik is who my heart wants and if it means riding on the back seat for the rest of my life then I guess that’s what I’ll do” (p.345). The last quote expresses how fond she is of the blesser and shows her acceptance of being the second wife.

3.4.5 Summary of the blessees in the selected literary texts

In contrast to the blessees in *The Blessed Girl* and *Bare: #The Blesser Game* who initiates transactional sex relationships because they want to fit into a culture of living a luxurious life, wearing expensive clothes and having a lot of money at their disposal; the blessee in *Sweet Medicine* is forced by the economic circumstances in the country and a low-wage job to start a transactional sex relationship. Chigumadzi (2016) thus does not describe a modern transactional sex relationship in which a married man has an extra-marital affair but rather a traditionally accepted one, in which the blessee or side-chick is referred to as the Small House. The Small House in Chigumadzi’s (2016) novel holds a bachelor’s degree in economics and dreams of becoming the Governor of the Reserve Bank. When the economy does not allow this dream to come to fruition, although sexually inexperienced, she resolves to seduce her boss, who becomes her

blesser. She keeps up her appearance and exercises to keep in shape, but all these are to no avail when she struggles to keep the blesser sexually enticed after she becomes the Small House. After that, she uses *muti* to entice her blesser sexually and bear him a son as a means to secure their relationship. The blessee in Maphosa's (2019) *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1* refers to herself as a side-chick. The side-chick is described as a 25-year-old PhD student who inevitably becomes a side-chick and ends up in a transactional sex relationship when the blesser marries someone behind her back. When she meets the blesser, she is sexually inexperienced, has an insatiable desire for sex and is also a rape victim.

3.5 The depiction of blessers in the selected literary texts

This section describes the depiction of the different blessers in transactional sex relationships in the selected literary texts.

3.5.1 The multiple blessers in *The Blessed Girl*

The blessee in *The Blessed Girl* has three blessers; Teddy, Jeff and Emmanuel, who are all static characters. Firstly, Teddy is described as a Chief Financial Officer at a municipality in Limpopo who uses his position to issue the blessee a tender. He is married and lives in one of Limpopo's suburbs for the affluent, called Tender Park. Teddy visits Johannesburg twice a month, and Bontle, who lives in Johannesburg, receives R15 000 every time he comes to Johannesburg. Physically, Teddy is described as having a beer boep. From his conversation with Bontle at the end of the book, one can infer that Teddy is a static character because despite having tested positive for HIV, he continues to live the same lifestyle of being a blesser.

Another blesser of Bontle is Jeff, a businessman who owns various Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) companies in the mining, media, and property spheres. Jeff, who is also married, is described as significantly old (59) with “wrinkles on his forehead” (p.37) and a person with diabetes who loves using Viagra. He is described as having been part of the liberation struggle, then went into exile and finally studied at Harvard. Bontle’s relationship with Jeff has lasted six years. He gave R10 000 to 20 000 per month towards the upkeep of her lifestyle and bought her a BMW, although his wife demanded it back when she discovered another car registered in her husband’s name.

The last blesser is Emmanuel, a Nigerian oil magnate who owns businesses in Nigeria, South Africa and the United States. Bontle, realizing his wealth, decides to pursue him although he is her friend's blesser. Bontle pretends to be well acquainted with how business works and, in this way, grasps the interest of Emmanuel. He gives Bontle an unlimited credit card, buys her expensive gifts, takes her on expensive trips and becomes a partner in the Hospital Business with the blessee and her ex-husband.

3.5.2 The blesser in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*

The blesser in Phamotse’s (2017) *Bare: #The Blesser Game* is described as “wealthy, charming, flirty” (p.166) although not handsome, for which his smile makes up. Tim Morgan is described as a 46-year-old multimillionaire who is intelligent, generous, hardworking and a smooth talker who knows how to take care of women. He describes himself as more than a common boyfriend but someone who could open lucrative doors for their partner. However, he is very jealous, controlling and possessive. He is

also bisexual as he has sexual relations with men and women other than his wife. He also does not mind his wife sleeping with younger men he has approved. When Tim Morgan first meets the protagonist, he seems very loving, caring and considerate. He spends a lot of money and time with Treasure for months without demanding anything more than a kiss. However, once they become sexually intimate, he seems to become a more controlling, possessive and abusive partner. The afore-mentioned traits of the blesser align with Luke and Kurz's (2002) that posit that in the relationship, the men seem to control the conditions for sexual intercourse and, in this case, more. The blesser seems to be a rounded character, although not dynamic because he has a layered and complex personality that is believable to the reader. However, he is not dynamic because he does not undergo any change in the story and remains static. Similar to the blessers in Makholwa's (2018) *The Blessed Girl*, the blesser in Phamotse's (2017) novel is static, wealthy, not physically attractive and married, whilst the significant differences are that he is bisexual, controlling and possessive.

3.5.3 The blesser (Minister of Finance) in *Sweet Medicine*

Zvobgo is a septuagenarian, older than his mother-in-law, who has a potbelly with a "physique of an ageing sportsman" (p.101). He is initially married with two daughters who are approximately the same age as his Small House. However, when his wife (Woman of the House) leaves him with their two daughters, he eventually pays *roora* (lobola) – ten heads of cattle, for his Small House and takes her as his traditional wife. He also buys her a flat and gives her a monthly allowance to use as she pleases.

Zvobgo is also described as a high-profile government employee with a bodyguard and a cook who both have the responsibility of tasting his food before Zvobgo or the

Small House eats it, in case it is poisoned. He likes intellectual conversation but never engages Tsitsi as his interest in her is primarily physical and not intellectual because “[h]e seldom solicited her opinion outside of domestic matters” (p.115). The aforementioned substantiates the argument that the Small House (blessee) and the minister of finance (blesser) relationship is driven by what he can provide in return for sexual intercourse.

In addition, regarding sex, Zvobgo is described as a patient lover even when Tsitsi felt ill-equipped and worked on her sexual prowess to please him sexually. However, he eventually takes her as confidant and shares about his Mrs Zvobgo with Tsitsi “...too stubborn...too self-righteous...did not want to touch him” (p.31). Nevertheless, as quickly as he had made Tsitsi his confidant he quickly loses sexual interest in her when she moves into his house.

3.5.4 The blesser in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

Professor Elikplim Mawufeasi Nkrumah is a 34-year-old multi-millionaire from Ghana who holds “a PhD in Robotics and Mechatronics and lectures at the University of Johannesburg, where he also runs his engineering company. The age difference between the blesser and blessee in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1* aligns with the finding of two studies that state that the primary aspect of the blesser/blessee relationship is money, not age (Glasscoe, 2020; Moodley & Ebrahim,2019). Elik is described as tall with a dark complexion and brown eyes. He generously spends more money on the side-chick and her family than on his wife. He is a dynamic character that seems to genuinely love the side-chick with whom he has broken up several times.

After four years in a relationship with the side-chick, he divorces his wife and proposes to her. In contrast to the blessers in the three novels mentioned above, Elik is young and portrays what seems to be an authentic interest in Fierce when they first meet whilst she reciprocates as she does not know that he is a professor that is also a multi-millionaire.

3.5.5 Summary of the blessers in the selected literary texts

The blessers in *The Blessed Girl* are Teddy, who issues the blessee a tender and provides her with a maximum of R30 000 per month upon visits. The second blesser is Jeff, a businessman who buys the blessee a BMW and provides between R10 000 – R20 000 per month upon visits. The last blesser is Emmanuel, a Nigerian oil magnate who gives the blessee an unlimited credit card becomes her business partner and is the one the blessee desires to marry. All three blessers are married and significantly older than the blessee. The blesser in *Bare: #The Blesser Game* is Tim Morgan, a 46-year-old multimillionaire who is twice the age of the blessee and provides for all the blessee's needs, although he is possessive and controlling. The blesser is also married, and his wife is aware of his transactional sex relations with Treasure. In *Sweet Medicine*, the blesser is in his 70s, and the blessee is his first experience with a blessee or Small House. He is married and has two grown daughters, his blessee's age. He buys the blessee a car, provides for her financially and takes care of the blessee's mother and uncle. Lastly, the blesser in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1* is a 34-year-old multimillionaire who buys the blessee two cars and gives her money to spend on herself and for the upkeep of her family.

3.6 An analysis of selected literary devices in the selected literary texts

In response to the study's first objective, this section includes an analysis of the literary devices and aesthetics for the representation of transactional sex relationships in the selected four literary texts.

3.6.1 Selected literary devices in *The Blessed Girl*

This section examines the unrefined descriptive data presented in Makholwa's (2018) novel utilising literary devices such as allusion, authorial intrusion, similes, idioms, imagery, colloquialism, rhetorical questions, code-switching, sarcasm and repetition.

3.6.1.1 Single reference allusions in *The Blessed Girl*

Makholwa (2018) extensively employs allusion to engage the reader to reinforce her message. Makholwa uses allusion as a casual reference that is not integral to the plot or as a single reference for which the reader needs to make a connection between the work and the allusion. Makholwa's use of this technique requires the reader to know the characters, clothing brands, and TV shows alluded to, amongst others. This section discusses the singular reference allusions to famous historical and contemporary figures, doctors, authors, books, social media, clothing/car/alcohol brands, cafés and reality television shows, respectively, in *The Blessed Girl*.

Makholwa (2018) makes a single reference allusion to a historical figure, "Marilyn Monroe was the original blessee" (p.3). In her memoir, Bontle Tau alludes to Marilyn Monroe, a popular American actress and sex symbol who was famous for contributing

to the sexual revolution of her time. Bontle calls Monroe the original blessee and thus justifies her being a blessee.

This allusion is used to reinforce to the reader that blessees are not a new phenomenon. Another example that alludes to Marilyn Monroe is “[i]f I were given the option to spend a lifetime as Albert Einstein or as Marilyn Monroe, I’d choose Marilyn Monroe every time...drugs and all” (p.3). However, Monroe is juxtaposed with Einstein, a well-renowned genius, to create a beauty vs brain effect to emphasise that she would still choose beauty.

In another example, Makholwa (2018) makes a single reference allusion to a contemporary figure and another to a psychologist. One example is “Donald Trump doesn’t believe in global warming so I don’t buy it either” (p.21). Bontle alludes to Donald Trump, the 45th American president famous for his controversial tweets and governing style. The allusion is used to communicate the blessee’s belief system, and how she does not find fault with the ‘blessed girl’ lifestyle she leads, thus using Trump as her archetype. Makholwa uses this allusion for character development by associating Tau with Trump.

The blessee in Makholwa’s (2018) novel also makes a single reference allusion to a well-known South African Clinical Psychologist: “Talking to my psychologist, Dr Nthabiseng Mabena, helped me a little bit” (p.95). The allusion is used to create an awareness in the reader about Bontle’s ‘need’ to talk to a psychologist. The allusion is integral to the plot as the reader must infer a connection between the allusion and the

plot that partly centres around Bontle's struggle with mental health problems deriving from her transactional sex relationships.

Then, Bontle makes another single reference allusion to three writers: Malcolm Gladwell - a Canadian journalist and writer, Donald Trump – the 45th American president, and Richard Branson, an English magnate and writer. The following allusions are made: “Malcolm Gladwell said that if you spend 10 000 hours honing a skill if you practise incessantly at it, you are more likely to be a champion in that field” (p.3). “The only books in my house are motivational treasures by the likes of my hero Donald Trump, Richard Branson and books about how to manipulate men... he he he” (p.4). Makholwa (2018) employs the allusions above for the character development of the protagonist and provides exposition to the readers. Gladwell's book appeals to Bontle because she wants various transactional sex relationships as they provide a platform for her to get skilled and receive optimally from her blessers. This thought relates to Wamoyi et al. (2010) who posits that transaction varies during the relationship, with quantities given being more at the beginning. Bontle considers being a blessee and manipulating men a skill she needs to hone.

Similarly, a single reference allusion is made to four books; *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* (1992), *Why Men Love Bitches* (2002), *The Art of the Deal* (1987) and *The Secret* (2006). These references are integral to the plot and the development of the blessee. Makholwa (2018) requires the reader to infer a connection between the titles of the books mentioned above and Bontle's lifestyle. Bontle considers herself to be from Venus, a bitch, who manages dealings with different men

and lives by a motto in *The Secret*; “What you think, you create. What you feel, you attract. What you imagine, you become” (p.147). The books that the blessee reads confirm her dedication to being a blessee through reading the relevant books, her acknowledgement of being a bitch and her life’s motto.

The fifth single reference allusions Makholwa (2018) employs are allusions to social media which is an integral part of the plot of *The Blessed Girl*. Bontle uses social media to update her followers on different platforms, and it is also covertly the reason she lives the blessed life, to show it off to others. Examples of allusions to social media are: “I’ve got a decent clientele thanks to the following I’ve amassed on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook” (p.6). The blessee, who also imports and sells hair weaves, uses her transactional sex relationship posts on different social media platforms to amass a good following, thus increasing her hair business customers. Apart from sharing her blessed lifestyle, she also posts pictures, “...share this look with my Instagram fans” (p.7) which serves as an advertisement for her hair business. In addition, she uses *Photoshop* to her advantage because she photoshops not only her appearance but fake holidays as well, and although it is an illusion, this often creates an impression of authenticity to her social media fans. The last example in the social media category is “FaceTime means I have to do my hair and put on make-up, so I text him instead” (p.125). Although the general public might use FaceTime to call family and friends, the blessee, as advocated by Lipstick Feminism, employs FaceTime to sexually entice her blessers when they call. In other words, she must always wear make-up and be ready for the camera. Makholwa (2018) employs all the

allusions mentioned above as integral to the plot because they create the setting in the mind of the reader of what the blesser lifestyle entails regarding social media.

A significant part of the story centres around popular brands, and thus Makholwa (2018) employs more single-reference allusions to clothing brands, expensive cars, alcohol and television shows, and cafés/shops, which requires the reader to have knowledge of them. The single-use allusion creates a setting, provides exposition to the reader and adds to the character development. In addition to social media allusions, single reference allusions are made to expensive clothing brands. Makholwa (2018) alludes to a Louis Vuitton scarf and shoes (a luxury French fashion house); Bobbi Brown brand make-up (founder of Bobbi Brown Cosmetics); Gucci sneakers, top and cap; a Prada bag and Versace body lotion and perfume (luxury Italian fashion houses); and “a Khosi Nkosi form-fitting African print dress” (p. 32) from a South African female clothing brand. Then she alludes to stilettos by Christian Louboutin (a French fashion designer who created red-soled stilettos popularly referred to as ‘red-bottoms’); Rolex, a Swiss luxury watch; “a classy form-fitting black Victoria Beckham dress (an English fashion designer); Chanel No 5 which is a signature scent and iconic product by French businesswoman - Coco Chanel. She also alludes to Diesel jeans (an Italian clothing company); Roberto Cavalli jeans from an Italian fashion designer who is popular for his sand-blasted look for jeans; Miu Miu stilettos from an Italian high fashion brand that specialises in women’s clothing and accessories; “a body-hugging Karen Millen dress” (p.102) by a British women’s clothing line that specialises in evening attire amongst others and lastly, a Hugo Boss pin-striped suit by a German luxury fashion house.

The above allusions are critical because they are the epitome of the blessee lifestyle. The brand names alluded to by Makholwa (2018) are integral in creating the image of the blessee and her archetype. These allusions vividly describe and thus create an image of the fashion sense of the blessee in the reader's mind. The reader not only imagines the character's made-up face but also how the clothes are described to fit her body and the scent. Significantly, as advocated by Lipstick Feminism, the focus of the blessee is on her makeup and sex appeal because everywhere a dress is referred to, the allusion describes it as form-fitting or body-hugging. The above examples of single reference allusions concur with several studies that conclude that women use their agency to exploit transactional sex relationships to fulfil their modern needs fuelled by the media and globalisation (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Swartz, 2017).

Then, Makholwa (2018) employs single reference allusions to expensive cars, which are also an integral part of the blessee lifestyle. Another allusion to brands employed by Makholwa (2018) is cars which also create an image of the materialism of the blessee. The following allusion: "When I go to ekasi in my shining Mercedes convertible" (p.43) refers to a German luxury car described as shiny and a convertible. The allusion is integral to the plot and supports the argument that the blessee lives an expensive lifestyle. Bontle, in *The Blessed Girl*, also alludes to a Lamborghini, an Italian luxury car, when she states, "[e]verything I post is real, boo, right down to the Lamborghini my man drives" (p.51). The allusion conveys that Bontle's boyfriend drives an expensive car, which contributes to the character development of one of the numerous boyfriends that are integral to the development of the plot. Makholwa (2018) also alludes to a Maserati, an Italian luxury car. The allusion provides

exposition to the reader by explaining the blessee's interest in men who drive a specific type of luxury car. The above example of the blessee boasting about her blesser's expensive cars is an example of how Lipstick Feminism inadvertently promotes patriarchy because the blessee boasts about a car that is not hers, and thus the financial and material power remains with the blesser (Marchetti, 2020).

Penultimately, Makholwa (2018) makes single reference allusions to alcohol, cafés, shops, hotels and reality television shows. Pertaining to alcohol, Dom Perignon, Moët & Chandon, Moët Brut Imperial popularly referred to as Moët are champagnes that are products of a French winery. The allusion is used to make the reader aware of Bontle's expensive taste in champagne. It also allows readers to infer a connection between the blessee lifestyle and the allusion. In addition, Makholwa (2018) alludes to Rupert & Rothschild Classique wine made from a prestigious partnership between a South African family and a French Baron. Thus, the blessee only consumes expensive champagnes and wines to keep up with her lifestyle.

Similarly, Makholwa (2018) makes singular references to the Melrose Hotel, Saxon Hotel, Mount Nelson Hotel, News Café, and Woolworths. The aforementioned are not merely descriptive but are alluded to, to create a setting of the typical venues the blessee wines and dines in and the ones she buys from when in a financial crisis. For example, Bontle states, "I have a cheap bottle of wine from Woolworths to see me through the weekend" (p. 66). The reader infers that Woolworths is ordinarily an expensive supermarket, but the allusion reveals the expensive taste and lifestyle of the blessee. Thus, Woolworths is her last resort to buy when she is in a financial crisis.

However, it is public knowledge that Woolworths is one of the most expensive supermarkets for the ordinary citizen.

In relation to reality television shows, Makholwa (2018) makes single reference allusions to the Kardashians, an American reality television series about a high-profile celebrity family and Somizi, a South African actor, choreographer and media personality who has a television show called *Living the Dream with Somizi*. These allusions to television shows are made to make the reader aware of the type of lifestyle that Bontle desires to live. The Kardashians and Somizi both depict a glamorous lifestyle which covertly advocates for plastic surgery, expensive clothing and car brands. The blessee aspires to be like the celebrities in these shows.

Lastly, Makholwa (2018) makes the following general single reference allusion "...I think I need to also invest in Kegel balls...." (p.98). Kegel balls are balls that are used to strengthen the pelvic floor and vaginal muscles. Makholwa (2018) uses the allusion because of its importance to the blessee's development, which prioritises sexual grooming, amongst others, to keep her in shape and satisfy her lovers. In addition, the quote, "Any girl who lives my lifestyle will tell you the worst season of the year for as mistresses are the so-called Festive Season" (p.101) alludes to the festive season. The reader is to infer a connection between the undesirability of the Christmas holidays and the reality of Bontle being a side-chick that becomes insignificant during the holidays. These last two allusions are significant because they also reveal the blessee's dedication to being a blessee by working on her vaginal muscles to satisfy her blessers. In contrast, it also reveals the loneliness the blessee experiences over the

Christmas holiday because her blessers spend time with their families. She cannot go to her family because she has created the illusion that she is constantly busy with work.

3.6.1.2 Authorial intrusion in *The Blessed Girl*

Authorial intrusion is a device used to establish a relationship between the reader and the author (Bureman, n.d.). In contemporary fiction, authorial intrusion is often used for its comedic effect or to portray the author as a character. Authorial intrusion as a literary device has been criticised as being interruptive, outdated and associated with poor writing skills (Dawson, 2016). It has also been criticised for allowing the author's research to become visible in the form of information that the characters would not know, such as scientific and technical terms. Another critique is that the choice of words used in authorial intrusion is often that of the author and not the character (Hill, 2011). However, despite the criticism against using authorial intrusion, Makholwa (2018) employs the technique aesthetically and creatively. Makholwa (2018) poses questions to engage the reader and consistently addresses the reader.

3.6.1.2.1 Narrator's questions to the reader

The first example of authorial intrusion in *The Blessed Girl* is through questions the author poses to the reader, of which the personal pronoun *you* is an indication that the author is addressing the reader directly: "What do you mean you thought I owned the place? Is that what you think I said?" (p.7). As the reader, one would think that Bontle owned the place because, at the beginning of the novel, she says, "I own ...a fully paid-up penthouse on Grayston Drive in Sandton" (p.4). This created the impression that she owned the place because she described her possessions as a blessee. The next

question posed to the reader is, “[w]hat do you mean you can’t see him in the pictures? Whose Rolex and Versace shoes do you think are peeking out strategically on my status update? You know I can’t show his face. You want his wife to kill me? (p. 119)”. With these questions, the blessee describes the nature of her transactional sex relationship with the blesser, the secrecy and how she can never reveal her blesser’s identities on her social media platforms. In the questions above, the narrator poses the questions in such a way that they sound as if the reader had asked them, and she was repeating them to make sure she heard them correctly.

However, in the following questions, the narrator poses the questions as though she is engaged in a conversation with the reader. The quote, “Oh, I didn’t tell you I also import and sell weaves?” (p.6), shows that the blessee can make her own money through her hair business; however, the profits would not be enough to produce the blessed life she desires. In the following quote, the narrator asks the reader; “...you know I cannot handle any stress at the moment, don’t you?” (p.196), which can also be considered an ambiguous question because it could be a fitting response to her mother who demands to see Bontle without telling her the details of her request. Similarly, it is directed to the reader because she has already shared her struggle with depression and how stress starts her episodes. The last example is Bontle’s posthumous confession about her writing; “[b]y the way, while we’re being honest, you know this is not how I write, right?” (p.277). This means that speaking well and writing well was essential to the blessee because they added to the image she had created – not needing an education because she had achieved all she desired.

3.6.1.2.2 Narrator's conversations with the reader

This section presents the authorial intrusion examples of how the author addresses the reader in *The Blessed Girl*. Makholwa (2018), by using a memoir, becomes the blessee who engages with the reader as if she was having a conversation with someone physically in front of her, although this is true in an abstract sense.

The following are examples of how Makholwa (2018) employs the authorial intrusion device of speaking to her readers: “By now, you’ve decided I’m a whore anyway, so let me introduce you to Papa Jeff” (p.33) and “[o]h by the way, I see you rolling your eyes about my sex life. I’m not stupid. I condomise” (p.43). Bontle ‘introduces’ the reader to one of her blessers and expresses dismay at how the reader rolls their eyes. Similarly, she repeats, “[d]on’t look at me like that” (p.163) and “I see you looking sceptical, but anyway, it’s true” (p.258). The examples above are done in a way that gives the impression the writer could see the reader. “The reason I’m writing this memoir is because I want to be honest and sincere as possible...warts and all” (p.49) is one of the examples in which she expresses her reasons for writing the memoir - to be honest and to be vulnerable because one would only share details about something as intimate as warts, with a confidant. She addresses the reader as if they are acquaintances or someone she is getting to know. For example, she addresses the reader about issues of trust, “[t]hat part of my life remains too personal to share. Besides, I don’t trust you enough yet” (p.95).

Furthermore, she addresses the readers as if they are in her real life. For example, when she says that they should check her Instagram account whenever they, according to

her, do not believe her. Another example is when she expresses dismay at the reader because talking to them is like talking to the police because she feels interrogated; “Gosh. Talking to you is like talking to the police...mxm! This is not an interrogation, *phela*. Yours is to listen without prejudice” (p.24). However, the reader had not asked any questions.

In the following example, at the end of the memoir, Makholwa (2018) employs authorial intrusion to address the reader and their contribution to the blesser/blessee culture. Highlighting the causes and what this culture leads to, she says:

You are part of the reason that girls like me exist. You are part of the society that worships money over all else. You click a thousand likes when you see a beautiful girl with no other talent than a beautiful backside, but you don't do the same for the ordinary girl who is trying to make the best of her life through honest means. You glorify the things that mean nothing. Money, possessions and designer labels. (p. 276-277)

At first glance, the second critique of the author's word choice filtering through when authorial intrusion is used could hold because the blessee, who is a young woman with no education beyond high school, uses words such as ‘swansong’ (p.276), ‘selfcensoring’ and ‘memoir’ (p.49) amongst others. However, the following question posed by the character to the reader clarifies that the choice of words is not hers: “[b]y the way, while we're being honest, you know this is not how I write, right?” (p.277). Thus, the characters' confession of using an editor clarifies the use of the blessee's advanced vocabulary.

In addition, regarding the use of scientific and technical terms, Bontle clarifies her knowledge of such terms in the story. For example, "...[t]hen he took out a herb which he claimed originates from Mexico. 'It's called Damiana. It will loosen up all your inhibitions, sweetheart'" (p.118). Furthermore, a quick google search yields the same results as explained in the story, which is proof of Makholwa's (2018) research. However, she has employed it artfully by making one of the blessers explain it to Bontle, who is assumed not to know the drug.

Makholwa (2018) creatively suppresses her voice to make the character narrate in the first person, and thus, her use of authorial intrusion is deliberate and with purpose throughout the novel and not accidental. Apart from using the technique for comedic effect, Makholwa (2018) also uses it mainly to get the reader to think about their contribution to the blesser/blessee culture.

3.6.1.3 Similes of the transactional relationship culture in *The Blessed Girl*

The study's first objective is to examine how the selected novels innovatively employ literary devices and aesthetics to describe transactional sex relationships. The third literary device Makholwa (2018) employs are similes about money and appearance, sexual relations and emotions, respectively.

3.6.1.3.1 Similes of materialism and appearance in *The Blessed Girl*

Money and appearance are integral to transactional sex relationships because money is what is often exchanged, while the blessee needs to maintain a specific type of appearance to appeal to the blessers. The first example about materialism, "... I've

been running like a Kenyan athlete” (p.12), is used to explain how Bontle is awarded and manages a million-dollar tender in partnership with one of her blessers. In the simile, Bontle, driven by the blessed lifestyle of materialism, compares herself to a Kenyan athlete because they are notorious for their grit and determination. In the second example, “[a]ll those years at varsity and she’s still living like a pauper?” (p.56), Bontle compares her friend, who is a university graduate to a beggar. The quote above is evidence that the blessee does not see the value of an education which would require time to yield the amounts of money she desires, as opposed to making money from her body because she refers to herself as a “poster child for instant gratification” (p.56). In the last example, “[s]niffing around for a man who will stop and pay them attention...like a pack of hound dogs” (p. 265), Bontle compares the prostitutes by the side of the road waiting to be picked up by men to hound dogs that are often used by hunters to track their prey.

The importance attached to materialism is also accorded to physical appearance in *The Blessed Girl*. Makholwa (2018) provides the following examples to substantiate the importance of looking beautiful for sex appeal in *The Blessed Girl*. In the following two examples, Bontle compares herself to a celebrity and a cosmopolitan chick; “...others wanting selfies with me like I’m a real celebrity” (p.43) and “[n]ow I just look like a swanky and responsible cosmopolitan chick” (p.135). Being a celebrity connotes fame and popularity, whilst being cosmopolitan connotes being global, both ideals the blessee aspires to. In the last example, Bontle states, “I feel like an animal that’s been dragged through the mud all day long” (p.174), comparing herself to an animal because she is not wearing any make-up and her hair is a mess. The latter

example reiterates the importance Lipstick Feminism has attached to women wearing make-up to feel empowered. The blessee attaches feeling beautiful to wearing make-up and doing her hair at a salon. The similes of materialism and appearance attest to the literature that consumerism is one of the major causes of transactional sex relationships.

Assessed through the critical lens of Mwangi's (2009) postcolonial paradigm, the researcher has identified materialism as a pervasive local form of oppression because it is directly linked to social media. On these social media platforms, youth are exposed to concepts like Instagram models, unrealistic beauty standards like a yellow complexion is beautiful, images of a luxurious life that entices them, and get-rich-quick schemes. Social media is one of the greatest vehicles through which youth are enticed to a life of materialism which entices them to engage in anything that promises to give them their desired life. Although this is not a generalisation, if Africans do not self-reflect and address the local form of oppression that appears as materialism, it will produce lazy youths with no core values and who lack a sense of identity.

3.6.1.3.2 Similes of sexual relations and emotions in *The Blessed Girl*

In addition, just as materialism is important in the blesser/blessee culture, sexual relations are equally important. However, transactional sex relationships are not free of different emotions. In the first example pertaining to sexual relations, Bontle compares herself to a virgin; “[h]ello, I responded, casting my eyes down like the virgin I wasn’t” (p.37). She compares herself to a virgin because of the cultural significance, innocence and allure attached to virginity, although she immediately

adds 'wasn't. A second example that relates to virginity is "[s]o, I'm guessing he's single and unattached? As hard as finding a virgin in this city of gold" (p.133). Another example of a simile that has a connotation of innocence and allure is "[w]hen I'm with him I act like some kind of altar girl" (p.81). In the simile, Bontle compares herself to a girl working in the church, which she is not but acting like it makes her sexually attractive to her blessers.

In the second example, Bontle compares sex to money; "[s]ex is not such an aphrodisiac to me as much as money is..." (p.38). The simile implies that sexual intercourse does not arouse sexual desires for Bontle; however, having money arouses sexual desires. Similarly, in another example, the blessee compares herself to a call girl; "[m]eeting at hotels and restaurants makes me seem like a call girl" (p.138). The simile expresses the blessee's dissatisfaction with meeting at hotels and restaurants, which is ironic because her blessers contact Bontle via phone for dates that lead to sexual intercourse and, like a call girl, receives money from her blessers.

In the last example about sexual relations, Bontle compares herself to an injured animal to describe the pain she endured; "I was screaming like an injured animal" (p.81) whilst having sexual intercourse with one of her blessers. Finally, she compares the small print of the HIV results of one of her blessers to a newspaper headline that "seem large, sensational and unreal" (p.251). These examples attest to how women can use their sex appeal for profit according to Lipstick Feminism, however, this comes with its consequences. One of the consequences is evident in the example above

when the blessee had painful sexual intercourse with one of her blessers and could not tell him to stop because of what she benefits from the relationship.

Transactional sex relationships do not just entail painful sexual intercourse but a range of other emotions. Makholwa (2018) employs interesting aesthetics to compare emotions. This section examines the presentation of the following emotions: resentment, panic and fear. Firstly, Makholwa (2018) employs two similes in which she compares the emotion of resentment and panic to bile. The blessee compares her resentment for her mother to bile which primarily connotes anger and bitterness. She is bitter because her mother introduced her to the transactional sex relationship culture when she slept with an older man at the age of fourteen because he was giving her mother money. Secondly, she compares the feeling of panic to bile, but in the latter example, it connotes fear when one of her blessers confronts her about sleeping with other men; “I stand up, panic rising to my throat like bile” (p. 251). The blessee panics because the blesser’s interrogation might confirm her fear, which he does because he confesses to having tested HIV positive. This example is evidence of why social science research has found that transactional sex advances the spread of HIV and AIDS (Wamoyi et al., 2019b). Although sexual relations and emotions cannot be avoided in a transactional sex relationship, the negative consequences are evident.

3.6.1.4 Idioms pertaining to relationships, money and emotions in *The Blessed Girl*

The objective of this chapter is still to examine how Makholwa (2018) innovatively employs literary devices and aesthetics to represent transactional sex relationships. In this section, Makholwa (2018) employs idiomatic expressions in different contexts to

make her writing dynamic and give it character. Idiomatic expressions cannot be interpreted literally because the meaning differs from what the actual words imply. This section discusses how idioms have been used to describe the blessee's relationships, money and emotions.

The first set of examples are idioms that relate to Bontle and her intimate relationships; "I've been charming the pants off people since the day I was born" (p. 4). This expression could be taken literally regarding Bontle's story, but it is not literal as expressed in the idiom. Another example is, "I get all horny because champagne always just melts my insides" (p. 11) is about how Bontle gets sexually excited every time she drinks champagne. A third example. "I'd wait till the franchise deal was clinched and maybe get myself knocked up by him just to keep him close..." (p. 52) in which clinched and knocked-up are not literal as they refer to acquiring the business and getting pregnant. The last example, "[t]hese men look completely outside my fishing pond (p.100), is an idiomatic expression in which Bontle is expressing her disinterest in the men they are dining with.

The second set of examples are idiomatic expressions that pertain to Bontle's blessed lifestyle and the role of money which include: 1) "new revenue stream" (p.16), 2) "fallen on hard times" (p.16), 3) "level 6 blessers" (p.53), 4) "poster child for instant gratification" (p.56), "I need to let this moment marinate" (p.117) and 5) "monopolise Mr Emmanuel" (p.150). Precisely, the blessee expresses her need for a new blesser, how one of her blessers is struggling financially, the calibre of blessers sought after, her immediate need for money, thinking carefully about the status of her relationship

and finally, her desire to steal her friend's boyfriend and have him all to herself without having to share him.

In the last set of idioms, the blessee describes different emotions: boredom, love and disappointment. The first example, "the thought of seeing him makes me comatose" (p.26) expresses the blessee's boredom at the thought of seeing her husband. The example could imply that she never found her husband exciting and able to provide what she desired, and this is why she sought transactional sex relationships for excitement and provision. The second example, "he was whipped" (p.36), explains how one of her blessers is in love with her after she seduced him and gave him different carnal pleasures or sex positions. Lastly, "burst my bubble (p.82) is an idiomatic expression in which the blessee expresses her disappointment when she is informed that the money for the tender she received will not be paid out immediately.

Feeling amorous because of the consumption of champagne, which is amongst the only drink the blessee consumes, clinching the franchise deal, new revenue stream, monopolising Mr Emmanuel, and level 6 blessers are the idiomatic expressions summarised in the above paragraph. These examples primarily relate to the blessee's love for material possessions and her desire to have more. According to Haddad (2018), "[b]lessing" at Level 1 includes airtime and data, and as the levels increase, so does the amount of blessing, from clothes and luxurious goods (Level 2) to cars and iPads [sic] (Level 3), to overseas trips (Level 4)" (p. 7). However, the blessee in *The Blessed Girl* adds two more levels when she speaks of level 6, perhaps because of the franchise deal and monopolising a person.

3.6.1.5 The sensory experience of *The Blessed Girl* through imagery

Imagery is the representation of sensory experiences through language. The word image suggests a mental picture. According to Perrine and Arp (1992), there are different types of imagery, namely, visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, organic, and kinaesthetic imagery. Makholwa (2018) employs visual, auditory, tactile and organic imagery to describe scenes that relate to the senses. The technique is employed to help the reader engage with the text through the senses. This section presents the types of imagery in *The Blessed Girl*.

3.6.1.5.1 Visual imagery in *The Blessed Girl*

Makholwa (2018) primarily employs visual imagery to describe how things appear. The data for visual imagery has been sub-divided under the following headings: complexion, body image and a mistress's guide.

Firstly, Makholwa (2018) presents the following examples of imagery that pertain to complexion to reflect the main character's development and to contribute to the theme of the blessee. All the examples are about a lighter skin complexion; "...even in this era of the Yellow Bone" (p.18), "...but I heard that Nigerians are crazy about Yellow Bones" (p.52), "I also did some skin bleaching so that my complexion can be as luminous as possible" (p.61), "I went for another skin-bleaching session yesterday so I am a proper, yellow sunflower" (p.73), "Of course, I need more skin bleaching. The yellower the better, is what I always say" (p.98) and "I want my skin to be lighter" (p.235). The imagery creates an image in the reader's mind and reiterates the importance of a lighter skin complexion for the blessed girl. "Yellow bone is a phrase

that has been used in young, urban South African slang” to define the “lightest type of light-skinned black female” whose “skin usually has a yellow-tan” (Mcclay, 2014, para 12). Yellow bones have been trending for the past few years, which has perhaps influenced Bontle’s perception of beauty as being light-skinned. Thus, she implies that if someone is not light in complexion, they are not beautiful. She also reveals her intention to seduce Mr Emmanuel, a Nigerian national, when she speaks of how they like yellow bones. The examples mentioned above are repeated throughout the novel to emphasise the importance of a lighter complexion.

Secondly, the physical body image is as equally crucial as complexion and Makholwa (2018) extensively presents the following visual imagery that relates to the body image of the characters to contribute to the theme of the blessed girl. The following examples all pertain to body image; “[m]y skirt was short enough to give full exposure to my yellow, toned legs and my bum stuck out to amplify my earthly, genuine, African assets” (p.37), “Anyway, I’m dressed in a glittering gold micro-dress that hugs every part of my body; showing off my round African bum” (p.49), “I might need to do those bum implants if I am to compete with Iris. Her bum is huge, sexy and just...perfect” (p.52), and “[s]ince I lost that weight my butt looks extra big and luscious” (p.111). The first example implies the importance of physical exercise to tone your legs, while the first and second examples imply the importance of dressing with sex appeal. In essence, the examples emphasise the importance of having an appealing image in terms of what you wear and its size. All the afore-mentioned examples create an image of the character's appearance, more specifically their behinds, which Makholwa (2018) describes including details of size (amplify, huge, extra big), shape (round) and to its

appeal (sexy, luscious). Thus, body image is a crucial aspect of the blessed girl's life and its contribution to maintaining her lifestyle.

The third set of examples attests to how contemporary African writers have succeeded in breaking sexual taboos in their writing. Makholwa (2018) presents visual imagery that relates to the intimate body image of the characters to contribute to the theme of the blessee and the main character's development. The blessed girl will go to any extent to sexually satisfy her blessers to continue leading a life of materialism. The visual imagery examples below create an image of the blessee's intimate parts as she keeps referring to them to maintain her lifestyle: "I decided to do some anal bleaching just to make sure my lady parts are in porn-star condition" (p.62), "I think I want you to tighten it. Take it back to its original position. That man shoved a 30-centimetre-long penis into me. I will never be normal again" (p.76), "I would definitely need to stitch up my vagina. I wouldn't want him wondering why I'm not as tight as when we were still together" (p.81), "And I haven't taken care of my lady parts in a while, so I will need anal and vulva bleaching as well." (p.98) and "[a]s usual when I meet with him, I don't wear panties. He likes for me to go commando!" (p.112). Makholwa (2018) explicitly refers to anal and vulva bleaching, which creates a visual image in the reader's mind because it also has the potential to shock the reader on realising to what extent the blessee will go to keep her blessers satisfied. In addition to this, the blessee seems familiar with 'porn-star condition' private parts. Makholwa (2018) also refers to vaginal tightening, and this perpetuates the idea that blessers prefer tight vaginas and increases the pressure on the blessees.

Finally, Makholwa (2018) includes a page with six guidelines that present visual imagery, including detailed descriptions of the requirements to fulfil when a blessee travels with her blesser. This section briefly describes the guidelines; firstly, pack “four skimpy bikinis that can be torn off by the teeth of a skilled lover; good quality condoms...” (p.184). Secondly, “[n]o moaning, groaning (unless in bed). Don’t bring any drama. That’s the wife’s job” (p.184). Thirdly, “it’s the wife’s job to act like some kind of equal partner. You are there to be spoilt and to spoil him in kind” (p.184). The afore-mentioned examples deliberately create a negative image of the blesser’s wife as someone who nags her husband and is hysterical. Fourthly, “[b]ring...a few new bedroom tricks...watch Pornhub or buy the *Kama Sutra*. Bring sex toys...” (p.184) is visual imagery included for the development of the blessee whose life revolves around being a blessed girl and thus hones her skills to keep her lovers satisfied. Next, “pictures with him must not feature his head. Capture the designer pants, shoes, watches....” (p.184). Finally, “[I]earn to be Always On. No headaches, no dryness, no excuses” (p.184). The above example regarding the guidelines when travelling with a blesser is used to contribute to the blessee theme and create an atmosphere of an outing with a blesser. Makholwa (2018) creates an image of the blessee as fun, sexually adventurous and reassuring and juxtaposes it with the wife, who is the opposite.

3.6.1.5.2 Auditory and tactile imagery in *The Blessed Girl*

This section continues to examine how Makholwa (2018) innovatively employs imagery of which this subsection presents auditory and tactile imagery to describe scenarios that relate to the sense of hearing and touching things, respectively. “I was

screaming like an injured animal” (p.81) and “a blanket of uncomfortable silence drapes the car” (p.87). The meaning conveyed by the first imagery is Bontle explaining how she screamed whilst having sexual intercourse because of the pain she endured. This afore-mentioned imagery is used for the development of the main character. The second imagery conveys the meaning of uncomfortable silence and is used to create a tense atmosphere between the blesser and the blessed.

Makholwa (2018) also employs tactile imagery to describe the sense of touching things. The following are examples of tactile imagery: “[t]he gesture, feeling his filthy hand on me, triggers me further” (p.209). The imagery is employed to arouse the reader’s emotions and describes the feelings conjured up by the touch of the man who impregnated her when she was fourteen. Another example: “I slap him, punch him, and kick him over and over again until I’m dizzy with emotion” (p.210). The imagery creates an atmosphere and arouses the reader’s emotions because it describes Bontle’s physical reaction of anger toward the father of her son. Then, “I never knew that love was a tangible thing” (p.212) is tactile imagery used to develop the main character and describe her feelings of fondness towards her son. The aesthetic visual descriptions of violence in contemporary fiction might not be new, but Makholwa (2018) contributes a different point of view when she describes the auditory and tactile images of violent sexual scenes.

3.6.1.5.3 Organic imagery in *The Blessed Girl*

The last example of imagery in this section is organic imagery which relates to body experiences like hunger, thirst, pain and fatigue, amongst others. This section presents

the organic imagery in *The Blessed Girl* subdivided into two categories: money and sexuality.

The following organic imagery examples pertain to the blessed girl's physical reaction to money: "I guess we just feel the pain every time we must fork out money for our own drinks" (p.10). The imagery conveys that the blessed girl would rather have someone else pay for her drinks rather than use her own money. Another example is, "I felt something wild and uncontrollable in my pants. Yes. I actually had a real, live orgasm...first time ever in my life...an orgasm without anyone even touching my nether regions" (p.24). The imagery describes Bontle's physiological response when she saw R2 million in her bank account. The last example pertains to the blessed girl's physiological response to money, "[t]he thought of my bank balance makes me want to throw up" (p.103). This imagery is used to contrast the previous reaction because when the blessee does not have money, she becomes physically ill by throwing up whatever she has ingested.

The following organic imagery examples pertain to the blessed girl's emotional reactions in different contexts: "I seem to lack the hormone or emotion that produces empathy, especially when it comes to matters of the heart" (p.84). The imagery is used to develop the character of the blessee and conveys her lack of empathy after stealing her best friend's boyfriend because it affirms the blessed girl's self-serving nature. A second example is, "[i]f they start talking politics or world affairs, I will weep. I did not get dressed up like this to crack my skull trying to impress men" (p.148). This

imagery presents Bontle's reaction if a conversation with potential blessers did not transpire favourably.

3.6.1.6 The voice of *The Blessed Girl* through colloquialism

This section continues to study literary devices as it examines how Makholwa (2018) innovatively employs colloquialism and aesthetics both for the representation of transactional sex relationships and to keep her novel relevant and befitting to the current times. Makholwa (2018) employs informal language throughout the novel to create Bontle's personality, make the narrator's voice sound natural and indicate the novel's setting. The examples of colloquial language Makholwa employs are subdivided into the following categories: general examples and hashtags, interjections, text messages and ellipsis, and are discussed as listed.

3.6.1.6.1 General examples of colloquialism

Makholwa (2018) vividly describes Bontle's sexual escapades in the following examples: "give him a blow-job" (p.42) which is a colloquial expression to describe oral sex performed on a man, "get it up" (p.43) to describe the inability to get an erection, "my vajayjay" (p.75) to describe her vagina, "bazooka almost paralysing my insides" (p.81) to describe a large penis. Then, Bontle describes her hair as *on fleek*, which means stylish, *selfie* for a photo captured using her cellphone, *DM* for direct messages often used on social media and *ka-ching*, which refers to money. Next, the narrator employs the following colloquial examples to express her annoyance in different contexts; *Gawd*, which refers to God with emphasis on her blesser's snoring, *fuckery* to refer to nonsense; *hay suka*, which is vernacular for damn you and

hayikhona for not here. In addition, Bontle also employs the following expressions in different contexts: *bubbly*, which refers to champagne, *intel* for information, *ekasi* for a township, *ride-or-die* for loyalty, *woke* for awareness, *hun* for honey, *choms* for a friend and lastly, *yup* for yes and *he-eh* for no.

3.6.1.6.2 Hashtags, interjections, text messages and ellipsis

The second example of colloquialism is the use of hashtags. In 2007, “Chris Messina made a tweet suggesting the use of # to organize content” (Omena et al., 2020). Chris Messina could not have imagined how the movement of adding the hash symbol before a word, a series of characters, or an emoji would become an everyday social practice inside and outside of web platforms (Omena et al., 2020). In order to keep the content of this novel real, Makholwa’s (2018) main character Bontle employs hashtags every time she updates her social media platforms, for instance: “#DropTopThings#Windinmyhair!” (p.7) to refer to her convertible car’s open roof and the fact that she just did her hair. Similarly, she posts on Instagram #FabFriday, #FabMe, #FabNails!” to refer to the day, herself and just having gotten her nails done. (p.56).

Another example is when Bontle refers to a holiday with one of her blessers; #Sunshine & good loving #Baecation” (p.111). Some hashtags are employed to market her transactional sex relationships, whilst others focus on her appearance and the impression of a luxurious life she creates for her social media followers. She also employs youthful language such as *drop top* instead of the open roof, *fab* instead of fabulous and *bae* instead of a boyfriend.

The third example of colloquialisms is when Bontle employs various interjections to express emotions such as astonishment, annoyance, surprise and disgust in different contexts. She uses *shoo!* (adopted from the Afrikaans *sjoe*) and *wow!* to express astonishment, *nx!* a click of the tongue to express annoyance, *huh?* to ask a question, *gosh* to exclaim surprise. “*Phhtt!* Do I look dumb to you?” (p.58); here, *phhtt* is used to express disgust while *phshh* in “Phshh! Of course!” (p.149) expresses a fake laugh. Lastly, the two examples of exclamations of astonishment and annoyance are “*Yho!* I am King! (p.71) and “*Tjo!* I give up on you!” (p.122). Makholwa (2018) aesthetically employs these interjections to make her writing relatable to the reader but also for the character development of the blessee.

In addition, Makholwa (2018) also includes actual text messages that the blessed girl sends to her blessers to make the colloquial aspect of her novel real. The following are examples of text messages recorded verbatim in the novel: “hai baby” (p.125) instead of *hi baby*, “U can pick up your scrap at the g8. The keys r with da sekurity guard. Gud bye & hv a nice life with dat crazy fat lady” (p.129). Instead of *you can pick up your scrap at the gate. The keys are with the security guard. Good bye and have a nice life with that crazy fat lady*. “Hai, I was in huspitol 4 past few weks. Had 2 remove systs. Im bak now. I’m fine, Call me” (p. 165) instead of *Hi, I was in hospital 4 the past few weeks. I had to remove cysts. I’m back now. I’m fine, call me*. “Must I ekspekt a delivary?” (p.262) instead of *must I expect a delivery?*

Makholwa (2018) also employs text messages as a foreshadowing device to make the reader aware that some aspects of the blessed girl may not be as they seem. The blessed

girl, who portrays a luxurious life in which she has attained her dreams without an education, seems almost perfect but her writing skills betray her.

The last example of colloquialism in *The Blessed Girl* is ellipsis. As part of the first objective, the study investigates the aesthetics that Makholwa (2018) employs as a contemporary novelist. She, for instance, does not use ellipsis in the conventional way of omitting and allowing the reader to fill the gaps; however, she uses ellipses for awkward silences in conversations where the speaker is uncertain of what to say or feels anxious. The following are some examples of silences in which the speaker is uncertain of what to say in the one context; “[b]aby girl...the Mercedes...there’s...ahem...an issue there. Erm...you see...the Merc is um...currently behind by...ummm...by two instalments” (p.105). In addition, “[m]y wife...we’ve joined a new church...we’ve become more spiritual” (p.107). In the afore-mentioned quotes, the blesser was uncertain and uncomfortable about what to say because of the subject he was addressing - asking for his car back from the blessee. However, the elliptical explanation of having joined a new church with his wife and being more spiritual alludes to him having changed and that he can no longer proceed with the transactional sex relationship with the blessee. It also alludes to a recommitment to his wife. Bontle’s response portrays her anxiety about losing the car; “[b]abe...but...what-what are you asking me?” (p.105).

Furthermore, the following examples portray Bontle’s emotional state of anxiety when she explains that she is a mother to one of her blessers and that her son ran away because he found out she was his mother: “I...it’s hard to explain. I was young, Papa Jeff. I was young...I was still at school. My mom...she thought it would be better if

we, you know, if we pretended that he was her child” (p.221). The interpretation of ‘what are you asking me’ can be two-fold either focus on *what* - the car and *me* – the blessee. *What*, because she cannot imagine her life without a car and *me* because have you forgotten whom you are talking to – your blessee.

3.6.1.7 Rhetorical questions in *The Blessed Girl*

Makholwa (2018) also extensively employs rhetorical questions and hypophora as an aesthetic, literary device in *The Blessed Girl*. This section presents and discusses the rhetorical questions the narrator poses to the reader, which employ hypophora, a technique in which a question is posed and answered immediately and finally, the narrator’s self-reflexive questions, respectively.

3.6.1.7.1 Rhetorical questions to the reader

The objective of this chapter and hence this section is to examine how Makholwa (2018) innovatively employs rhetorical questions as a literary device for the representation of transactional sex relationships. A study that focused on the consumption of modern goods found that women engage in transactional sex to keep up with fashion (Stoebenau et al., 2013). Appearance or fashion is central to the study of the blesser/blessee culture, and thus the narrator of *The Blessed Girl* poses several rhetorical questions to the reader that are related to appearance. The first example, “[c]an you imagine how much better off this country would be if we all just took extra care in how we presented ourselves in public?” (p.6), shows the blessee’s naivety when she asserts that the country’s problems will be addressed if people dress better. However, it is also a reflection of her paradigm because in her trade of being a blessed

girl, she dresses a certain way to be publicly acceptable, and this could be why she assumes everybody else should too.

The second example is also a reflection of the blessee's paradigm – that you need to present yourself in a certain way and thus get plastic surgery if you must and score tenders; “And tell me, how did she manage to score so many deals looking the way she does?” (p.13). Marchetti (2020), advocating Lipstick Feminism, argues that wearing make-up and profiting from their sexual appeal make women feel empowered. However, the quote is an example of a woman whose appearance, according to the blessee, is not up to standard but seems successful. The question “[h]ow did she manage to score so many deals looking the way she does?” (p.13) is intentionally directed at the reader to ponder and this questions the bias of Lipstick Feminism.

Furthermore, the two examples; “[w]hat do you mean it's un-African to use plastic surgery? Excuse me, is that Shaka Zulu I hear calling you?” (p.49) and “[y]ou've never heard of anal bleaching?” (p.62). The first example expresses the narrator's comfortability with body modifications such as plastic surgery and anal bleaching because it is a modern trend. In contrast, the second example expresses surprise to the reader about never having heard about anal bleaching. However, the question is also posed to address preconceived ideas about plastic surgery in Africa and to make the reader feel illiterate about anal bleaching. In addition, the narrator employs sarcasm to allude to Shaka Zulu - a king of the Zulu kingdom who reigned in the 1800s - calling the reader. The question implies that those who consider plastic surgery foreign to Africa are old-fashioned and perhaps not acquainted with modern trends.

Then, "...but, choma, can you imagine me in the dust, in the heat, with a construction hat on?" (p.14) and "[w]ho in the world dates a guy who drives a Polo Playa?" (p.20) explain the vanity of the narrator's character –she cannot imagine doing manual labour to earn a living. Manual labour would require her to get dirty and be scorched by the sun, and date someone who drives a Polo Playa signifies poverty and that the person could not afford to meet her needs. The narrator addressed the reader as *choma*, which means friend, a technique which seems to give the reader responsibility because the narrator has confided in the reader.

The last example consists of questions the narrator poses to the reader. The first question pertains to sexuality; "I mean; can you imagine? Selling your body like that?" (p.265), which is ironic because she questions how the prostitutes next to the road can sell their bodies when she also does the same but just not next to the road. The next question, "[y]ou're just reading and thinking: this one is stupid, though, hey?" (p.176), is one in which the narrator expresses a sentiment of being judged by the reader because she thinks the reader thinks – she is stupid. However, since the reader has not said anything to the narrator, this could be interpreted as the narrator judging herself. The narrator uses the last two questions; "[y]ou remember all that, right?" (p.204), to ask the reader whether the reader remembers something she had told them and "[w]hat did you just say?" (p.276) to ask the reader to repeat what they had just said. Both questions are intended to emphasise the reader/narrator relationship.

3.6.1.7.2 Rhetorical questions and hypophora

Makholwa (2018) also innovatively employs the use of rhetorical questions with hypophora as a literary device for the representation of transactional sex relationships. The following are examples in which the narrator poses a question which she immediately answers. She asks, “[a]m I having an out of body experience? Am I dreaming? Is this how it ends? No. No. I’m alive. I’m still alive” (p.265). The narrator poses the above questions with hypophora after she has a car crash on her way to meet one of her blessers. The narrator, excited at the prospect and assumption that the blesser would propose marriage, took wine and cocaine, which could have led to the accident. In another example, she says, “[b]ut you knew that already right? Who am I fooling? You and I have known this for a while now” (p.268). She insinuates that the reader should have deduced her HIV-positive status because of how the story developed, especially when she started having unprotected sexual intercourse with her blessers.

In the last two examples of rhetorical questions that employ hypophora, the narrator, who is now a paraplegic, at the end of the story, attends her best friend’s wedding with her long-time boyfriend. “So what brings this thirty-one-year-old paraplegic to this beautiful wedding venue? Tsholo and Tim” (p.268) and “[a]m I bitter? Of course, I am” (p.277). Although she attends because she is happy for her friend, she is also bitter about how her life has turned out. Unlike the conventional rhetorical question in which a question is posed, requiring no answer because the answer is either common knowledge or suggested in the context, all the above questions are different in that an answer is provided after the question.

3.6.1.7.3 Narrator's self-reflexive rhetorical questions

There are a few questions in the novel that the narrator poses to herself. The following are examples from the novel: “[i]s money an addiction of mine? Men or, rather, male attention? What about beauty?” (p.95) The narrator poses these questions after a depression episode caused by her son going missing and is eventually discovered, using drugs. The narrator questions whether her family is prone to addiction – men, drugs or alcohol. She also asks, “[t]hey actually pay her to tell me that?” (p.160). The narrator poses this question to show her scepticism when her psychologists diagnose her with borderline personality disorder and extreme narcissism because, in her opinion, she merely has a strong sense of confidence. Lastly, “[h]ow am I going to take care of an ailing fifty-nine-year-old man?” (p.190) and “[h]ow am I supposed to survive when all of my lovers are migrant workers?” (p.248) These are questions the blessee toils with as she has no interest in caring for one of the blessers that are diabetic. Ironically, she also questions how she will survive without any of her lovers being permanently stationed in Sandton.

3.6.1.8 The linguistic diversity of *The Blessed Girl* through code-switching

Code-switching is another creatively employed literary device that answers objective one of the study. Similar to employing colloquialism to provide the narrator character, make her voice sound natural and indicate the setting of the novel, Makholwa (2018) also extensively employs code-switching throughout the novel. However, this section will only present and discuss examples that relate to transactional sex relationships. Code-switching can also give the reader a sense of belonging and indicate the author's

target audience. The narrator employs code-switching in Setswana and Afrikaans, and this section presents some examples.

The first example of code-switching related to the blessee's transactional sex relationship is in Setswana; "...I had to pleasure that fat, old, greasy husband of hers. Hayikhona" (p.126). "...I had to pleasure that... *No way*" is an example of the blessee expressing her dismay because the blesser asked her to return his car, which she feels she has earned because of their transactional sex relationship and all the sexual intercourse she has had with him. The following example is an altercation between the narrator with one of her blesser's wives; "[h]ey wena, s'febe! How dare you say babe to my husband" (p. 127). "*Hey you bitch...*" (p. 127). Interestingly, the wife is furious when the blesser calls her husband babe and calls her a bitch because of the sexual relationship the blessee has had with her husband. However, her husband observes quietly without intervening. For the narrator, having conversations in Setswana indicates that it is the language she is comfortable with when she is with friends or family or even to express herself during hostile situations when she is angry or is confronted by her blesser's wives like in the example.

The following examples of code-switching related to the blessee's transactional sex relationship are in Afrikaans, the second most prominent language the narrator switches to. The switch to Afrikaans could be because her mother is coloured, and Afrikaans is typically the mother tongue for coloured people. The narrator uses the following derogatory expressions that relate to the transactional sex relationship but also add to the novel's aesthetics because it makes it real. In the first example, "Fok!"

(p. 21), which means *fuck*, the blessee is annoyed because she has to drive to a construction site which is far from her luxury hotel. She is annoyed that she has to be far from her place of comfort and luxury and not the distance. The other examples include; “fokof!” (p. 125) which means *fuck off* and “[j]ou hoermeisie! Voetsek!” (p. 127) which means *you whore! Get lost!* These are examples of the blessee’s altercation with the wife of one of her blessers.

3.6.1.9 Sarcasm as criticism or a defence mechanism in *The Blessed Girl*

The primary objective of this chapter is to respond to the study's first objective, which is to examine how the selected novels innovatively employ literary devices and aesthetics to represent transactional sex relationships. This section examines Makholwa’s (2018) use of sarcasm as a form of criticism or defence mechanism.

In the first set of examples, Makholwa (2018) skilfully uses sarcasm to reveal the theme of appearance in the blesser/blessee culture. Firstly, “...no-name brand shoes, boring grey jersey and pants, no swag, so...walk on by, boy!” (p. 9). Bontle expresses her disinterest in men who dress this way because the outfit is not only an indication of not having a lot of money but also of not having any style.

In the following quote, the narrator uses sarcasm to criticise women who wear clothes without paying attention to the brand and women who wore t-shirts during apartheid and continued wearing them when the country was liberated:

She's one of those basic people who go around with a German-cut hairstyle, short nails, noname brand jeans and promotional T-shirts. I mean, there's

people - women nogal! - who still go around wearing promotional T-shirts. It makes my blood boil. How can you wear slogan T-shirts during apartheid, and then continue to wear them during democracy? *Hay'suka*. Common sense really is not that common.” (Makholwa, 2018, p. 13)

According to the narrator’s reasoning, freedom from apartheid should have changed how people dress.

In the third example of sarcasm linked to appearance, the narrator mocks the weight, dress sense and age of the blessers she dates. She refers to them using terms such as “beer boep” referring to the protruding belly (weight), “jersey-wearing uncle” to refer to the lack of dress sense according to her standards, and finally “fossils” to refer to their old age. Then in the following example, the narrator uses sarcasm to mock and condemn the dress sense of her business partner; “...since she has a dress sense of a hobo” (p. 21) which she describes as the dress sense of a homeless person. In the quote, she scathingly describes why she cannot be seen in a photo with her partner:

...I don't want to include a picture with Mama Sophia. She's wearing a hideous brown thing on her head - is it a hat? I don't know - and she has on a beige top in some type of organza material...there are no words...I cannot even bring myself to look at what she's wearing at the bottom. (p. 22)

She employs words such as *Mama* to describe a person who is not old, *hideous* or *some type* and *cannot look* to express sarcasm.

The next example of sarcasm that relates to the theme of appearance in the novel is when the narrator launches a scathing attack on dark-skinned girls in the following

quote; “[g]rowing up, I used to deliberately call them ugly because I just didn’t understand how a girl could be dark-skinned and still be considered beautiful” (p. 19). The quote reflects the narrator’s paradigm; she grew up believing that a darker complexion was ugly while a lighter or yellow complexion was beautiful. This correlates with the narrator’s constant desire to bleach her skin so that she can be lighter and thus feel more beautiful.

The last example of sarcasm is linked to the theme of materialism which is also central to the blesser/blessee culture. The narrator uses sarcasm to criticise her blesser’s choice of gifts for her; “[e]ish. New bag while people are pushing franchises...I mean, really, Papa Jeff?” (p. 54). Her blesser buys her a bag instead of a café franchise which her girlfriend’s boyfriend was considering. When one of her blessers takes back his car because his wife found out that the narrator drives the BMW that her husband bought, he suggests that she drives his Toyota Corolla, and her response is a sarcastic remark of “Toyota what?” (p. 105). Materialism in the blesser/blessee culture requires that only specific brands and designer labels are sought after, thus, cars like a Toyota Corolla do not qualify.

3.6.1.10 Repetition as a literary aesthetic device in *The Blessed Girl*

The last literary device to be examined under the primary objective of this chapter is repetition.

Makholwa (2018) employs repetition to draw attention to the theme of money and transactional sex relationships. The blesser/blessee culture is driven by transactional

sexual relationships that fund the life of material possessions. This section highlights the repetition examples pertaining to transactional sex relationships and materialism.

The following quotes are examples of transactional sex:

“[w]ere you...were you...mutilated? “[n]o. no. I’ve lost my vagina”, “[y]es. Yes, you could put it that way” and “...we need to involve the authorities. We need to call the police. We need to open a case... We need to be able to show evidence” (pp.75-76).

The narrator repeats *were you*, *no*, *yes*, and *we need* to emphasise the importance of her transactional sex relations and the repercussions that often accompany such relations when she explains the pain she is enduring to her doctor.

The second set of quotes are examples of materialism and the value that the narrator attaches to it: “And I need rent money for this month. Fuck”. And I need help with the tender. Shit!” (p.12), “Ka-ching! Ka-ching! Ka-ching!” (p.82) and “[i]f you’re the kind of girl who’s always taking, taking, taking, and never giving...” (p.113). The narrator repeats the phrase and words *I need to*, *ka-ching*, *taking* to emphasise her need, love for money and how she intends to take from her blessers without reciprocating.

3.6.2 Summary of the literary devices in *The Blessed Girl*

The section analysed the literary devices employed to aesthetically present the unrefined descriptive data for transactional sex relationships. The devices include allusion, authorial intrusion, similes, idioms, imagery, colloquialism, rhetorical questions, code-switching, sarcasm and repetition. Makholwa (2018) employs single-

reference allusion to refer to historical and contemporary figures, writers, books, social media, clothing/car/alcohol brands, cafés and reality television shows. Then she employs authorial intrusion to engage the reader through questions and what seems like a general conversation. The narrator also uses authorial intrusion to share the responsibility of her transactional sex relationship life with the reader and to coerce the reader to ponder their contribution to transactional sex relationships. Makholwa (2018) then employs similes and idioms to discuss critical issues in transactional sex relationships, such as money, appearance, sexual intercourse and emotions. One of the extensive literary devices she employs is imagery, which includes visual, auditory, tactile and organic imagery. Makholwa (2018) focuses on complexion and body image for the visual imagery, focuses on sounds made during sexual intercourse for the auditory imagery whilst describing the sense of touch during sexual intercourse for tactile imagery, and lastly, focuses on body experiences like hunger, thirst, pain and fatigue for organic imagery.

The last literary devices pertaining to transactional sex relationships that Makholwa (2018) presents are colloquial aspects such as hashtags, interjections, text messages and ellipsis. These are all employed to keep the novel's content accurate or give her writing character. She also uses rhetorical questions addressed to the reader, with hypophora and self-reflexive questions. Makholwa (2018) also employs colloquialism and code-switching to give the narrator a natural voice and make her novel real and relatable. The second last literary device discussed in this section is sarcasm which is employed as a form of criticism or a defence mechanism in Bontle's relationships.

Finally, Makholwa (2018) employs repetition as a literary device that focuses on transactional sex relationships and materialism.

3.6.3 Selected literary devices in *Bare: #The Blessor Game*

The objective of this chapter is still to examine how the selected novels innovatively employ literary devices and aesthetics to represent transactional sex relationships. Phamotse (2017) employs different literary devices to describe transactional sex relationships vividly. The vivid description of transactional sex relationships fills a gap in this study as being explicit about a topic that has been taboo for years is a new phenomenon for contemporary African writers. Although numerous literary devices are employed in the novel, this section only presents those that pertain to transactional sex relationships: euphemisms, metaphors and hyperbole, allusions and imagery, respectively.

3.6.3.1 Euphemisms, metaphors and hyperbole in *Bare: #The Blessor Game*

This section discusses examples of euphemisms relating to sexual relations, metaphors relating to money, and hyperbole relating to transactional sex relationships. These examples concur with the findings of the following scholars (Hunter, 2002; Choudry et al., 2015; Formson & Hilhorst, 2016; Wamoyi et al., 2019b), who define transactional sex as intercourse that is given or provided in exchange for something.

Phamotse (2017) uses the following euphemistic expressions to refer to matters related to sex. The first example, “I hope you’re well oiled about sexstyles” (p.143), is a euphemism that means being (*well oiled*) experienced in different (*sexstyles*) positions.

Another example is “[y]ou’re mouth-watering, Treasure” (p.239) of which the *mouth-watering* refers to the sexual desire Tim Morgan feels for Treasure. The example, “...no man should ever go to bed hungry” (p.251) is advice given to Treasure that a man should be satiated sexually, especially if he has a blessee; she should ensure that all his sexual desires are met. In the fourth example, “she was finally his, feeding on the salt from his body” (p.182) explains the taste of salt in Treasure’s mouth as she performs fellatio on her blesser. In addition, “she wasn’t sure what to do, so she held it gingerly and tried not to grimace as she put it in her mouth. It tasted of salt and sweat” (p.182); the word *it* in this example represents her blesser’s male member. The following example, “...it’s time to spice up the menu...” (p.267), means to try different things in the bedroom. Furthermore, “...I’m more than a BODY” (p.277) expresses Treasure’s objection to being treated like a sex object. Moreover, Phamotse (2017) employs the following words and phrases to refer to lady parts; *intimate parts*, *cookie*, *Eden’s apple* and *rosebud*. For example, “Her intimate parts were on fire” (p.185) means her lady parts were on fire (sore) after having had sex with her blesser. In the next example, “[y]ou’re my woman and that is my cookie” (p.201), “...water covering her Eden’s apple” (p.220), and “...until it touched her tightly wounded rosebud...” (p.228); *cookie*, *Eden’s apple* and *rosebud* all refer to the blessee’s private parts. It is not a typical flour cookie edible with the mouth; neither is it the forbidden apple from Eden but the private parts of the blessee.

The metaphor is the second literary device that Phamotse (2017) also creatively employs to describe different issues related to money. The first example is “...you just need a Minister of Finance in your life” (p.150). In the afore-mentioned metaphor, a

blesser is compared to a Minister of Finance. This metaphor implies that a Minister of Finance or blesser would be wealthy and be able to provide all the desires of the blessee. However, the metaphor also implies that a Minister of Finance in government has money at his disposal or uses public funds whilst the portfolio is intended to manage the budget, taxes and other government programs. This metaphor has perhaps been adopted in a self-reflexive Africa where many African governments have been accused of misappropriating funds. Another example of a metaphor relating to transactional sex relationships is "...milk him for a house" (p.252) in which the blesser is compared to a cow, and the cow's money is compared to milk. This metaphor implies that the blesser's wealth can be compared to a cow's supply of milk which is assumed to be in abundance.

The third literary device that Phamotse (2017) employs to describe prices, reactions and attention is hyperbole. In the following quote, "[e]verything costs more than a kidney" (p.162), implying that the price of clothes is exaggerated, costing more than a kidney. This exaggeration creates an atmosphere of an expensive shop that Treasure would ordinarily buy from. The hyperbole emphasises the lavishness of Stuttafords. Treasure is not used to shopping or even going into lavish shops like Stuttafords. A second example is when Treasure exaggerates the attention she received from her blesser in the following quote "he gave her all of his attention" (p.174) to emphasise the amount of time she spent with her blesser. The deeper meaning of this hyperbole is that Treasure tries to justify a relationship that is more than sexual because she seems desperate to make her relationship with Tim more than it is.

3.6.3.2 Allusions to clothes, cars and alcohol in *Bare: #The Blessor Game*

The next literary device that Phamotse (2017) employs is allusion which is effectively employed to create an atmosphere of opulence. The most prominent theme in allusions is consumerism. This section discusses allusions to clothing brands, alcohol and expensive cars in *Bare: #The Blessor Game*, which corroborates the findings in the literature review. The following items are exchanged for transactional sex; money, education, clothes, food, alcohol, basic needs and cell phones (Kuate-Defo, 2004; Zembe et al., 2013). Also significant to note is that consumerism directly motivated young people to engage in transactional sex (Kamndaya et al., 2016).

Similar to Makholwa (2018), Phamotse (2017) employs allusion as a single reference for which the reader needs to make a connection between the work and the allusion, which requires the reader to have knowledge of the clothing brands, alcohol and cars alluded to, amongst others.

Firstly, as previously alluded to, image and presentation are significant in the transactional sex relationship culture. Thus, the first single reference allusion is made to several designer brands in the following quote, "...Gucci, Miu Miu...Stuart Weitzman, Alexander McQueen, Walter Steiger...And every woman has to have at least one pair each of Christian Louboutins, Jimmy Choos, Manolo Blahniks, Tom Fords and of course the master Louis Vuitton" (p.152). The allusion refers to shoes by the designers mentioned above. It conveys a sense of luxury and the need to wear or own the afore-mentioned designer shoes to be part of the transactional sex relationship culture. Another example of a single reference allusion is "...clothes I must mention

Valentino, Versace, Dior, Armani, Prada, and Chanel” (p.152), an allusion that refers to the designer clothes that one needs to wear as a blessed girl. Similarly, the following single reference allusion example alludes to exercise gear by mentioning them by designer name, “[h]er bare minimum outfit - Nike Aeroloft vest, Lululemon running shorts and Vivo barefoot shoes...” (p.284). The exercise gear is explicitly described to create an awareness in the reader that it is what the blesser/blessee culture requires.

Secondly, single reference allusions are made to alcohol in the following quotes; “...blend of Chenin Blanc and Chardonnay, from Franschhoeck” (p.150), “Romanee-Conti, La Grande Rue, Richebourg, Chablis, Chambertin, Montrachet...” (p.153) and “...some other exclusive champagnes are Bollinger, Krug, Moet, Cristal, Veuve Clicquot ...” (p.154). This allusion to wines and champagnes creates an awareness of the expensive taste of alcohol in the blesser/blessee culture. When taught about choosing wines and champagnes, Treasure is informed to always look for the words ‘grand’ or ‘premier’ when ordering wine.

Finally, Phamotse (2017) employs a single reference allusion to allude to expensive cars to create an atmosphere of luxury in presenting the transactional sex relationship culture. In a differently-themed novel, the writer would have referred to cars without the detail it receives in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*, primarily to create an image of luxury in the reader’s mind. The allusion is made to the following luxury cars; BMW 760Li, Maserati Quattroporte, Porsche Cayenne and a Bentley Continental GTC. The vivid descriptions add to the image of the blesser/blessee culture.

Both Makholwa (2018) and Phamotse (2017) employ single-reference allusion primarily for character development, the creation of the setting and the mood of the plot. They both allude to clothing brands, expensive cars and alcohol. In contrast, Makholwa (2018) alludes to historical and contemporary figures, writers, books, social media and television shows to develop the character of the blessee and the plot. Phamotse (2017) also alludes to social media but not in so much detail as Makholwa (2018).

3.6.3.3 The sensory experience of the blessee through imagery in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*

In response to the study's first objective, another literary device that Phamotse (2017) employs is different types of imagery to describe sex scenes in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*. Even though the topic of sex has been taboo and has not been described with the level of detail she employs, the current study fills that gap. Phamotse (2017) employs imagery to provide the reader with an accurate description of the transactional sex relationship culture through the senses. This section presents examples of the visual, organic and tactile imagery described in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*.

3.6.3.3.1 Visual imagery in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*

Although Phamotse (2017) provides different examples of visual imagery, the focus of this section is visual imagery that relates to the sexual relations in the novel, as the focus of the study is to examine the aesthetics with which contemporary writers present issues of transactional sex relationships.

The first example of visual imagery, "...she put it in her mouth. It tasted of salt and sweat. She squeezed her eyes shut and did her best to please him" (p.182), describes Treasure's first time experience performing fellatio on her blesser and how she almost choked. This imagery conveys her inexperience and discomfort. In the same scene, "...[h]e was entranced with her body and her small waist, with her nipples standing at attention" (p.182); the author describes Treasure's youthful body and the blesser's captivation with it as they engage in sexual intercourse for the first time. Another example from the same scene; "[s]he allowed him to slide in and out, although he was slightly big for her and it hurt" (p.183), describes Treasure's discomfort and pain whilst engaging in sexual intercourse. The imagery conveys a message of conformity to the blesser's desires even if it is painful or uncomfortable for her.

The second example of visual imagery pertaining to sexual relations between the blesser and blessee is "[a]nal is my desire today.... Treasure was on her knees as he forced himself into her, pushing and pushing, dry and tight" (p.202). The scene describes Treasure's first consensual anal sex experience and the pain and discomfort that accompanies it. Consensual because she had been raped before. This imagery represents the transactional sex relationship culture because the blessee is forced to oblige to undesirable sex acts to please the blesser. Phamotse (2017) further describes, in the same scene, that "[t]ears flowed down her burning cheeks, dripping onto the carpet, yet she still kept her screams in. The rough carpet slowly peeled her skin off her knees" (p.202). On her knees, forced himself and dry and tight are all descriptive phrases of the pain Treasure endures during her first-time anal sex experience.

However, it also conveys the blesser's indifference to her pain despite seeing Treasure cry.

The third example of visual imagery pertaining to sexual relations describes the blessee's anxiety and prowess regarding having sexual intercourse next to the road on the car bonnet; "[s]he bit her lower lip to hide her slightly fretful grimace. With her toes. She unzipped his pants" (p.225). The imagery conveys the blessee's limited control over the place, and time the blesser will demand sexual intercourse. Phamotse (2017) further vividly describes the sex scene, "[h]e tilted her legs apart, moving his damp lips between them with lust emanating from every pore. Her nipples rose and stood at attention (p.226). The imagery describes the sexual desire of both the blesser and the blessee; the blesser's desire can be inferred from his actions, whereas the blessee's desire can be inferred from her body's physical reaction. Central to the study's argument is that the discussion of sex has been a taboo subject in Africa, yet Phamotse (2017) describes sexual scenes like the above to add a sense of urgency to the covert aspects of transactional sex relationships.

The evidence in the above examples concurs with the literature reviewed in this study. One of the emergent issues of transactional sex relationships is the limited negotiating power that young women possess because the men are often older, revered and economically advanced (Hunter, 2002; Luke & Kurz, 2002; McIlwaine & Datta, 2004). The scholars add that this tends to put men in charge of sexual intercourse and condom use decisions. As in the examples above, young women often have no agency, leaving them vulnerable for the man to take advantage of.

3.6.3.3.2 Organic and tactile imagery in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*

Phamotse (2017) also employs organic and tactile imagery, respectively. She employs the former to arouse the reader's emotions as organic imagery describes the experiences of the body, such as emotions. "Treasure felt a strange pang..." (p.210), "[h]er shoulders slumped heavily... (p.210), "...the echoing terror in her gut expanded..." (p.217), "[t]he wind swept all her anxiety away..." (p.225), "Treasure kept her pain stifled in her gut" (p.229), "...the nerves in her chest had her heart squeezed..." (p.243), "[h]is words...plagued her conscience and tore at her heart" (p.278), "...the devastated grief in her eyes could have killed a running bull" (p.285) and "[h]er tears...were boiling feelings spilling out of a life of horror and grief..." (p.292). The examples mentioned above describe Treasure's emotions which are often negative and describe her anxiety more than her happiness. The portrayal and description of emotions support the literature that often, transactional sex relationships strain the women who do not leave because of fear of losing their benefits or fear of violence.

The following are examples of tactile imagery that describe the blesser touching the blessee sexually. The examples are highlighted as unrefined data because they contribute to the transactional relationship culture theme:

- "She climbed rather awkwardly on top of him, trying to move her body against his while sliding her thighs over his legs" (p.182).
- "He told her to place her hand on his testicles and move them around...Relax; treat it like an ice cream, yes, that's it..." (p.182.)

- “He pushed her backwards onto the bed, did some foreplay robotically and then had his way with her” (p.202).
- “He pulled her in for a penetrating kiss, closing the car door, distracting her lips with his warmth. He folded her in his arms, hugging her...” (p.225).
- “He moaned, oblivious to her pain, then dragged his fingers down her back, ripping the dress to top it all off” (p.229).

“She climbed”, “slid”, “move them”, “he pushed”, “he pulled”, “he folded”, and “he dragged” are all examples of tactile imagery employed to vividly describe the different sexual escapades of the blesser and blessee. The afore-mentioned examples of tactile imagery primarily describe the blesser’s position of control over sexual intercourse. The imagery confirms that although the sexual relationship is consensual, the blesser dictates even the sexual positions, leaving the blessee in discomfort.

3.6.4 Summary of literary devices in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*

The study's first objective was to examine how the selected novels innovatively employ literary devices and aesthetics to represent transactional sex relationships, colloquially known as the blesser, blessee, sugar daddies, sugar babies and side-chicks’ phenomenon. This section, like the previous, aimed to answer the first research objective and described the recognisable features of transactional sex relationships as presented in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*.

The section analysed the following literary devices employed to aesthetically present the unrefined descriptive data for transactional sex relationships: euphemisms, metaphors and hyperbole, allusion and imagery. Phamotse (2017) employs

euphemisms to describe sexual relations between the blesser and the blessee whilst metaphorically describing the extent of the wealth of the blesser. She also employs hyperbole to exaggerate the prices and reactions. Similar to Makholwa (2018), Phamotse (2017) employs single reference allusion to refer to clothing brands, alcohol and expensive cars. In addition, both authors extensively employ visual, organic and tactile imagery as literary devices. She focuses on sexual relations for the visual imagery and the blessee's emotions for organic imagery whilst also describing the sense of touch during sexual intercourse for tactile imagery.

3.6.5 Selected literary devices in *Sweet Medicine*

This section describes the recognisable features of transactional sex relationships as presented in Chigumadzi's (2016) *Sweet Medicine*. The study's first objective was to examine how the selected novels innovatively employ literary devices and aesthetics to represent transactional sex relationships. Similar to Makholwa (2018) and Phamotse (2017), Chigumadzi (2016) employs different literary devices to describe transactional sex relationships. This section presents the literary devices that specifically describe transactional sex relationships in *Sweet Medicine*. The devices include imagery, idioms, code-switching, similes, euphemism and sarcasm.

3.6.5.1 The sensory experience of the blessee through imagery in *Sweet Medicine*

Chigumadzi (2016) extensively employs visual imagery pertaining to sexual relations, appearance and materialism, and tactile imagery of desperation and sexual relations to describe transactional sex relationships. Thus, this section discusses visual imagery and tactile imagery, respectively.

3.6.5.1.1 Visual imagery in *Sweet Medicine*

3.6.5.1.1.1 Visual imagery pertaining to sexual relations in *Sweet Medicine*

The first visual imagery example is, “Tsitsi expected that her petite frame tightly held in her new - and, yes revealing - evening dress would be met with more enthusiasm” (p.56). The imagery creates an image of Tsitsi’s body and her revealing dress. The same scene describes, “[t]he dress was a startling cerise pink...chosen for the way it contrasted against her dark skin...” (p.56), creating an image of Tsitsi’s complexion contrasted against the pink dress. Lastly, Tsitsi “...greeted him as she knelt to take off his shoes and give him his slippers, making sure his eye caught the dip of her breasts” (p.56), creating an image of Tsitsi in a knelt position with her cleavage exposed. All the afore-mentioned visual images describe Tsitsi’s efforts with her appearance to try and win back the sexual affection of the blesser with whom she is in a transactional sex relationship. The tight-fitting dress and cleavage are meant to arouse sexual attraction, but her efforts failed as Zvobgo did not do anything to show his interest.

In the second example of visual imagery that pertains to sexual relations, Chigumadzi (2016) describes how Tsitsi sprays perfume on her neck and breast, buttons her cardigan to amplify her cleavage and alludes to her jog as a “way of hinting at a body fit to be fucked...” (p.59). Chigumadzi (2016) continues to describe how Tsitsi was “undressing at a deliberately slow pace so that he could catch every movement, every twist of her body” (p.62). In a final attempt to seduce him, she thrust “her buttocks in his direction so that he could not help but see her soft, round cheeks, the ones he had loved to grab, knead, pound and even slap” (p.63). All the above examples describe Tsitsi’s effort to win back her blesser’s sexual attention, but it all proves futile.

In another example, Chigumadzi (2016) employs the technique of flashback to provide a detailed description of Tsitsi's first-time sexual encounter with her blesser, at a time when he was still sexually attracted to her:

...he pulled her to him. She felt herself dampen at this sudden gesture of authority. The switch aroused her. The touch felt forbidden and had her wondering whether the fact that she was as youthful as his daughters made it even more exciting for him....His fingertips traced her nipples, then down to her navel and to the mound of coarse hair between her legs to her womanhood....But here she was, moving quickly from dampness to wetness, expressing desire for this old man” ...She was surprised again when he slapped her bum. A firm slap with a cupped hand that had blood rushing to her cheeks.... She found herself confused, aroused at the sight of his firm legs incongruously lean and sinuous like that of a young man, under his small but firm drum of stomach. (p.105)

In the above quote, Chigumadzi (2016), similar to Makholwa (2018) and Phamotse (2017) employs visual and tactile imagery to explicitly describe sexual intercourse between the blesser and blessee in which she describes their nudity, their excitement and their emotions.

3.6.5.1.1.2 The visual imagery of appearance in *Sweet Medicine*

Chigumadzi (2016) also describes visual imagery as it relates to appearance. She describes how Tsitsi complains to the blesser about the condition of the room they use for their sexual rendezvous. “...the sheets had stains and...; that the carpet smelt of

mildew...that the room's sink was discoloured from the constant drip of a leaky tap; that the hotel was in a dingy part of town..." (p.32). The meaning conveyed is Tsitsi's dissatisfaction with being brought to this hotel, as a way of trying to make their relationship meaningful and permanent. In addition, the following example continues her complaints about the hotel's appearance, not because it is a problem but because she is trying to demand more from the blesser. She also does not want to be associated with the real prostitutes as she does not consider herself to be one "...whenever they entered the hotel lobby, where the real prostitutes would inevitably make themselves at home, bums and breast spilling out of their clothes" (p.32).

In another example of visual imagery that relates to appearance, "[p]eople need to see me as a respectable wife to Zvobgo. I'm tired of being confused for that daughter of his!" (p.44). The imagery creates an image of Tsitsi trying to look like a respectable wife through her traditional attire instead of her usual youthful look. However, when she goes out to see her friend Chiedza, she "was unrecognisable from her usual traditional guise. She had her twelve-inch weave brushed out in full display and wore a tight-fitting dress" (p.67). This latter look is the same one she wore when she seduced Zvobgo for the first time. The imagery implies that the blessee looked different when the blesser was first attracted to her, but now she has adopted the same look as his ex-wife, with whom he had no intimate relations. Shefer and Strebel (2012) theorise that having multiple sexual partners is evidence of men's masculinity. The blesser perhaps often seeks excitement away from his wife, who is stereotypically described as boring. *Sweet medicine* provides evidence that Tsitsi becomes just another wife instead of the intriguing woman the blesser was attracted to initially.

3.6.5.1.1.3 Visual imagery pertaining to materialism in *Sweet Medicine*

Chigumadzi (2016) also describes visual imagery that relates to materialism in transactional sex relationships. Materialism is integral to transactional sex relationships because the blesser gives the blessee money and gifts in return for sex. The following are examples of visual images of gifts the blessee received. The blesser buying the blessee a Land Cruiser is implied because she took cabs to work before she became the Small House and moved into Zvobgo's house. In addition, "he had already bought her a flat, one that would serve as a love nest of sorts for the two of them" (p.109). Besides the car and flat, Tsitsi also demanded money she saved.

Additionally, Tsitsi, having "settled in her role as Woman of the Main House, ... filled it with many, many shiny trinkets. New glass cabinets with rows and rows of polished dishes and sparkling glassware" (p.59). As the new wife, Tsitsi was redecorating the house, which in her opinion, was not left up to standard by the previous Mrs Zvobgo. Thus, she decided to buy and decorate the house with different items, "[t]here would be heavy silverware. She would have a display cabinet... filled with things. Some things she would not know how to use, which of course was not a problem - they would be display cabinets..." (p.111). The examples above of visual imagery describe Tsitsi's love for beautiful material things. She decides to redecorate the house the way she has always dreamt. The examples above corroborate Fazlinovic et al. (2017) claim that *sugar dating* enables young women to buy desired material objects for themselves. Seemingly, Tsitsi's primary mission has changed from fighting poverty to gathering material possessions. On the other hand, if Zimbabwe's economic situation was

different and she had become the Governor of the Reserve Bank, she would probably still have acquired her desired material objects.

3.6.5.1.2 Tactile imagery of desperation and sexual relations in *Sweet Medicine*

The second example of imagery used as a literary device in describing transactional sex relationships is tactile imagery. It is used firstly, to relate to Tsitsi's desperation and secondly, to sexual relations. The first example of tactile imagery describes Tsitsi's desperation at the beginning of the story when "... the *n'anga* places the pouch in her palm. The amorphous shape does not betray its contents..." (p.5). This example of tactile imagery describes the feeling of the pouch in her hand when she receives the pouch with *muti* to use against her nemesis, the new secretary whom she fears will steal Zvobgo's affections. The imagery substantiates the extent to which the blessee will go to ensure her position or to receive what she wants from the blessing. Another example is when, at the end of the story, "[s]he grips the pouch in her handbag. As if willed by her action, Zvobgo looks at her" (p.188). This last imagery implies that using the pouch was successful because she was now pregnant, and they consulted the priest for a white wedding date, just as she had wanted. According to Bandali (2011), being passive and dependent on marriage is a norm, and some women exchange sex for resources to escape this norm and thus challenge the accepted female norms. However, Tsitsi's example complicates this view. Although not passive, Tsitsi is dependent on marriage and thus unscrupulously uses her transactional sex relationship to achieve her desired white wedding. The question then remains – is Tsitsi empowered? On closer scrutiny, Tsitsi's relationship complicates understanding transactional sex relationships. She might be empowered because marrying Zvobgo provides her with

financial security. She is also empowered because using her sexuality fails to hold Zvobgo's attention; she is industrious in finding a *n'anga* to provide her *muti*. However, she is also disempowered because the marriage is not attained honestly; she strengthens patriarchy with her dependence, and Zvobgo remains in a position of power.

Chigumadzi (2016) also employs tactile imagery to describe sexual relations in transactional sex relationships. The first example of tactile imagery related to sex is when Tsitsi desires Zvobgo's affection and turns around "...thrusting her buttocks in his direction... the ones he had loved to grab, knead, pound and even slap" (p.63). In the same scene, she "stroked his back and he pulled away.... She found herself kissing him" (p.63). The meaning conveyed is that, now that they live in the same house and share a bed, Zvobgo is no longer sexually attracted to Tsitsi.

The second example of tactile imagery related to sex is when Chigumadzi (2016) employs the flashback technique to describe the sexual means Tsitsi used to corner the blesser the first time she decided to seduce him. "...now rubbing her hand up and down his arm" and "...she took her hand and cupped his balls" (p.100). The imagery describes how Tsitsi made a conscious decision to seduce the blesser, who was her boss at the time.

The last examples of tactile imagery that relate to sexual relations are:

- "His fingertips traced her nipples, then down to her navel and to the mound of coarse hair between her legs to her womanhood" (p.105), and

- “She was surprised again when he slapped her bum. A firm slap with a cupped hand that had blood rushing to her cheeks” (p.105).

Chigudmadzi (2016) describes the blessee and her blesser’s first sexual encounter. Fingertips traced nipples and navel, slapped her bum and cupped his balls are all examples of touch between the blesser and blessee. This encounter conveys that the blesser had surrendered to the blessee’s advances after being hesitant for months.

3.6.5.2 Idioms about relationships, sexual relations and emotions in *Sweet Medicine*

This section responds to the study's first objective: to examine how the selected novels innovatively employ literary devices and aesthetics to represent transactional sex relationships. Like Makholwa (2018), who employs idiomatic expressions to describe relationships, money and emotions in transactional sex relationships, Chigumadzi (2016) employs this literary device in different contexts to make her writing dynamic and give it character. This section discusses how idioms have been employed to describe relationships, sexual relations and emotions that pertain to transactional sex relationships.

3.6.5.2.1 Idioms about relationships and sexual relations in *Sweet Medicine*

Chigumadzi (2016) employs idiomatic expressions to describe relationships and sexual relations as they relate to transactional sex relationships. The first example of the idiomatic expression that refers to relationships is when Zvobgo’s colleagues rebuke him for divorcing his wife. His colleagues tell him he is not the first person to have a side-chick or girlfriend - “... you are not the first to have a Small House” (p.118). This rebuke implies that it is normal for men to have a Small House or side-

chick, but they do not divorce their wives. Small houses are a reflection of the country's polygamous history. According to Mutseta (2016), the small house institution has similar functions, roles and structure as those found in established monogamous families. However, his colleagues problematise Zvobgo's relationship because it dismantles his marriage. The next idiom, "...cementing their relationship" (p.133), refers to Tsitsi thinking about ways in which she can become Zvobgo's wife instead of remaining a girlfriend. In addition, the last example describes Tsitsi's desire to be addressed as Mrs Zvobgo; "Mrs Zvobgo. The words...[t]hey'd been turned over so many times as she tasted their deliciousness" (p.137). This expressed desire implies that Tsitsi never intended to remain a side-chick but perhaps always had the desire to become Zvobgo's wife. If not, Tsitsi would have remained a side-chick until she met an eligible bachelor to marry.

Furthermore, Chigumadzi (2016) employs idiomatic expressions to describe sexual relations in *Sweet Medicine*. The following idiom questions whether Zvobgo is gay since he is no longer showing sexual interest in Tsitsi - "...are you saying our man is like Banana?... no, no Chi - I know he likes women" (p.71). However, the following example explains Tsitsi's inability to sleep despite having had lengthy sexual intercourse with Zvobgo - "[t]he first night in the house, she could hardly sleep, even though she had just had a marathon session with Zvobgo" (p.112). Despite having achieved what she desired for Zvobgo to leave his wife and for her to move into his house, Tsitsi is sleepless as she is tormented by the thoughts of another woman achieving the same feat with him. The above example supports McRobbie's (2009) argument that Lipstick Feminism supports the neoliberal consumer culture because it

encourages women to consume more and promotes individualism rather than collectivism. Tsitsi is only concerned with her well-being and not how her actions affect Zvobgo's wife. The third example is used because of Tsitsi's worry about how easy it will be for Zvobgo to sleep with different women; "...he found it easier to slip in and out of thighs" (p.133). The concern is valid because although he is not a promiscuous man, she has introduced him to that kind of life. What worsens Tsitsi's emotional torment is the realisation that just as she seduced him and achieved what she desired, it would be easy for another woman to do the same. The last example, "[s]he is wearing the ill-disguised uniform of a temptress..." (p.184) describes the skimpily-clad secretary who ironically reminds Tsitsi of herself when she was trying to seduce Zvobgo. Tsitsi sees herself in the new secretary because she dresses like Tsitsi did when she resolved to seduce Zvobgo.

3.6.5.2.2 Idioms about emotions and general idioms in *Sweet Medicine*

This section discusses idioms of emotions and general idioms that pertain to transactional sex relationships. The first example, Tsitsi "...waited for sleep to rescue her from the menacing questions that plagued her" (p.64), refers to her desire to fall asleep so that she can rest from the thoughts about her deteriorating relationship with the blesser. In addition, "[w]ith these thoughts, it felt heavier and heavier" (p.73) describes Tsitsi's thoughts about her relationship with Zvobgo, which overwhelm her. The second example is when Tsitsi confesses to Chiedza about the sexual inactivity between her and her blesser and immediately regrets doing so, "She said the words quickly in the hope that they would float up, disappear lightly into the air with her friend's cigarette smoke..." (p.70). Tsitsi immediately regrets confiding in her friend

about the sexual inactivity in her relationship and hopes that her friend will not hear her confusion as it would be carried off by the cigarette smoke as quickly as she utters them.

Chigumadzi (2016) also employs general idiomatic expressions to describe transactional sex relationships, setting and context in *Sweet Medicine*. The following idioms refer to various aspects like the economy, age, and abortion. In the first example, Chiedza encourages Tsitsi; "...most importantly, whatever keeps you fed in this upside-down BACOSI economy..." (p.36). BACOSI refers to the Basic Commodities Supply Side Intervention implemented by the Zimbabwean government to lessen the shortages of basic commodities in supermarkets but backfired because the citizens had to pay double the prices. The above quote regarding the BACOSI economy implies that if it were not for the state of the economy, both Tsitsi and Chiedza would probably have been in their desired jobs, the ones they studied for but are forced by circumstances to be in transactional sex relationships.

In addition, Tsitsi complains to Zvobgo about the "[t]he Catch-Me-If-You-Can electricity..." (p.108) which refers to load shedding. Both of the afore-mentioned idioms are relevant to transactional sex relationships because the blessee decides to be in this relationship to provide food for herself, her mother and her uncle in an economy where the prices of basic commodities are exorbitant. She also deliberately and strategically complains about the load-shedding, knowing that the blesser can provide a generator.

Another example refers to the age gap between the blesser and blessee as “[s]he was aware of the great distance between her and Zvobgo, a great gulf of experience.... He was some decades ahead of her” (p.115). The second example refers to a possible newspaper headline; “Small house caught at slaughter house!” (p.169) when Tsitsi reprimands her friend about having her third abortion. Unwanted or unplanned pregnancies are one of the challenges of transactional sex relationships that force the blessees to take desperate measures such as abortions. The last two examples corroborate the literature findings that young women allow men to control the conditions for sexual intercourse, such as whether condoms or contraceptives will be used (Luke & Kurz, 2002). This conclusion is endorsed by McIlwaine and Datta (2004), who state that young girls find it difficult to negotiate the use of contraceptives.

3.6.5.3 The bilingualism of the small house through code-switching in *Sweet Medicine*

The third literary device aesthetically employed by Chigumadzi (2016) is code-switching, a technique to make the reader aware that the story is set in Zimbabwe. Thus, the character uses Shona which makes their conversations natural and adds to the authenticity of the story. Apart from signalling a casual register, code-switching also expresses the identity of the characters.

The first example pertains to Tsitsi’s transactional sex relationship with her blesser. Tsitsi’s friend Chiedza teases her saying, “even as Zvobgo's woman *uriers kukiya kiya* like the rest of us?” (p.45). This means Tsitsi is hustling or trying to make money like everybody else. Similarly, Tsitsi tries to defend her relationship with Zvobgo to Chiedza when she states, *Hatisi kuchaya mapoto!* (p.46) She and Zvobgo do not live

as boyfriend and girlfriend without marriage. In addition, Chiedza reminds Tsitsi about the basics of her relationship with Zvobgo; “[t]he fundamentals are clear. *Hapana kurasika*” (p.49), which means that there is no getting lost or need to get confused because either party knows the reciprocal expectation. In the last example of code-switching that relates to Tsitsi’s transactional sex relationship, she threatens the maid, “If you tell Baba Zvobgo, *vakangonzwa chete kuti takambotaura*” (p.174). Tsitsi tells her that she would make sure she goes back to her mother's village if she tells Zvobgo that Tsitsi asked her for information about a *n’anga*.

The second examples pertain to Tsitsi’s appearance, an important aspect of transactional sex relationships. Chiedza, Tsitsi’s friend who had several transactional sex relationships before Tsitsi, advised her that her blesser should never find her “wearing tracksuits and a *dhuku* (headscarf). Chiedza also teaches Tsitsi to apply makeup; *Ko chiiko*, Tsitsi? which means so, what is it? because Tsitsi had mixed and applied the wrong colours. Chiedza tells her *zvikaramba zvakadai*, if it does not work or stays like this – referring to the make-up, she will take over as Zvobgo’s small house (p.112).

3.6.5.4 Similes of the transactional sex relationship culture in *Sweet Medicine*

In addition to code-switching, Chigumadzi (2016) also employs similes as a literary device to describe transactional sex relationships in *Sweet Medicine*. The first two examples explain the tense relationship between the blesser and the blessee. Firstly, “[h]is stare kept her paralysed, like a fieldmouse cornered by a python (p.55), compares Tsitsi’s paralysis to that of a fieldmouse cornered by a python to describe

her fear. In addition, [l]ike a schoolgirl reprimanded by the headmaster, Tsitsi fetched a cardigan from their bedroom” (p.57). Tsitsi is compared to a schoolgirl because of the seniority of Zvobgo or the embarrassment she feels when he reprimands her whilst she is trying to seduce him. The example implies that in Zvobgo’s eyes, Tsitsi is just a girl and not a woman and she, in turn, confirms this by retreating when he reprimands her. Men do not only control the conditions for sexual intercourse, such as whether condoms or contraceptives will be used, as posited by Luke and Kurz (2002) but also control the woman to the extent of treating her like a child. However, it should be noted that women allow the ill-treatment they receive from men.

Secondly, the following similes explain Tsitsi’s mental agitation. For instance, because of Zvobgo’s lack of sexual interest; “she felt...as if someone was pouring cement into her head” (pp.72-73) which is a comparison of Tsitsi’s countless thoughts to cement being poured. The next example still relates to Tsitsi’s mental agitation because she had gone to see a *n’anga* to resolve the problem, “The migraines are sometimes head-splitting and debilitating like someone is hacking with a hoe at the back of her head, felling her to the ground for their enjoyment” (p.182). The excruciating pain of the migraine headaches is compared to a feeling of being hacked on the head and is an indication of the high stress levels experienced by Tsitsi because of Zvobgo’s sexual disinterest, which threatens her livelihood.

Finally, the following similes describe Tsitsi’s transactional sex relationship. “She chided herself for sounding so scripted, like a movie...” (p.100) describes Tsitsi comparing the speech she makes to Zvobgo to seduce him to a movie script. In another

example, Tsitsi's expression of indignation is compared to a stereotype in a Nigerian movie; "[m]xm, she snarled like a Scorned Wife in a Nollywood movie..." (p.110). The afore-mentioned similes support the theme of transactional sex relationships because the similes aesthetically explain the covert issues that arise from being in these relationships.

3.6.5.5 Euphemisms pertaining to sexual relations in *Sweet Medicine*

The next literary device that Chigumadzi (2016) employs is euphemism to describe sexual relations. Anything related to sex was only alluded to, and the juxtaposition is that although contemporary writers explicitly detail sexual intercourse through imagery, they also employ euphemisms for aesthetics. Below are several examples that all relate to the sexual escapades of the blesser and the blessee. Firstly, "...her moist walls receiving him as he entered her slowly" (p.32) does not refer to physical walls but refers to the blessee's private parts and the act of sexual intercourse. Secondly, "[y]ou won't satisfy the hunger of his loins" (p.47) means Tsitsi would not be able to satisfy the sexual needs of her blesser or any other man. Thirdly, "...he could not help but see her soft, round cheeks..." (p.63) does not refer to the cheeks on her face but to her bottom. Next, Tsitsi tells Chiedza that they, her blesser and herself, "haven't done it in a while" (p.70), and the pronoun *it* refers to sexual intercourse, whereas "a man has to eat" (p.70) also refers to sexual intercourse and not to eating food in the conventional sense. The last two examples refer to Zvobgo performing cunnilingus on Tsitsi; "she felt his tongue deep in her..." (p.106), which does not refer to her mouth but rather her lady parts and Tsitsi performing fellatio on Zvobgo as "she sucked on his manhood..." (p.111) with manhood referring to his male member. Other

euphemisms refer to the blesser as a *minister of finance* because he provides money to the blessee and *Small House*, which is a polite way to refer to a side-chick.

3.6.5.6 Sarcasm as criticism or defence mechanism in *Sweet Medicine*

Finally, Chigumadzi (2016), like Makholwa (2018), also employs sarcasm to criticise different issues that pertain to transactional sex relationships. The following examples of sarcasm are Chiedza's criticism of Tsitsi. For example, the "Catholic saint who dreamed of a big white wedding has talked herself into living in sin" (p.69) is what Chiedza tells Tsitsi in defence of her transactional sex relationship lifestyle. Chiedza also points out to Tsitsi that "you are so quick to point out that you are not a prostitute (p.73). This is a sarcastic comment because, like Chiedza, Tsitsi, although in denial, is engaged in a transactional sex relationship. The following is a sarcastic comment by Chiedza to Tsitsi and everybody else who judges what they do and esteem married women higher than unmarried women, "[y]ou all should spare us your morality that lauds women over the supposedly lesser whores and girls" (p.73). The irony of the quote is that the whores and girls are also women, and those praised could also be in relationships that involve transactions to an extent. Lastly, Chiedza reminds Tsitsi that "[i]f he could do it to her, he can do it to you" (71), which means if Zvobgo could leave his wife for Tsitsi, he can also leave Tsitsi when he meets somebody else. The fear of Zvobgo leaving implies there is no guarantee in a transactional sex relationship; the blesser or blessee could move on to a new prospect. The analysis of sarcasm is relevant to this study as Chigumadzi (2016) highlights the covert issues of transactional sex relationships.

3.6.6 Summary of the literary devices in *Sweet Medicine*

This section, like the previous, aimed to answer the first objective by describing the recognisable features of transactional sex relationships as presented in *Sweet Medicine*. Chigumadzi (2016) employed several literary devices for the aesthetic representation of transactional sex relationships in her novel. She extensively employs visual imagery to describe sexual relations, appearance and materialism. In addition, she employs tactile imagery to describe the blessee's emotional and physical desperation as well as the sexual relations of the blesser and blessee. Chigumadzi (2016) uses idiomatic expressions to express the blessee's relationships, sexual relations and emotions. Then code-switching is employed as a literary device to describe relationships and appearance. Similes and euphemisms are employed to describe sexual relations, whilst the similes also describe the blessee's emotions. Lastly, like Makholwa (2018), Chigumadzi (2016) also employs sarcasm as a literary device for criticism, not just between Tsitsi and her friend but also to engage the reader in thought. The following literary devices, visual and tactile imagery, idioms and euphemisms, are all employed to describe sexual relations in a transactional sex relationship.

3.6.7 Selected literary devices in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

This section discusses literary devices such as imagery, idioms, allusion, euphemism, similes, and rhetorical questions that specifically describe transactional sex relationships as presented in Maphosa's (2019) *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*.

3.6.7.1 The sensory experience of the side-chick through imagery in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

3.6.7.1.1 Visual imagery pertaining to sexual relations in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

Although the subject of sex is taboo, Maphosa (2019), like other contemporary African writers, vividly describes sexual intimacy in her novel. This section provides evidence of detailed sexual intercourse descriptions and their related issues. The first example describes one of Fierce's 'married lovers' physique before they engage in sexual intercourse, "He comes out with a towel wrapped around his waist and that chiselled chest all out in the open" and "...with the right amount of muscle and broad enough shoulders and those arms..." (p.32). The imagery conveys Fierce's attraction to Bunke's physical appearance contributes to the overall theme of transactional sex relationships because he is married, and Fierce is his side-chick. The example also implies the side-chick's fascination with sexual intercourse because despite claiming to love the blesser, she also has an intimate relationship with her classmate. Possibly, the sexually inexperienced side-chick could be fascinated with sexual intercourse and exploring other partners because she has only had sexual intercourse with her blesser.

The second example vividly describes sexual intercourse between Fierce and her married lover Bunke who is also her co-student:

He's going all animalistic on me, grabbing my hair a little too hard and choking my neck. I can't really move, I'm trapped under him and his weight is crushing me. The only sounds in the room is me choking - screaming, him breathing and the bed hitting against the headboard ...I have marks on my neck, teeth marks on my shoulder and bruises on my waist, thighs and back. (pp.32-33)

The above example creates a visual image of how Bunke grabs, chokes and crushes Fierce with his weight. In addition, it engages the reader's auditory senses when it describes the screaming, breathing and headboard noises. Finally, the scene described above creates a visual image of the teeth and bruise marks on Fierce's body which is evidence that her relationship with the blesser is not perfect but is accompanied by moments of discomfort and pain. This imagery supports the argument that contemporary African writers describe sexual scenes in detail without inhibition.

A third example employs hyperbole to describe the sexual relations between Fierce and Elik as shown in this excerpt, "He ...is so gentle my whole body, mind and soul are aroused" and "I'm still trembling after we're done and hearing him tell me how much ... he loves me just makes my brain explode" (p.54). Fierce further describes the extent to which she is aroused sexually and her emotions when she hears her lover's declaration of love for her. The imagery engages the reader's senses. The next example describes the different sexual escapades of Fierce and her blesser when she tells him that she is not wearing any underwear while they are at a mall. However, a security guard chases them before they can have sexual intercourse (p.60). The imagery describes how they have sexual intercourse in the car, leaving "footprints on the window and with him ... fingerprints and good grips on my ass, driving me like a Ford Ranger (p.62). The imagery creates different settings in the reader's mind where sexual intercourse occurs.

In another example, Maphosa (2019) combines visual, tactile and auditory imagery to describe the sexual intercourse between the side-chick and her blesser:

He kisses me back and I feel spasms running down my spine” ... His hands grope me and we are kissing and he’s standing up and his clothes are coming off. ... He pushes me on the bed and is kissing me with so much ferocity. His body feels so warm and his weight is crushing me... nibbling on my ear lobe. ...Love making turns to downright fucking and I’m screaming my voice away. I’m bringing my porn-star game to the bedroom. (pp.112-113)

The imagery engages the reader’s senses because Maphosa (2019) describes the sexual scene so vividly that it creates images in the reader’s mind of the kissing, the undressing, the groping, the temperature, the weight, and the screaming. By bringing her porn-star game to the bedroom, Fierce contributes to the transactional sex relationship theme because it suggests that the side-chick is acquainted with pornography and how women perform sexual feats to please men. In addition, Maphosa (2019) employs euphemisms to visually describe the sexual intercourse scenes, as shown in the example below:

...he kisses every part of my body slowly from my lips all the way down. He lingers on my boobs, he’s always loved them.... He stays longer down there, taking his time and putting his tongue to work. ...he holds me close as he gently parts my thighs with his knees and makes his way slowly into me. ...I wanna stay right here, under him... (p.141)

The imagery mentioned above not only creates a visual image of the side-chick’s body but also describes her lady parts (*down there*), boobs (*breasts*), putting his tongue to work (*cunnilingus*) and making his way slowly into me (*sexual intercourse*). Similarly, Maphosa’s (2019) diction in her visual imagery employs euphemisms to describe the side-chick’s body and the sexual relations between her and the blesser. She also shows

the reader that sexual intercourse between the side-chick and the blesser occurs in different locations. She describes them falling from a swing and the side-chick dislocating a shoulder whilst having sexual intercourse (p.150) and having sex in the backseat of the car, leaving footprints on the windows (p.151). These descriptions of sexual intercourse in public substantiate the argument that sex is no longer considered a taboo subject. Maphosa (2019) is the first writer amongst the four selected novelists to detail the side-chick enjoying the sexual experience with the blesser.

Maphosa (2019) also describes, although it could be considered unintentional, the violent nature of the blesser during sexual intercourse with the side-chick at times. The following are two examples of two different sexual encounters of a violent nature:

He grabs me by the neck and I feel like I'm suffocating. He kisses me so hard I'm sure my lips are bruised. I can hardly breathe, clawing at his hand with mine so he can loosen the grip. From the get go there's no gentle or slow, it's a warzone. He struggles to find his way into me but with the force he's using he eventually does and I don't fight him. He holds me down and flat out murders me. (p.285)

In the quote above, Maphosa (2019) creatively employs diction to describe violent visual imagery by using words like *suffocating*, *bruised*, *warzone*, *force* and *murders*. The diction could be considered unrefined and bordering on describing rape and not consensual sexual intercourse, however, as is evident in the next example, the side-chick continues to allow violence during sexual intercourse.

The second example of visual imagery of a violent nature is similar to the first;

He picks me up and throws me on the bed and is not even trying to be gentle about it. I think he means to give me a love bite... He actually bites me and I wince. It hurts. His fingers are digging deep into my skin and his weight is crushing me. I close my eyes and bite hard on my lower lip. I bite so hard I taste blood. This is my way of saying 'I'm here for you baby'. I would actually say those words out loud if he wasn't choking me so hard. I'm gasping for air. I can hardly breathe. (pp.322-323)

The two examples above describe the nature of the sexual intercourse that transpires between the side-chick and the blesser. He grabs her neck to the point where she almost chokes; he kisses her hard to the point of bruising her lips, and the sexual intercourse is rough and painful. The imagery describes how whenever the blesser has an emotional burden; he violently uses sex as his outlet. The examples substantiate the argument by different scholars that women have limited negotiating power because men are often older, revered and economically advanced (Hunter, 2002; Luke & Kurz, 2002; McIlwaine & Datta, 2004). The side-chick rarely has decision-making power about sexual intercourse; how and when it will transpire because it is often about the blesser. The above quote is also an example of how women are passive receivers of sexual action whilst men are active givers.

Maphosa (2019) uses diction to communicate the physical pain the side-chick experiences during sexual intercourse with the blesser, for example, dislocate, hurts, crush, bite, blood, choke and gasp. Unlike the blessees in Makholwa's (2018) and Phamotse's (2017), the side-chick in Maphosa's (2019) is a hardworking PhD student

who was making ends meet, even before she met the blesser. She is thus not desperately in need of money, and it is thus perplexing that she continues to stay in a relationship with the blesser who hurts her during intercourse and defends it as – him needing it and her being there for him. Although the men make sexual decisions and take what they want, even violently, if women receive it without objection, this could be perceived as them allowing the abuse. As alluded to earlier, the side-chick in Maphosa’s (2019) novel is the only blessee who seems to enjoy sexual intercourse with the blesser. The side-chick’s enjoyment of sex could be why she overlooked the times when the blesser became violent.

In the last example, Fierce describes her inexperience when she first met the blesser and how he still gives her goosebumps when they have sexual intercourse. Maphosa (2019) employs tactile (grab and pull), olfactory imagery (scent) and gustatory imagery (drink, lick, bite, eat) to describe their rendezvous and engage the imagination of the reader:

Our bodies are dissolving into each other. I grab his back, pulling him closer and closer. I inhale the scent of his perfume and that extra scent that’s just him. It’s the most delicious scent in the whole world. It makes me want to drink him, lick him, bite him, eat him up and have him for dessert afterwards.”
(p.379)

The meaning conveyed with the afore-mentioned visual imagery was the side-chick’s sexual inexperience when she met the blesser who was older and more experienced sexually, which could contribute to her sexual desire for him alone because of her

limited experience. However, this also shows the side-chick taking control by *grabbing* and *pulling* him closer.

3.6.7.1.2 Visual imagery of materialism in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

In addition to sexual relations, transactional sex relationships are also about a sexual transaction in exchange for money, gifts or other valuables. Maphosa (2019) highlights the material aspect of the relationship as evidenced in the following examples in Maphosa's (2019) novel.

The first example, "...you always said you wanted a Fortuner and since I want to give you everything you want, here is a start..." (p.18) and "[j]ust like that, I'm the new owner of a brilliant black Jeep Grand Cherokee Limited" (p.307). Thus the blesser bought the side-chick two cars with full ownership, although not at once. The two cars and a house are the most valuable possessions the blesser bought the side-chick without her asking for it. The side-chick in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1* is the first to fully own cars and a house in her name compared to the others for whom the cars and property are registered as belonging to the blesser. Another example of visual imagery that pertains to materialism is the time spent by the side-chick and her blesser. They spent time on game drives, seeing the big five "some quad biking ..., a helicopter ride over the North West province" (p.317), and walking and taking pictures around Sun City.

In addition to the trips, Elik showers Fierce with gifts as she notes, "I got 5 pairs of heels this month alone and 6 bundles of 30 Brazilian hair!" (p.70), "R5000 perfume

from Israel” (p.444) and “takes care of my black tax” (p.301). The blesser gives Fierce enough money for herself and her family. The following quote reiterates the material possessions of the side-chick:

I have everything I want. I have the money, the weaves, the clothes, the shoes, the cars, the travelling. I afford to take care of my family and I have a man who buys me gifts. I have the life. Everything that I want that money can buy, I have. (p.311)

Lastly, in a conversation with a friend who also has a blesser, Fierce inquires about the most expensive gift her friend ever received from her blesser. The friend’s response is “[t]his hair. Inches baby! It cost R5000!...” and data (p.70) which, in Fierce’s opinion, is not enough to justify sexual intercourse. The blesser bought the side-chick two cars and a house, has taken her on game drives, provided for her family, bought her Brazilian hair and expensive perfumes, and this is why she finds it unacceptable when a friend confides that she has been a side-chick just for hair and data. Although the side-chick did not plan to be a side-chick, interestingly, she has a mental paradigm of what the reward should be to engage in sexual intercourse with a blesser.

3.6.7.2 Organic imagery of emotions in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

In addition to visual imagery, Maphosa (2019) also employs metaphoric expressions to explain the different emotions experienced by the side-chick. Firstly, she describes Fierce’s disappointment with the blesser in the following organic imagery; “[m]y heart shattered” (p.16), “[m]y heart just sank all the way into my stomach” (p.292) and “I feel a pain lingering in my throat and a hollowness in my heart” (p.31). In contrast, the blesser expresses his emotions to Fierce; “...he breaks down the walls with me. He

talks and he bares his emotions” (p.291). In addition to metaphor, Maphosa (2019) also employs similes and an oxymoron in the following two examples: “I feel like the world just crushed down on me! Like a truck full of cement ran over me, reversed and ran over me again” (p.246) “I hate Elik but I love him” (p. 29) to describe her feeling of disappointment and her confused feelings for Elik. The descriptions are vivid and, apart from creating a mental picture, engage the reader's senses.

3.6.7.3 Idioms pertaining to sexual relations and materialism in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

This chapter continues to respond to the study's first objective, which is to examine how the selected novels innovatively employ literary devices and aesthetics to represent transactional sex relationships. This section examines the second literary device that Maphosa (2019) employs to describe transactional sex relationships. Similar to Makholwa (2018) and Chigumadzi (2016), Maphosa (2019) employs idiomatic expressions to add character and dynamism to her writing. Although there are numerous idiomatic expressions in the novel, this section only discusses how idioms have been employed to describe sexual relations, materialism and the transactional sex relationship as the most relevant to the study.

3.6.7.3.1 Idioms pertaining to sexual relations in *The Y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

Maphosa (2019) employs the following idiomatic expressions to describe sexual relations. Firstly, “...he looked so hungry” (p. 14) refers to the blesser’s sexual desire for the side-chick and does not describe a hunger for actual food. Secondly, “...he murdered me” (p. 15) is an idiom that describes the vehemence with which the blesser

has sexual intercourse with the side-chick. However, the side-chick is not physically killed, as the idiom suggests. Thirdly, "...not so well gifted" (p. 15) refers to a man that does not have a large penis. The side-chick wishes that she had had sex with someone that had a smaller penis because of the pain she endures when she loses her virginity to the blesser. Similarly, the blessee in Makholwa's (2019) *The Blessed Girl* describes her painful sexual intercourse with the Nigerian blesser with a large penis. Ironically although they both lament the pain, they remain in transactional sex relationships with the said blessers and even wish to marry them.

In addition, delicious is an adjective used to describe something that is pleasant to taste. However, "...he looks delicious" (p. 23) describes the sexual attractiveness of the blesser as perceived by the side-chick. Another example is "...I had Elik" (p. 33), which describes the side-chick having had sexual intercourse with the blesser and not the literal meaning of indulging in breakfast as insinuated in the novel. Furthermore, "...keep it in his pants" (p. 61) is used to describe the side-chick's dissatisfaction with the blesser sleeping with other girls and thus refers to promiscuity and not keeping private parts in the pants. The next example, "...just a chewing gum" (p. 64), is an insult that the blesser's sister-in-law hurls at the side-chick. The idiomatic expression refers to the side-chick being a sex object for the blesser he will sleep with and eventually reject when he loses interest. Moreover, "...a panty dropper" (p. 74) does not refer to the literal removal of underwear but the amorous feeling ignited in the side-chick by the blesser's new car. In addition, "...bring my A-game" (p. 155) describes the side-chick's desire and intention for a good performance when she has sexual intercourse with the blesser.

The last two idiomatic examples that relate to sexual relations are “...dickmatised” (p. 249), which describes the side-chick’s love of sexual intercourse with the blesser. She enjoys sexual intercourse with the lessee even when he requests her to do things that she would normally not do, for example, taking his sons to his wife. Then, “...do somersaults on Elik” (p. 342) refers to the advice the side-chick receives from her maternal aunt to perform different sexual acrobatics during sexual intercourse with the blesser because he takes good care of her financially and, by extension, the family as well.

3.6.7.3.2 Idioms of materialism and relationship in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

In addition to idioms of sexual relations, Maphosa (2019) also describes idioms of materialism and relationship dynamics as outlined in this section. The examples attest to what some studies have concluded, that women use their agency to exploit transactional sex relationships to fulfil their modern needs fuelled by the media and globalisation (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Swartz, 2017). The first example of materialism is “...get a blesser” (p. 6) which refers to an elderly, wealthy man that financially provides for a woman much younger than himself in return for sexual intercourse. Then, “...swimming in money” (p. 13) describes being wealthy and is used by the side-chick to express her excitement at discovering that the professor she has just met is wealthy. The third example is “...black and white babies” (p. 312), referring to the side-chick’s cars that the blesser bought her, not actual babies. The last example is how the side-chick describes her joy when she receives a fuel card and no longer has to pay for her fuel; “...honey to my soul” (p. 315). Although the side-chick keeps reminding the reader of her pure intentions with the blesser, the aforementioned quote

exemplifies the transactional nature of their relationship and how happy she becomes when she receives gifts from the blesser. The side-chick's joy is understandable as it would be unrealistic to expect an unemployed student to fuel such expensive cars.

The following idiomatic expressions employed by Maphosa (2019) pertain to the side-chick's relationship dynamics with the blesser. The first example, "I'm still frozen..." (p. 64) describes the side-chick's shock when Brenda, the sister-in-law to the blesser, hurls insults at her and almost attacks her physically. The example, "...sharing is caring" (p. 74), describes the side-chick's justification for her beliefs about her relationship with someone else's husband. The side-chick believes the wife should share her husband with her, and it should not be a problem. Thirdly, the blesser assures the side-chick that he will not cheat again and that it is only him and the side-chick in the relationship, "[w]e're exclusive" (p. 153), which is ironic because he is married. Furthermore, "...knock me up" (p. 154) describes the side-chick's optimism about her relationship with the blesser lasting because she is entertaining the idea of having children with him. In addition, "...brownie points" (p. 155) describe the side-chick's efforts, cooking the blesser's favourite meal to please him and win his favour. As alluded to earlier, this is evidence of the side-chick's hope to become more than just a side-chick. Another example, "...crime to steal someone's husband" (p. 240), describes the side-chick's concern about acquiring a criminal record for being in a relationship with someone's husband. Although the use of the words criminal record is an exaggeration, perhaps it describes the nature of the offence with which the side-chick regards her transactional sex relationship with someone else's husband. A penultimate example is "...eternity of side-chickness" (p. 293) which describes the

side-chick's concern about remaining a side-chick if she commits to the blesser because he will not leave his wife. The last example, "...these lions eat" (p. 316) refers to how the side-chick describes the blesser's wife and his sister-in-law because there is a physical altercation whenever they meet her.

In transactional sex relationships, the blesser gets what he wants (sex), and the blessee gets what she wants (money and gifts), which creates the illusion that it is an equal relationship when it is not. The side-chick or blessee invests more in the relationship than the blesser. The side-chick or blessee is called for sexual engagement at the blesser's convenience because the blesser's are often married. The side-chick must also organise her life around the blesser's demands and risk contracting STIs or HIV, especially when the blesser has many side-chicks like in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*. Finally, the side-chick stands the risk of physical assault or verbal confrontation by the blesser's wife or family members. Thus considering these sacrifices, this essentially means the transactional sex relationship is not equal.

3.6.7.4 Allusion to brands and sexual relations in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

Both Makholwa (2018) and Maphosa (2019) employ allusion in their novels as a literary device to describe transactional sex relationships. However, only the examples of allusions that infer a connection to transactional sex relationships, such as clothing brands and sexual relations, are discussed to remain within the scope of this study.

The first examples of allusion discussed pertain to clothing brands. In the example, "Elik bought these red bottoms overseas!" (p.41), Fierce alludes to red-soled stilettos

created by popular French designer Christian Louboutin. This allusion contributes to the character development of the side-chick because it supports the argument that side-chicks love expensive popular brands. In another example, “I have a weakness for H&M, I always feel the need to buy something there” (p.55) and “... I get a nice dress at YDE...” (p.55), Fierce alludes to H&M (Hennes & Mauritz); a Swedish clothing company and YDE (Young Designers Emporium) that aims at supporting local South African designers. The aforementioned allusion contextualises the story because it raises the awareness in the reader of the importance of luxury brand items for the side-chick.

Additional examples of brands alluded to in the story include, “...I have lots of Victoria’s Secret lingerie, red bottom heels, genuine Louis Vuitton bags...” (p.70) and “I can't believe I'm waking up in another woman's Egyptian cotton” (p.71). Victoria’s Secret is an American lingerie and clothing brand, whilst Louis Vuitton is a luxury French fashion house emphasising the Egyptian because it is the best in the cotton industry. The examples mentioned above contextualise the theme of materialism and add to the character development of the side-chick.

The next set of examples of allusion pertain to sexual relations in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*. Fierce alludes to a song with a strong sexual theme in the following example; “...Marvin Gaye and get it on...” (p. 45). Marvin Gaye is an American singer who released a song titled *Get It On* in the 1970s. The allusion contributes to the sexual theme examined in the study and thus demonstrates the side-chick’s excitement to have sexual intercourse with one of her lovers. Fierce also alludes to a popular

American television programme called *Cheaters*, which acts as private investigators hired by civilians to follow lovers suspected of cheating. The allusion “If that show *Cheaters*, were here tonight, they would air an episode to remember” (p.49), conveys the side-chick’s awareness that she is cheating, which contributes to the theme of transactional sex relationships between side-chicks and blessers.

3.6.7.5 Euphemisms of sexual relations in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

Like Phamotse (2017) and Chigumadzi (2016), Maphosa (2019) also employs euphemistic expressions to describe issues related to sex as they are relevant to transactional sex relationships. This section thus describes several examples of euphemistic expressions in Maphosa’s novel. The allusion, “...someone not so well gifted...” (p.15) is a euphemistic expression for a man whose private part is not large. Another example is when the side-chick describes sexual intercourse with the blesser as “I had Elik” (p.33) as if referring to breakfast in the morning. Among other expressions for sexual intercourse, “some some” (p.276) is often used in the novel to describe sexual intercourse. Maphosa (2019) also employs “keep working” (p.316), which refers to sexual intercourse in which the side-chick is on top. Furthermore, the pronouns *it* and *that* in “got it good” (p.316) and “hit that” (p.391) refer to sexual intercourse. Moreover, “get into my pants” (p.303) describes the desire to have sexual intercourse with the side-chick, whereas the pronoun *it* in “keep it in your pants” (p.303) refers to the blesser’s private parts and him being promiscuous. Then another example of euphemism is “I can go down on my knees and take care of business” (p.237), which describes the side-chick performing fellatio on the blesser and “...swallow all of it...” (p.238) refers to the blessers semen. In addition, “...my legs

open too easily” (p.252) refers to the side-chick’s inclination to have sexual intercourse with either the blesser or classmate. Then “a sex god” (p.106) refers to the sexual prowess of the blesser in the side-chick’s opinion. Finally, “he drops the soap” (p.269) is an expression used in prison to refer to sodomy. When a prisoner drops his soap while taking a bath, he stands a chance of being raped, and this is what the side-chick hopes would happen to her rapist in prison.

3.6.7.6 Similes of sex, agony and materialism in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

Unlike the other writers who focus on sexual relations, money or appearance, Maphosa (2019) employs similes that describe the side-chick’s relationship. In three different scenarios, the side-chick describes different physical altercations with the blesser’s family, and one of the examples is “...kicked me like a soccer ball...” (p. 280). The side-chick compares herself to a soccer ball because a ball is usually kicked on the ground, and she felt humiliated when her blesser’s wife and sister-in-law kicked her to the floor. Then “...get thrown out like a dog...” (p. 281), the side-chick compares herself to a dog because although a dog might be a friend, it is not an animal that is always treated well, and she feels ill-treated when she was thrown out of a wedding celebration by her blesser’s family. In the last example, “[s]he beat me up like a donkey” (p. 436), the side-chick compares the beating she received to that administered on a donkey, perhaps because the connotation of a donkey is that of either stupidity or stubbornness. The former because although she has been beaten up on different occasions, she has stubbornly remained in a relationship with the blesser because she refuses to lose the blesser as a lover. All the similes relate to the theme of

being a side-chick and thus highlight the negative consequences of transactional sex relationships.

The following two similes relate to the emotional agony experienced by the side-chick in her relationship with the blesser. The side-chick compares herself to a caterpillar when she says, "...keep wiggling like a caterpillar in labour..." (p. 323) because she has insomnia and is tossing and turning in bed after the blesser has rough sexual intercourse with her, which reminds her of her rape ordeal. Then the side-chick compares her pain to the pain of a jilted bride, "I'm hurting like a jilted bride left by her groom at the altar..." (p. 347) when she attends a cleansing ceremony and experiences the emotional pain of her miscarriage she thought she had dealt with. The abovementioned similes relate to the emotional agony experienced by the side-chick in her relationship with the blesser. These examples show how much the transactional sex relationship is agonizing for the side-chick because when the blesser has rough sexual intercourse with her, it reminds her of what she experienced when she was raped. Significantly, the blesser knowing what the side-chick endured inconsiderably, still chooses to have rough sexual intercourse with her. This creates an impression that the blesser is only concerned with fulfilling his needs and is emotionally detached and that the relationship is purely transactional for him.

The last two examples relate to materialism and sexual relations, respectively. The side-chick compares the feeling of waking up next to the blesser to a million dollars, "...feel like a million dollars..." (p. 316) because a million dollars connotes abundance, and this simile thus supports the argument that the side-chick or blessee

values material possessions. The last example is “[h]e is like a child caught stealing sugar” (p. 356) which is a simile in which the blesser is compared to a child, stealing sugar after he and the side-chick were caught having sex by the side-chick’s mother. This simile contributes to the theme of sexual intercourse in transactional sex relationships and highlights its importance.

3.6.7.7 Various rhetorical questions in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

The last literary device examined that has been employed by Maphosa (2019) is rhetorical questions which she applies to create an awareness in the reader that the answer to the question posed is common knowledge and thus suggested in the context of the question asked to emphasise a point. This section discusses the rhetorical questions relevant to the study and that relate to transactional sex relationships.

The first example, “[i]f I take this money does it mean I got paid for my services?” (p.28) is a question the side-chick poses to herself after having sexual intercourse with her blesser, who leaves her 300 Euros. Contextually, the blesser could have left the money because of their relationship or because he loves the side-chick, as he claims. Alternatively, it could just be a question to emphasise the transactional sex relationship to the reader. Another the following example a question is posed to emphasise that in a blesser/side-chick relationship, the blesser, which is usually older, makes the decisions in the relationship. “How controlling does someone have to be to book you flight tickets without your consent?” (p.51)

Furthermore, "...the best way to get over one man is to get under another, right?" (p.51) is a question that is posed to justify the promiscuous nature of side-chicks in transactional sex relationships. However, the following rhetorical question highlights the side-chick's disappointment when she realises that she is not the only side-chick in her relationship with the blesser; "[d]id she just say these little prostitutes? Like there are many?" (p.64). The story's context suggests the answer to this question; however, it also emphasises the nature of transactional sex relationships.

Finally, Maphosa (2019) applies several questions to emphasise the immediate and long-term negative consequences of transactional sex relationships;

[i]s this how Komla feels? Am I the source of her pain? Is she going to be another angry black woman because of me? Will that affect those cute twins I love so much? If her life is a series of misery, is that on me? Am I terrible person [sic]?" (p.346)

The above quote implies that the consequences are multifaceted in that they could, firstly, affect the wife who experiences the pain of her husband's betrayal. Secondly, the blesser's twin boys could also be negatively affected if their parents divorce and when they come to an understanding one day of how their parents ended up getting a divorce. Finally, the guilt might lead the side-chick to resent herself for breaking up a family, hence, she questions her morality.

3.6.8 Summary of literary devices in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

This section aimed to examine how the last selected novel innovatively employed literary devices and aesthetics to represent transactional sex relationships. Maphosa

(2019) employs the following literary devices to describe the transactional sex relationship phenomenon: visual and organic imagery, idioms, allusion, euphemisms, similes and rhetorical questions. The visual imagery, idioms, allusions, euphemisms, similes and rhetorical questions are all employed to describe sexual relations in transaction sex relationships, whilst idioms, allusions and similes are used to describe the theme of materialism. Organic imagery describes the blessee's emotional state whilst the rhetorical questions address the consequences of transactional sex relationships.

3.6.9 Contribution of the blesser and the blessee character development to the debate

This chapter examined how the selected novels innovatively employed literary devices and aesthetics to represent transactional sex relationships. However, this section examines how the character development of the blesser and blessee in the analysed novels contributes to the transactional sex relationship debate.

Although the novels are fictional, the literary devices that have been analysed create an image in the readers' minds of what could be happening in reality in transactional sex relationships. Due to the nature of social science research and ethics issues, the literature reviews, apart from a definition of what a blesser or blessee is, do not provide an in-depth description of their characters. However, this study with each novel has described the possible character traits of a blessee and a blesser, respectively.

The vivid descriptions employed by the writers engage the readers' imagination because some writers, through allusion, accurately describe real people (doctors,

actors, writers) and places (hotels, shops and events). In addition, the discussion of the literary aesthetics of transactional sex relationships through imagery and euphemisms creates possible scenarios of the sexual experiences of the parties involved, which aim to create empathy and improve interpersonal understanding for the lead characters. The reader is covertly invited to ponder transactional sex relationship issues which could lead to further research.

3.6.10 Chapter summary

This chapter addressed the study's first objective which was to examine how the selected novels innovatively employ literary devices and aesthetics to represent transactional sex relationships, colloquially known as the blessers, blessees, sugar daddies, sugar babies and side-chicks phenomenon.

In conclusion, the chapter analysed the transactional sex relationship or blesser/blessee culture in the selected literary texts. In Makholwa's (2018) *The Blessed Girl*, the transactional sex relationship culture is described as luxurious, attainable and should be every girl's dream, whilst Phamotse's (2017) *Bare: #The Blesser Game* extensively describes the required appearance to thrive in Sandton, the consumerist culture, sexual relations and social media. In *Sweet Medicine*, Chigumadzi (2016) does not describe a modern transactional sex relationship culture like Makholwa (2018) or Phamotse (2017) but a more traditionally accepted one in which a married man has an extramarital affair, and the blessee or side-chick is referred to as the Small House. Finally, Maphosa (2019) describes a transactional sex relationship culture focused on sexual relations, relationship dynamics and money.

The blessees described in the selected literary texts share a common characteristic which is, they all want money and luxuries in exchange for sexual intercourse. The blessee in the first novel, *The Blessed Girl's* name is Bontle Tau, who is 24 years old, has three blessers, lives in Sandton, drives a luxury car, has buttock implants and hopes to become a second wife to one of the blessers. The blessee in the second novel *Bare: #The Blesser Game's* name is Treasure Mohapi, who arrives in Sandton after she passes her grade 12 exceptionally, with a dream to pursue a modelling career. After being coached about the do's and don'ts of Sandton by her long-time friend, she inadvertently ends up in a transactional sex relationship. Although she arrives as a naïve young woman who is also a rape victim, she quickly adapts to her new financially demanding lifestyle. In addition, the blessee in Chigumadzi's (2016) *Sweet Medicine* is Tsitsi, who holds a bachelor's degree in economics and dreamt of becoming the Governor of the Reserve Bank. When the economy does not allow this dream to come to fruition, although sexually inexperienced, she resolves to seduce her boss, who becomes her blesser. She keeps up her appearance and exercises to keep in shape, but all these are to no avail when she struggles to keep the blesser sexually enticed when she moves into his house. Thereafter, she uses *muti* to entice her blesser sexually and bear him a son as a means to secure their relationship. Finally, the blessee in the last novel, *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*, is described as a 25-year-old PhD student who inevitably becomes a side-chick and ends up in a transactional sex relationship when the blesser marries someone else behind her back. When she meets the blesser, she is sexually inexperienced, develops an insatiable desire for sex and unfortunately ends up being raped by a boyfriend.

The blessers in *The Blessed Girl* are Teddy, who issues the blessee a tender and provides her with a maximum of R30 000 per month upon visits. The second blesser is Jeff, a businessman who bought the blessee a BMW and provides between R10 000 – R20 000 per month upon visits. The last blesser is Emmanuel, a Nigerian oil magnate who gives the blessee an unlimited credit card becomes her business partner and is the one the blessee desires to marry. All three blessers are married and significantly older than the blessee. The blesser in *Bare: #The Blesser Game* is Tim Morgan, a 46-year-old multimillionaire who is twice the age of the blessee and provides for all her needs, although he is possessive and controlling. The blesser is also married, and his wife knows about his transactional sex relationship with Treasure. The blesser in Chigumadzi's (2016) novel is described as being in his 70's, and the blessee is his first experience with a Small House. He is married and has two grown daughters, his blessee's age. He buys the blessee a car, provides for her financially and takes care of the blessee's mother and uncle. Finally, the blesser in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1* is the youngest of all the blessers in the selected literary texts. He is a 34-year-old multimillionaire who buys the blessee two cars and gives her money to spend on herself and provide for her family.

In Makholwa's (2018) *The Blessed Girl*, the following literary devices employed to aesthetically present the unrefined descriptive data for transactional sex relationships were analysed; allusion, authorial intrusion, similes, idioms, imagery, colloquialism, rhetorical questions, code-switching, sarcasm and repetition. Makholwa (2018) employs a single reference allusion to historical and contemporary figures, writers,

books, social media, clothing/car/alcohol brands, cafés and reality television shows. Then she employs authorial intrusion to engage the reader through questions and what seems like a general conversation. The narrator uses authorial intrusion to share the responsibility of her transactional sex relationship life with the reader and to coerce the reader to ponder their contribution to transactional sex relationships. Makholwa (2018) then employs similes and idioms to discuss critical issues in transactional sex relationships, such as money, appearance, sexual intercourse and emotions. One of the extensive literary devices she employs is imagery, in which she presents visual, auditory, tactile and organic imagery. Makholwa (2018) focuses on complexion and body image for the visual imagery, focuses on sounds made during sexual intercourse for the auditory imagery whilst describing the sense of touch during sexual intercourse for tactile imagery and lastly focuses on body experiences like hunger, thirst, pain and fatigue for organic imagery.

The last literary devices that Makholwa (2018) presents are colloquial aspects such as hashtags, interjections, text messages and ellipsis. These are all employed to keep the novel's content accurate or give her writing character. Makholwa (2018) also employs code-switching to give the narrator a natural voice and make her novel real and relatable. Sarcasm is employed as a form of criticism or a defence mechanism in the blessee's relationships. Finally, Makholwa (2018) employs repetition as a literary device that focuses on transactional sex relationships and materialism, which is a critical aspect of the relationship.

In contrast, Phamotse (2017) employs euphemisms to describe sexual relations between the blesser and the blessee whilst metaphorically describing the extent of the wealth of the blesser. She also employs hyperbole to exaggerate the prices and reactions. Similar to Makholwa (2018), Phamotse (2017) employs single reference allusion to refer to clothing brands, alcohol and expensive cars. In addition, like Makholwa (2018), Phamotse (2017) extensively employs visual, organic and tactile imagery as literary devices. She focuses on sexual relations for the visual imagery and the blessee's emotions in the transactional sex relationship organic imagery whilst also describing the sense of touch during sexual intercourse for tactile imagery.

Chigumadzi (2016) also extensively employs visual imagery to describe sexual relations, appearance and materialism. In addition, she employs tactile imagery to describe the blessee's emotional and physical desperation as well as the sexual relations of the blesser and blessee. Chigumadzi (2016) in *Sweet Medicine* uses idiomatic expressions to express the blessee's relationships, sexual relations and emotions. Then code-switching is employed as a literary device to describe relationships and appearance. Similes and euphemisms are employed to describe sexual relations, whilst the similes also describe the blessee's emotions. Lastly, like Makholwa (2018), Chigumadzi (2016) also employs sarcasm as a literary device for criticism, not just between Tsitsi and her friend but also to engage the reader in thought. The following literary devices; visual and tactile imagery, idioms and euphemisms, are all employed to describe sexual relations in a transactional sex relationship.

Finally, Maphosa (2019) also employs the following literary devices to describe the transactional sex relationship phenomenon in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*: visual and organic imagery, idioms, allusion, euphemisms, similes and rhetorical questions. The visual imagery, idioms, allusions, euphemisms, similes and rhetorical questions are all employed to aesthetically describe sexual relations in transactional sex relationships. In contrast, idioms, allusions and similes are used to describe the theme of materialism. Organic imagery describes the blessee's emotional state whilst the rhetorical questions address the consequences of transactional sex relationships.

The following chapter's aim is two-fold. Firstly, it seeks to examine the catalytic incidents in the selected novels that lead to the initiation of transactional sex relationships. Secondly, it explores the social issues that emerge as a result of transactional sex relationships.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INITIATION OF TRANSACTIONAL SEX RELATIONSHIPS IN FICTION AND THEIR EFFECTS

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is twofold as it firstly aims to answer the second research objective, which is to examine the catalytic incidents in the selected novels that lead to the initiation of transactional sex relationships. The second aim of the chapter is to answer the third research objective, which is to explore the social issues that emerge due to the existence of transactional sex relationships. The issue of transactional sex relationships has grown in importance in light of the recent blesser and blessee phenomenon in South Africa. This study examines the catalytic incidents and the issues that emerge from transactional sex relationships from a fictional perspective. The chapter discusses the direct or indirect causes of transactional sex relationships in the selected literary texts, followed by a discussion of the resultant effects.

4.2 Causes of transactional sex relationships in the selected literary texts

Previous social studies research identified poverty, peer pressure, consumerism, social status, parental encouragement, prestige, good grades and job security as causes of transactional sex relationships (Albers et al., 2017; Bhana & Pattman, 2011; Eller, 2016; Groes-Green, 2013; Kaute-Defo, 2004; Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Masvawure, 2010; Shefer et al., 2012; Stoebenau et al., 2013a; Stoebenau et al., 2016b). This section discusses the catalytic incidents that lead to the initiation of transactional sex relationships in the selected literary texts to substantiate the social studies' findings.

4.2.1 The catalysts of transactional sex relationships in *The Blessed Girl*

This study identified peer pressure and parental encouragement as the catalytic incidents that led to the initiation of transactional sex relationships in Makholwa's (2018) *The Blessed Girl*.

4.2.1.1 Peer pressure as a catalyst of transactional sex relationships in *The Blessed Girl*

The evidence provided by social studies research found peer pressure to be an indirect cause of transactional sex relationships (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Bhana & Pattman, 2011; Groes-Green, 2013; Stoebenau et al., 2013). Similarly, Makholwa's (2018) *The Blessed Girl* aligns with the finding. Peer pressure is an indirect cause because it is experienced when Bontle is a teenager, not an adult. Arguably, the peer pressure experienced by Bontle as a teenager could have set precedence for her transactional sex relationships in her adult life. The following quote is an example of the peer pressure experienced by Bontle:

It was the constant pressure to fit in, the awareness that I did not have most of the basics that these kids enjoyed – the luxury cars that came to pick them up at school, the constant chats about expensive holiday trips with their families...You don't know how humiliating it was to hear kids rattling off places like Paris, Venice, Knysna, Cape Town and Durban...(p.45)

The above quote describes Bontle's desire to fit in at an early age. She was aware and unhappy because, unlike her peers – she did not live in the suburbs, nor was she picked up by expensive cars from school, and she could also not join her peers when they shared their holiday experiences. Although the peer pressure occurred at a young age, it was one of the significant catalytic incidents that led to the initiation of Bontle's

transactional sex relationships in her adult life. Peer pressure resulted in depression which is be discussed later as one of the emerging psychological issues.

Peer pressure is a local form of oppression under the critical lens of Mwangi's (2009) postcolonial paradigm of writing-back-to-self. The aforementioned corroborates the finding that peer pressure contributes to risky sexual behaviour among young people to escape poverty, fit into the status quo and attain fashionable items (Bhana & Pattman, 2011; Groes-Green, 2013; Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Stoebenau et al., 2013).

4.2.1.2 Parental encouragement as a cause in *The Blessed Girl*

Another catalytic incident that results in Bontle's initiation of transactional sex relationships is her mother's influence. This finding validates the study by Maclin et al. (2015), who found that mothers encouraged their daughters to earn money for the family through transactional sex relationships. Parental encouragement is thus also identified as a local form of oppression according to Mwangi's (2009) postcolonial paradigm of writing-back-to-self. The opposite is also possible when parents expect their unemployed children to take care of them financially, often colloquially referred to as black tax, even if not through transactional sex relationships. The African parents' unrealistic expectations of their children are also identified as a local form of oppression because they often apply unnecessary pressure that could lead them to engage in transactional sex relationships to fulfil their parents' demands.

This section discusses the different examples of parental encouragement in Makholwa's (2018) *The Blessed Girl*. Bontle's first lesson from her mother was never to allow a man to sleep with her if he was not going to spend a lot of money on her.

According to her mother, “it was the only way to ‘play the game’” (p.200). As the authority figure, Bontle’s mother indoctrinated her daughter at a young age, and she developed the paradigm that sexual intercourse meant getting paid for it. Thus, growing up, Bontle did not associate sexual intercourse with a stable relationship but rather as a transaction and how much money she could get out of it.

Gladys, Bontle’s mother, treated her daughter’s beauty like a treasure that had to be flaunted. When her shebeen customers took interest in Bontle as a teen, she did not discourage them. Bontle’s complaints about men touching her breasts and buttocks fell on deaf ears because, according to her mother, the men were just men, and she should only complain when they touched her private parts. Gladys’s response to her daughter’s complaints raises several issues. Firstly, she did not consider men touching her teenage daughter’s breasts and buttocks a problem. Secondly, breasts and buttocks did not qualify as private parts, which could mean she had no sense of personal boundaries. Thirdly, she condoned the men’s behaviour as men being men, thereby strengthening patriarchal norms. The latter could have been because she did not want to offend her customers, who would probably stop buying from her shebeen. The issues mentioned above could be a reflection of Gladys’s paradigm and how she was raised. Perhaps Gladys grew up in a culture where men inappropriately touching girls was acceptable, which is why she imparts the same knowledge and culture to her daughter. It is thus not adequate for feminism to treat life’s challenges in binary terms as it is not just men versus women, but is complex as it involves women versus women as well.

From a young age, Gladys treated Bontle's beauty like a commodity and told her, "[d]arling, beauty runs in this family! Every dime I've ever made I've made directly or indirectly because of the way I look" (p.46). This example is another paradigm of Gladys, who grew up thinking that looks are everything and thus taught her daughter the same. The encouragement from her mother could have influenced Bontle to think she could use her beauty in exchange for gifts and money from men. Precisely, Gladys taught her daughter to only sleep with a man if he would pay a lot of money. This lesson sounds like a lesson in prostitution where sexual intercourse is exchanged for money. She also teaches her daughter that her only valuable body part is her private parts and that men can touch her body in any way they please. This lesson could have left Bontle growing up without any bodily self-worth unless it was sexual. In essence, she taught Bontle to use her looks to make money. This is another lesson that could have influenced Bontle to think about why she should work if she has the looks that can make her money.

4.2.2 The catalysts of transactional sex relationships in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*

In Phamotse's (2017) novel *Bare: #The Blesser Game*, peer pressure and a lure of material possessions are the two primary factors that lead to the initiation of transactional sex relationships. According to social studies research, peer pressure plays a significant role in the commencement of transactional sex relationships (Bhana & Pattman, 2011; Groes-Green, 2013; Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Stoebenau et al., 2013). However, the current study presents the intricacies of peer pressure.

4.2.2.1 Peer pressure as a catalyst of transactional sex relationships in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*

Peer pressure through money and socialisation are the significant drivers behind transactional sex relationships in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*. Several studies corroborate the finding that peer pressure contributes to young people engaging in the risky sexual behaviour of transactional sex for an improved social status. Studies further claim that young people feel pressured to compete with their wealthier counterparts to attain fashion items pursued by others (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Bhana & Pattman, 2011; Groes-Green, 2013; Stoebenau et al., 2013). According to Mwangi's (2009) postcolonial paradigm of writing-back-to-self, peer pressure is also identified as a local form of oppression because it is enforced and experienced by African youths and influences their vital decisions. This section first presents the peer pressure examples that relate to money, followed by examples that relate to socialisation.

When Treasure arrives in Johannesburg to pursue her passion for modelling, her friend Lintle initiates her into everything she needed to know about Sandton. For example, Lintle tells her, "Relax; you just need a Minister of Finance in your life," ... "Someone that will, um, support your desires" (p.150). When Treasure complains about the high prices of the clothes in the store where they were shopping, Lintle tells her that she needs a Minister of Finance. On the other hand, Treasure has no idea what a Minister of Finance is and is promised she will meet him through her blesser in due time. Lintle creates an awareness in Treasure that having a Minister of Finance is directly related to achieving her objectives. The awareness leads to the initiation of Treasure's transactional sex relationship with Tim.

In another example, Lintle persuades Treasure to think big about money; “Bianca may have been your sugar mommy, but you’re heading for the big leagues now...” (p.151). Lintle encourages Treasure to consider getting a rich blesser whom she portrays as better than a sugar mommy, referring to Treasure’s ex-girlfriend. Lintle refers to a blesser as “big leagues”, implying that they are superior to sugar moms. This information creates a mental expectation in Treasure’s mind before she meets Tim.

Furthermore, Lintle buys Treasure a pair of stilettos that cost the price of two smartphones, which according to Treasure, are expensive; “Her pure heart couldn’t understand this extravagant life.... But what choice did she have? Her tongue had already declared that she wanted money” (p.160). This gesture reminds Treasure of growing up in poverty, and she could thus not fathom how easy it was for Lintle to spend so much money. Treasure accepts the gift by assuring herself that she had already declared that she wanted money, as though there was no other choice.

Finally, the importance of money is reiterated through peer pressure when Lintle and Treasure spent ten thousand rands in three hours. Lintle trivialises how much they spent, “These private cabs cost a fortune, on top of the ten thousand we just spent in three hours” (p.162). This point is vital to this study since it emphasises the nature of transactional sex relationships in which spending money and living a lavish lifestyle are essential.

Socialisation is the second aspect of peer pressure that contributes to the initiation of transactional sex relationships. Lintle introduces Sandton as “...the harbour of extravagance and “...that they “all pay a small price for it” (p.152). Treasure’s

grooming to a suitable standard begins as Lintle tells her, “Tonight, I ‘m going to teach you how to be a lady, the things you should drink at dinner parties and the things you can wear” (p.150). Lintle's first objective in grooming Treasure is to bring her up to par regarding what to dress and drink during parties because appearance is valued in the transactional sex relationship.

In another example, Lintle ironically takes Treasure to a notorious restaurant for lunch, a “place well known as a pickup spot for sugar daddies...” (p.156). Although Lintle does not explicitly explain the reason for bringing Treasure to the restaurant, she uses her body language by winking to insinuate it. The allusion is that these are the type of restaurants they frequent.

Furthermore, Treasure soon realises what the lifestyle she desires in Sandton entails; “The lifestyle had to be opulent –having countless followers on social media, with thousands of likes and comments and retweets, showed how powerful and influential a person was” (165). Thus, power and influence could be achieved through a wealthy lifestyle aided by social media. This essentially means that social media is an essential tool in transactional sex relationships that helps blessees project a public image of power and influence.

In addition, despite her desire for the lifestyle, Treasure disliked older men; “It was boring being around old men and they gave her the chills, but she didn’t want to show her discomfort” (p.167). She despised the older men's company and how they made her feel. Ironically, the same older men would eventually help her afford the lifestyle she sought.

Finally, Treasure is not only physically groomed in dress code and social behaviour but also sexually groomed; “Who would want a massage or blow job from those? ...You probably need to wax too” (p.151). Lintle expressly mentions a blowjob and a wax, and if Treasure has been naïve about the lifestyle, she is being groomed for, the mention of a blowjob and wax makes her realise what she is about to undertake. In transactional sex relationships, sexual grooming is crucial because the blessee aims to please the blesser.

4.2.2.2 The lure of material possessions in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*

Another cause of transactional sex relationships in Phamotse’s (2017) *Bare: #The Blesser Game* is the lure of material possessions. After Tim and Treasure’s first meeting, he sends her an expensive perfume. “...an exclusive Robert Piguet FRACAS Swarovski...” (p.170). A perplexed Treasure is ignorant of the perfume's value until Lintle informs her of its exclusivity. Tim's gift is intended to entice Treasure and make her aware that he has more to offer. Tim uses this as bait since he gives her the perfume before they have a relationship, and he receives nothing in return.

In another example, Tim showers Treasure with expensive gifts, trips and money; “On weekends he dazzled her with trips to the bush, expensive gifts, dinners and game drives” ... She was spoilt with money...” (p.173). Tim did everything for Treasure to impress her, whereas the money enabled her new lifestyle. Although Treasure had not reciprocated Tim's gifts, he was carefully grooming her for the lavish lifestyle that is a fundamental aspect of transactional sex relationships.

Notably, at the beginning of their friendship, it seemed Tim was sincerely in love with Treasure as “He gave her all of his attention and spoon-fed her gifts and money” (p.174). He spoon-fed her, implying that Treasure received a lot of gifts and money from Tim. The hyperbole “all of his attention” also creates the impression that he was sincerely interested in a relationship with her, however, not for the same reasons she wanted to be with him. Tim's time, gifts, and money were all part of a plan to entice her to become a blessee.

Furthermore, Lintle creates the impression for Treasure that getting her material desires fulfilled is essential when she remarks, “He may be in his fifties but who cares? We want those Gucci’s, right!” (p.179). Lintle trivialises Tim’s age even though he is twice Treasure's age. Like Tim, Lintle uses the lure of materialism which is significant because in transactional sex relationships, the blesser is often older than the blessee, and gifts are an essential part of the connection. Thus, Lintle established the trend for Treasure.

Additionally, Tim falsely promises to fulfil Treasure’s dreams in his quest to win her affections; “My dear, I’m more than a common boyfriend. I can help you to open a small business and even get you government tenders. I will be your lover, your business mentor, and your life coach” (p. 185). He distinguishes himself from a ‘common boyfriend’ by acting as if he wants to assist Treasure in advancing in life. Eventually, it becomes evident that this is all a ruse to get Treasure into a transactional sex relationship. The quote above demonstrates what prior studies have shown. The blesser is often in control of the relationship, and the blessee obliges out of fear or respect because he is her senior, and this is often due to a pre-existing system of gender

inequality that influences the girls' ability to challenge the terms of the sexual relationship (Luke & Kurz, 2002; Hunter, 2002; McIlwaine & Datta, 2004). In conclusion, the findings above substantiate Haddad's (2018), argument that blessees use their bodies as commodities to fulfil their immediate desire for material and luxury items whilst embracing patriarchal structures of inequality.

4.2.3 The catalysts of transactional sex relationships in *Sweet Medicine*

The chapter aims to answer the second research objective by examining the catalytic incidents in the selected novels that led to the initiation of transactional sex relationships. The chapter also aims to answer the third research objective of exploring the social issues that emerge due to transactional sex relationships. In the literature, Mampane (2018) explains the socio-economic factor called the poverty of being uneducated and unemployed and Panashe's (2016) novel *Sweet Medicine* underscores this poverty. This study identified poverty as the most significant catalytic incident that leads to the initiation of transactional sex relationships in Panashe's (2016) *Sweet Medicine*. Hence, to address the second research objective, this section discusses the different aspects that directly or indirectly contribute to the formation of transactional sex relationships.

4.2.3.1 The theme of disillusionment and poverty in *Sweet Medicine*

This section discusses examples of both disillusionment and poverty in Chigumadzi's (2016) *Sweet Medicine*. Firstly, disillusionment with the state of affairs in Zimbabwe is a prominent theme throughout the novel. The researcher has identified it as a local form of oppression according to Mwangi's (2009) postcolonial paradigm. In view of

the postcolonial lens of writing- back-to-self, the disillusionment happens in an independent Zimbabwe with very little blame to be shifted to the West or colonizer.

In the first example, Tsitsi, a degree holder, is disillusioned when her ambition of working at the Reserve Bank does not come true. She ends up working in one of the government's ministerial offices as a secretary for a pittance; "When she started at her job and they had run through her list of duties with her, she wanted to tell them that she held a degree in economics" (p.90) but soon realised it was either this job or nothing.

Every time Tsitsi saw children going to school, it was a reminder of how "dreams of self-actualisation morphed into thoughts of stomach actualisation, sacrificed to put food on the table" (p.88). She thought acquiring a degree would guarantee a well-paid job in the field that she had studied but soon realised that outside of the university walls, it was survival of the fittest and the only dream to be actualised was the one of a daily plate of food. Tsitsi bemoans how she failed to recognise how Zimbabwe had changed beyond the university gates because she was too immersed in her books. When her friend Chiedza reminds her that what they do besides their day jobs is prostitution, she justifies her transactional sex relationship with Zvobgo as:

I ended up in this profession in the same way someone might end up being a lawyer because they couldn't get into engineering or dentistry, or because they couldn't get into medicine or even a banker who grew up telling everyone they want to be a soccer player... They do those things because that was what was available for their talents and their circumstances at the time. (p.73)

Tsitsi compares her transactional sex relationship to any other profession and thus justifies using her body for sex due to circumstances. Living from hand to mouth forces Tsitsi to weigh the following options to try and improve her life; sell water in Mbare, supply the locals eggs and bread from South Africa or find a job in South Africa. However, these options were futile as they required spending money that Tsitsi did not have.

Secondly, poverty accompanied by disillusionment is the most significant contributing factor to the initiation of transactional sex relationships in *Sweet Medicine*. Similar to disillusionment, the researcher also identified poverty as a local form of oppression according to Mwangi's (2009) postcolonial paradigm of writing-back-to-self. Although we may blame her country's economic situation, Tsitsi has not been wholly deprived of opportunities to better herself and live a decent life. Although poverty is alluded to in the other three novels, *Sweet Medicine* is the only novel that explicitly links transactional sex relationships to poverty.

The following examples describe poverty in *Sweet Medicine*. Firstly, "she had given the rude *hwindi* the equivalent of half her salary" (p.80) proving that Tsitsi's salary is insufficient because she paid half her salary to the bus driver. The next problem was that her entire month's salary only lasted two days which translated into "eating *nyimo* and *maputi* for the rest of the month with the same now-tired-looking weave and broken acrylics" (p.86). In addition, Tsitsi and many others had convinced themselves "...that the poverty of their lives could be eliminated by 'professionalism' (p.91), but found that they were now broke, hungry and poor despite having obtained degrees. Furthermore, Tsitsi was overwhelmed with feelings of guilt whilst performing fellatio

on her blesser; "...she disconnected herself, reminding herself that she needed to eat..." (p.31). She was unhappy with the route she had taken to ensure survival because she was destroying her temple by engaging in premarital sexual intercourse. In essence, a combination of the reasons mentioned above is what causes Tsitsi to seduce Zvobgo and engage in a transactional sex relationship because:

It was not her fault. Zvobgo compelled her to do it. She has a university degree and yet he and all of her prospective employers offered her peanuts for a tedious administrative post. What was she to do with the peanuts that barely stretched as far as the kombi fare to and from work? (p182)

The realisation of the social circumstances in the country, the poverty, the lack and hunger lack are all factors that propel Tsitsi into pursuing a transactional sex relationship with the person she believes could have offered her a better job to change her circumstances.

4.2.3.2 Economically motivated transactional sex relationship in *Sweet Medicine*

Tsitsi, having weighed her options, assessed her salary and unchanging domestic circumstances and resolved to pursue a transactional sex relationship despite her moral and religious upbringing. "Tsitsi stepped timidly into the luxurious dining room of teardrop chandeliers..." (p.92), a work social event, where she decides to make her move on Zvobgo. First, she feigns ignorance of the protocol concerning seating arrangements and sits at Zvobgo's table with other notables, including his wife. Sitting at Zvobgo's table was a strategic move to get him to notice her. Next, having thrown all caution to the wind, Tsitsi follows Zvobgo to the men's room, where she tells him "... I am sure I could make a better wife" (p.100), after which she pushes him into a stall, unfastens his belt and kneels on the floor. Although Zvobgo rejects her, this is

the beginning of their transactional sex relationship as he stammers “[h]-h-how...how are you getting home?” before handing her a US\$100 note.

4.2.4 The catalysts of transactional sex relationships in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

In response to the second research objective, this section discusses the catalytic incidents that lead to the initiation of transactional sex relationships in Maphosa’s (2018) *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*. The initiation of the transactional sex relationship in Maphosa’s (2018) novel is different from the other three novels in which these relationships are initiated because of poverty or peer pressure.

The main character, Fierce, is an ambitious Chemical Engineering PhD student who has been studying consecutively for eight years with the hope of achieving her educational dreams. Thus, unlike the characters in the aforementioned novels, she does not deliberately seek a transactional sex relationship. Fierce becomes a side-chick, unwillingly and unaware, when she discovers that her boyfriend married someone else over the festive holidays. Upon this discovery, she tries to break off her relationship with the boyfriend but to no avail as they constantly seem to gravitate towards each other. When Fierce’s boyfriend marries, this means she becomes a side-chick to her former boyfriend and the relationship turns into a transactional sex relationship.

4.2.5 Emerging issues of transactional sex relationships in the selected literary texts

The second aim of this chapter was to answer the present study's third research objective: to explore the social issues that emerge due to the existence of transactional sex relationships. Although categorised as social issues, the study discusses the

psychological (affecting the mind), social (affecting society) and physical (affecting the body) consequences that emerge from transactional sex relationships in the selected literary texts.

4.2.5.1 Psychological consequences of transactional sex relationships in the selected literary texts

According to Cresswell (2018), in qualitative research, the researcher interprets the meaning of the data by focusing on the individual meaning and describing a situation's complexity. Thus, this section takes advantage of the above benefit of qualitative interpretation. This section describes the psychological impact of transactional sex relationships on the blessees in the selected literary texts: *The Blessed Girl*, *Bare: #The Blesser Game*, *Sweet Medicine* and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*, respectively.

4.2.5.1.1 Depression as a psychological consequence in *The Blessed Girl*

Depression is a central theme in Makholwa's (2018) novel, and this section discusses Bontle's battle with depression and its link to transactional sex relationships. Bontle indicates that her "first battle with depression started when [she] was about fourteen years old" (p. 45). Bontle's depression at the age of 14 seemed to be a result of the aforementioned peer pressure that she endured. However, this is disproved when she still experiences depressive episodes despite living the luxurious life she had always desired. Thus as an adult, her therapist prescribes anti-depressants coupled with therapeutic counselling.

Another psychological effect is Bontle's constant desire to keep her social media followers up to date with pictures of what she is busy with because she feels it is "her patriotic duty to reflect an upbeat lifestyle and outlook" (p.97). The societal culture of

people sharing aspects of their lives on social media with pictures and hashtags adds to the psychological pressure Bontle feels because the more she shares, the more people follow her and like her posts. Thus, her chosen lifestyle adds to the psychological effects, like the depression that she experiences.

Another example that leads to Bontle's depression episode is when she spent Christmas alone because all her blessers were with their families. She drinks wine, sleeping pills and anti-depressants all at once. Before she starts to feel the effects of the drugs and wine, she posts old pictures with the hashtags #Sunshine & good loving #Baecation. She does this to give her followers the impression that she is having a good time and not alone. On New Year's Eve, she puts on her bikini, makes a margarita and requests the security guard at her complex to take pictures next to the pool, which she sends to her blessers as a reminder of what awaits them upon their return. These examples depict the loneliness and depression that Bontle suffers from during specific seasons in the year when her blessers prioritise their wives and children.

Furthermore, Bontle experiences another depressive episode when one of her blessers requests that she returns the Mercedes Benz because his wife discovered that he had been paying for it but it was not in their possession. This pressure, including the text messages from the blesser and harassment from his wife, to return the car leads to Bontle's institutionalisation in a psychiatric ward for a month. When Bontle eventually returns the car, she vandalises it and considers cutting her face with a razor blade to accuse the blesser's wife of assault but decides against the latter. These examples

prove that Bontle's engagement with her blessers is a primary cause of her depressive episodes in her adult life.

Bontle experiences a depression episode when she sees one of her blesser's reactions to a picture of her friend, Iris and her boyfriend. The blesser is upset because Iris is also his girlfriend. Seeing the blesser's reaction overwhelms Bontle with feelings of loneliness, inadequacy, and being unloved which leads to her suicide attempt by overdosing on pills. Upon her discharge, after three weeks, she takes a psychological exam and is diagnosed with borderline personality disorder and extreme narcissism. In retrospect, Bontle acknowledges the insignificance of what she prioritised all her life. She is faced with telling her brother that she is indeed his mother - "I kept running around with old men, chasing nothing – money, clothes, cars. Material things" (p.203). She resents her mother for having "sold her off" to an older man and stealing her childhood to enjoy the money he spent at her shebeen. Bontle concludes that her life "is that dream that was sold to our ancestors when we traded our cattle for mirrors" (p.204), but none of it was real. The results show that although Bontle's depressive episodes started as a teenager, most of her numerous mental breakdowns in her adult life can be attributed to her transactional sex relationships.

4.2.5.1.2 Diverse psychological consequences of transactional sex relationships in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*

This section discusses depression, the blesser's dominance, intimidation and emotional maltreatment of the blessee, and the blessee's inner conflict and trauma under the emerging theme of psychological effects in Phamotse's (2017) *Bare: #The Blesser Game*.

4.2.5.1.2.1 Blessee's depression in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*

Similar to Makholwa's (2018) *The Blessed Girl*, depression is a prominent theme in Phamotse's (2017) *Bare: #The Blesser Game*. This section discusses examples of the consequences of transactional sex relationships on the blessee's psychological well-being. Like the blessee in Makholwa's (2019) novel, the blessee in Phamotse's (2017) novel also abuses alcohol when depressed. After the forced unconsented abortion, Treasure becomes depressed and abuses alcohol primarily because Tim has not come to see her for three weeks and feels lonely. Zembe et al. (2013) emphasise the aspect of modernity when they state that transactional sex is linked to modernity because of young women's "preoccupation with money, fashion and alcohol" (p. 5). The evidence in the present study supports Zembe's finding because alcohol is linked to transactional sex relationships in a status quo fashion that exalts brands. However, the examples in this study also substantiate that transactional sex has been linked to an increased risk of alcohol consumption (Wamoyi et al., 2019a), in a negative manner. Treasure would not have gone into depression if Tim had been there to assist her emotionally after the abortion. However, it is somewhat naïve of Treasure to expect someone who has just violated her body and rights to be there for her emotionally. He is aware that Treasure had lost contact with her family, and he is the only person she has, but being an emotional support system for Treasure is not part of Tim's agenda as he is only concerned with having sex with her.

Another example that relates to depression is "[e]arlier, she had rushed around in a frenzy, pulling down all the blinds, locking everything that had any kind of key, as if she could shut off her feelings from reality.... I can't even stomach my own reflection"

(p.213). The example shows Treasure's devastation when Paul tells her about Tim's other girlfriend, how he sleeps with young men and pays the same young men to sleep with his wife. Evidently, there is no use of condoms or other contraceptives, thus Treasure's reason for having fallen pregnant. However, it seems that Treasure's devastation about Tim's mischief does not prompt her to think about her physical health. The assumption is, if Tim demands to sleep with her without protection, he probably does the same with his other lovers. In addition, Treasure does not seem to ponder whether she is psychologically healthy if she chooses to remain in a relationship with a man who sleeps with her, his wife, and other men and allows the same men to sleep with his wife. On the same day that Treasure finds out about Tim's mischiefs, her sister informs her that her mother had passed away. Her inner conflict escalates as she questions everything she has lost because of Tim and becomes depressed, shutting herself off from the world.

In the last example, Treasure admits, although to herself, that she is on the brink of a nervous breakdown. The final straw is when Tim refuses to engage in the conversation about her desire to study, hence, "She was existing on the edge of a breakdown held together with makeup and Daphne's expensive excursions. Weary and out of hope, her dreams sailed away on Tim's ridicule and controlling nature" (p.278). Tim's ridicule of her dreams intensified her depression because she held him in high regard. The depression experienced by the blessees corroborates Baumeister et al. (2017), who found that participants who admitted having transactional sex scored higher for symptoms of depression and anxiety.

4.2.5.1.2.2 The domineering blesser in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*

Phamotse (2017) presents evidence of the blesser controlling the blessee, and this section discusses the different examples. Firstly, Treasure, the blessee, has access to the money she cannot spend because Tim controls it. However, this is restricted provision because he monitors everything as “Tim ... kept strict watch over what she spent her money on. He opened a bank account for her, but it was an offshoot of his account, so he had complete control” (p. 188). Although Treasure has money, she cannot use it to advance her modelling career, study, or generously share it with her family because Tim has complete control. Treasure refers to Tim's dominating tendencies as "faults," oblivious to the fact that she has no agency in the relationship.

Similarly, Tim also sanctions all of Treasure's friendships and social activities because he is presumably jealous, and she is forced to apologise to Lintle for their lack of contact; “Listen, I'm sorry that I don't speak to you as often as I should. Tim doesn't like it when I'm on the phone when he's around. He gets a little ...jealous and edgy” (p. 197). In one example, Tim scolds her for going out without his permission and criticises her clothes; “[t]hat's why I came; you do as you please! Who gave you permission to roam around at this time of the night? Look at what you're wearing, tight jeans like a prostitute!” (p. 200). This example is evidence that the blesser controls the blessee financially and has social control over her dress sense and interactions with others.

Finally, Tim is a master manipulator when it comes to controlling others. He progresses from “Wake up, bitch! This is my house. Get UP!” (192) to “WAKE UP, MY angel; I'm taking you home to rest” (p. 193). Tim forcefully takes Treasure to

have an abortion without her consent. He calls her a bitch when he picks her up from the apartment but calls her my angel when he picks her up from the hospital, perhaps to manipulate her into believing everything is fine between them. Similarly, in a different incident where the blesser introduces Treasure to his wife, he says, “I know you two will get along famously just like you do with my bank cards” (p.244). This statement is manipulative because he forces the wife and side-chick to be friends because they both use his money. Manipulation is often the nature of transactional sex relationships because the blesser wants someone he can manipulate and the blessee with her materialistic ambitions falls into the snare.

4.2.5.1.2.3 Blesser’s intimidation towards blessee in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*

Phamotse (2017) also presents evidence of how the blesser threatens the blessee. In the first example, when Treasure discovers that she is pregnant, she ecstatically announces it to Tim, who tells her; “[y]ou will kill that thing and I will make sure of it! Treasure was terrified to see this side of him.... Treasure was left in a state of shock” (p. 191). In the quoted example, Tim threatens to kill the unborn baby, which he calls a ‘thing’. He fulfils his threat because of his power, influence and money. Treasure is shocked because she believed they were in a serious relationship and is surprised to see his outrage and disregard for their unborn baby. Tim is content with the nature of their relationship and does not want it to become complicated because he does not intend to marry Treasure. Although shocked, she understands her position for the first time despite her hopes that the baby would cement their bond. Despite knowing that Tim is married and has grown children, Treasure was naively hopeful that having a baby would make Tim see her differently.

In another example, on the morning that Tim picks up Treasure to forcefully take her to the clinic to have an abortion done, he threatens her again:

Listen, if you know what's good for you and your mother you will do as I say, otherwise the money will stop and you will both have nothing. So just listen to me and your cosy life will carry right on, with diamonds and dresses and champagne and buffet breakfasts. (pp. 192-193)

Firstly, he threatens her comfortable life, and he also threatens her financially since he knows that she sends money to her sick mother, who has never questioned where Treasure gets all the money she sends to her. Interestingly, Tim knows that Treasure is in a relationship with him because of the money he gives her. In contrast, Treasure is naïve to think they are in a serious relationship because they love each other. Lastly, the threats are conditional; her rewards will be revoked if she does not obey him and do as he says. Similarly, when she wakes up in the clinic, he threatens her again; “[s]he went into shock as Tim knelt next to her and spoke grimly, very quietly into her ear. If you say ONE WORD I will take all that you have in a heartbeat” (p. 194). Using his name and reputation without Treasure’s consent, Tim fulfils the threat of aborting the baby. The unconsented abortion should be illegal, physically traumatising and heart-wrenching for Treasure, but she remains in the relationship. Arguably, this threat is not only about taking everything from Treasure, but he also wants to protect his reputation. If he had threatened to take her life, Treasure’s reasons for remaining in the relationship could have been justifiable, but he threatens to take everything she possesses. This could mean that Treasure attaches so much value to the diamonds, dresses, champagne and money that she would rather endure a relationship of abuse. It could also mean that Treasure has no dignity or strength left to pick up the pieces of her life and start over.

In the last example, Tim reminds Treasure of being her sustenance and that he controls all her movements; “It seems like you’re forgetting who feeds you. I own each and every little thing here...” (p. 200). The quote mentioned above is what Tim says after Treasure went out without his consent. The blesser wants to maintain control; thus, he keeps the blessee financially dependent and does not enable her to achieve anything vital for herself that has the potential to liberate her. Tim keeps his control over Treasure by not giving her any cash because he knows that having cash at her disposal will allow her to obtain a degree, start a business or leave him. His money and Treasure’s love of the luxurious life keeps their transactional sex relationship intact. Treasure has money but cannot spend it as she pleases, which is disempowering. However, despite Tim disempowering Treasure with his controlling behaviour, she seems content with the scrapes he provides in the guise of luxury. If the blessee is to live a life of luxury, freedom to move and spend her money should be the greatest form of freedom that she lacks.

4.2.5.1.2.4 Blessee’s inner conflict in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*

Inner conflict is one of the effects that emerge as a psychological effect of transactional sex relationships. This section discusses the findings of the blessee’s inner conflict related to transactional sex relationships, as presented in Phamotse’s (2017) *Bare: #The Blesser Game*.

The following examples validate Baumeister et al. (2017), whose study found that participants who admitted having transactional sex scored higher for symptoms of anxiety. The blessee is concerned with various matters pertaining to her connection

to the blesser. When Treasure learns that Tim has a second girlfriend, hires young men to sleep with his wife, and frequently has extramarital affairs himself, she is distraught. As a result of this worry, “The voices in her head cried and clashed. *But what will I do? Where will I go? I can’t afford to live in this lavish townhouse, the BMW in my driveway, the clothes I wear...!*” (p.213). Treasure has internal turmoil because she believes that if she leaves Tim, she will have no other possibilities for self-sufficiency. The blessee's life and existence are stagnated due to the blesser's financial power over her and her complete financial dependence on him. Her physical and psychological dependence could be the reason she does not consider finding a job, studying or going back to modelling, in which she thrived. Treasure behaves as if she had not seen her mother's spirit break under her father's control. Or perhaps, like her mother, she is afraid to make crucial decisions to better or save her life.

In another example, Treasure receives a gift box from Tim with which she is unimpressed; “*More THINGS. And for what? ...I need HONESTY, not things. Why do men think everything is for sale?*” (p.217). Perhaps the answer to Treasure’s question should be that men think everything is for sale because women like Treasure have created the impression that it is. Tim has always sent gifts during their strained relationship, but he never apologised. Treasure is frustrated because her expectations have changed since she discovered that Tim lives a double life. Due to his financial independence, the blesser lives his life unapologetically, leaving the blessee with no agency.

Thus, due to Treasure's lack of agency, Tim makes his demands, and she obliges. In the following example, Tim sends her a gift box with a note informing her that he will

pick her up. She questions “...*why wasn't he this nice when he first forced anal sex on me? Now after days of not talking to me, he thinks he can just splash out on some gifts and then dictate what I do*” (p.218). Strangely, Treasure considers the gesture ‘nice’, which shows how much she values gifts. The anal sex was not forced if they had consensual sex, and she did not refuse or get up and leave when she realised Tim was forcing himself on her. Perhaps she was naïve and did not know what was happening but is it possible if she is a victim of brutal gang rape? On the contrary, due to her past sexual trauma, Treasure should be an expert in guarding herself against similar situations repeating themselves.

Nevertheless, it seems that Treasure is still traumatised by the painful sex for which she hoped Tim would apologise. The lack of agency and emotional turmoil left Treasure hopeless, and she “...sat down on the carpet and wept” (p.218). She could not understand how she was complying with Tim's requests despite her rage and dissatisfaction with how he treated her.

Moreover, Treasure's inner turmoil intensifies when she begins questioning her motives for staying with Tim after he engages in painful sex with her on the car's bonnet.

Why do I still want every part of him so badly when I also want to punish him so desperately? He took and never asked... He hurt me and never said sorry, yet I'm here in this fancy hotel; I'm still with him. (p.234)

The above quote describes Treasure's inner turmoil and how divided she feels because Tim forces her to have painful sex, for which he never apologises, and forced her to have an abortion without her consent. The above emotional turmoil contributes to the

adverse psychological condition in which Treasure finds herself. Treasure asks the right questions but does not take any action; thus, the inner conflict continues. Arguably, questioning her motives for staying with Tim shows that Treasure knows their relationship is dysfunctional.

Furthermore, she had not dealt with the emotional pain of the abortion, Treasure begins to question what happened to her in the clinic. She suddenly, “began questioning exactly how her child was taken away from her; what exactly was done to her body? *Was it more than abortion?*” *What if I was ‘fixed’, like an animal?* (p.281). Treasure is overwhelmed by unanswered questions about the abortion. She did not consent and wonders if she was sterilised or ‘fixed’ because animals cannot consent, and she was treated like an animal because nobody asked for her consent. As if coming out of a trance, Treasure, for the first time, questions what happened at the clinic and realises how Tim has treated her like an animal. Above all, Treasure feels like she has deteriorated morally, and although she had little power over what happened at the clinic, she does not end the transactional sex relationship that makes her feel immoral. Treasure’s unplanned pregnancy validates the claim that women who engage in transactional sex relationships are at a higher risk of unwanted pregnancies (Atwood et al., 2012; Dunkle et al., 2004a, 2004b). Thus, Phamotse’s (2017) questions echo Mwangi’s (2009) writing-back-to-self postcolonial paradigm, whose main objective is to highlight how contemporary African novels reflect on issues about Africa without focusing on writing back to the colonial centre. However, the above-quoted questions sound like questions from colonial times, but they are questions posed in postcolonial times. Was an abortion performed on a young woman who had not consented in an independent African country? Did someone in a clinic oblige because the blesser paid

the right amount of money? Does the poverty in our societies force civilians to engage in illegal acts to put food on their tables?

Finally, Treasure is conflicted about how having Tim in her life has not enriched her. Looking at a blanket used in Lesotho, her mind drifts away to how they traded their cultural leopard-skin cloak with a western blanket; “*They adopted an alien item into their culture that they don’t even make themselves. It keeps them warm and it looks good, but they can’t earn a living from it...*” (p.282). The scenario reminds her of how her own life, despite having Tim, her life has grown static. She has been enjoying the luxuries he provided but has nothing to call her own because everything is Tim's. The transactional sex relationship is one-sided because only the blesser makes decisions, and the blessee has an inner conflict that she cannot discuss with her blesser. According to Mwangi (2009), the Lesotho blanket question above is an example of self-reflection. To reflect on her life, Treasure uses the same question, how did the people of Lesotho trade their leopard-skin cloak for a western blanket? They would have been able to sell their leopard-skin cloaks because they are unique to Lesotho, but now they buy western blankets. Similarly, Treasure has abandoned her morals and teachings from home for a luxurious, fleeting life that is not hers.

4.2.5.1.2.5 Blesser’s maltreatment of the blessee in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*

Phamotse’s (2017) *Bare: #The Blesser Game* presents verbal, emotional and physical abuse that the blesser lashes out on the blessee. Firstly, when Tim picks up Treasure to take her to the clinic for the abortion, he lashes out verbally at her. “Wake up, bitch! This is MY house. Get UP!” (p. 192). He insults her by calling her bitch and reiterates

that it is his house, thus the liberty to have a key and let himself in. Treasure is shocked because she was abruptly woken from her sleep and had also never seen Tim so angry. Tim appeared to like rough sex, which was often painful for Treasure to the extent that she dreaded having sex. However, she endured because she did not want to lose the luxurious lifestyle Tim provided her or offend him, after all, he was older than her. Alternatively, perhaps she saw her mother endure abuse and was subconsciously conditioned to endure the same. The following are examples of the physical or sexual abuse she endured: “Treasure was on her knees as he forced himself into her, pushing and pushing, dry and tight” (p.202) and “[h]e pulled her closer to him...before assaulting her again. Treasure kept her pain stifled in her gut; tears skated down her bare cheeks...” (p.229) and “Treasure...soaked her wounded body” (p.234). The sexual violence examples substantiate the findings by Atwood et al. (2012) and Dunkle et al. (2004a) that women who engage in transactional sex relationships are at higher risk of sexual violence. The sexual experience in the above quote sounds similar to the rape that she endured and would have been an experience enough to resolve to leave Tim, but Treasure chooses to stay in a relationship where she endures perpetual rape. For Tim, the sexual intercourse they had was blissful because although he could see the discomfort or tears on Treasure’s face, he would not stop. Treasure hoped that he would regard her as more than a body, but he objectified her and was only interested in his pleasure as long as he provided for her needs. If Tim and Treasure’s relationship had mutual respect, perhaps Tim would have stopped when he saw her crying, but Tim felt entitled to fulfil his sexual fantasies because of everything he gave Treasure.

In addition to the verbal and physical/sexual abuse, Tim emotionally abuses Treasure. He insults Treasure and her mother, using the information Treasure shared in

confidence. “That’s the problem! You don’t think. That’s why your father kicked your mother out! You’re just like her – disrespectful!” (p. 200). Tim compares Treasure to her mother, accusing her of being disrespectful and foolish. Even though Treasure confided in him about what happened between her parents, he blames her and is no different from her abusive father. However, perhaps Treasure is like her mother because despite Tim’s physical, verbal and sexual abuse, just like her mother endured, she chooses to remain in an abusive relationship.

In another example, he undermines her self-confidence when he covertly comments on her complexion because of her black dress; “You know I don’t like black on you. It’s like when a white girl wears yellow. It doesn’t work” (p.205). Tim’s comment is emotionally abusive because he wants to control what Treasure wears, even if it makes her doubt herself. Tim also insinuates that something is wrong with her complexion and that she cannot wear what she likes. Similarly, he trivialises her pain of the abortion when he demands that she goes out with him whilst patronising her; “You bring great joy to me. I hope you come out of your black hole and dine with me tonight. I’ll pick you up at seven. Look sexy for me” (p.217). The quote shows Tim’s domineering character with a complete disregard for Treasure’s pain as long as his demands are met. The blessee feels trapped and unable to leave and thus continues in the emotionally and physically abusive relationship.

4.2.5.1.2.6 Blessee’s psychological trauma in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*

The blessee is subjected to a great deal of psychological trauma at the hands of the blesser. Treasure reminds Tim of his promise to let her study, but he dismisses her by changing the topic:

Her dreams seemed crushed; her goal of modelling had been reached only to be swallowed again by the shark she called her lover. Her thirst for a proper tertiary education had been squelched by fast cars, big city lights and the expensive make up she wore daily. (p.280)

A disillusioned Treasure reflects how her modelling career was short-lived because Tim prohibited her from continuing, just as her ambition to study had been consumed by her material desires. Ironically, her modelling profession would have paid for daily make-up, but she sacrificed her modelling career and her desire to further her education to please her blesser. The abuse she endured caused her psychological distress because she could not fathom why someone she loved would treat her in such a manner. Treasure seems to have forgotten that her mother also loved her father, but that did not stop him from abusing her mother. Similarly, Treasure naively thinks that her love for Tim will make him treat her better. However, this love is not reciprocated, and in addition, Treasure was supposed to discern Tim's character when he introduced his wife to her. If Tim loved his wife or had consideration for fellow humans, Treasure would not be in their lives because he would not need a transactional sex relationship.

Although devastated by the discovery of Tim's infidelity, in the following example, it appears that Treasure had given up all hope of winning her blesser's love. "In my own backyard you do this? ...Who the HELL is that?" (p.286). Treasure fumed upon finding Tim and Paul having sex in the car. The following quote describes Treasure's devastation:

She had done everything to hold his attention and keep him, but the pain of sharing him with every other body was beyond her. She had wanted to please

him so that he wouldn't go astray, but clearly, his appetite was greater than she was. She couldn't control him or who he slept with. (p.291)

Despite knowing that Tim is married and has intimate relations with his wife, Treasure still wants Tim all to herself. Thus, the knowledge of seeing him sleeping with another man makes her realise that her efforts were futile. The above quote shows that the blessee is one of the many lovers of the blesser. The blessee will likely demand more commitment from the connection, even if the partnerships are transactional. The shattered dreams, unfulfilled ambitions, betrayal and realisation of being just one more lover cause immense psychological distress, leading to depression. The blessee in Phamotse's (2017) seems emotionally vested in the relationship and possessive of her blesser in contrast to the blessee in Makholwa's (2019) novel, who seems emotionally detached and engages with her blessers like a business transaction. In addition, the blesser in Phamotse's novel has many sexual partners whilst the blessee in Makholwa's (2019) has many blessers.

4.2.5.1.3 Diverse psychological consequences of transactional sex relationships in *Sweet Medicine*

This section discusses how the blessee's relationship expectations lead to inner conflict in Panashe's (2016) *Sweet Medicine*.

4.2.5.1.3.1 Blessee's expectations in *Sweet Medicine*

One of Tsitsi's most significant expectations is that the blesser should marry her as she is no longer satisfied with just being a side-chick. In the first example, she is offended when Zvobgo says that the girl who takes care of her mother might get married and leave, "...[h]ow could he speak about it so casually, even mention it when he knew it remained a thorn in her flesh?" (p.28). She is offended when he speaks

about others getting married when he has not asked her to marry him. In addition, Tsitsi's friend Chiedza had asked her, "... why are you so fixed on this idea of a white wedding? He paid *roora* for you, isn't it acknowledgement enough? She couldn't say that it was not recognised in the eyes of the Church" (p.147). Tsitsi's dissatisfaction with a traditional wedding for which Zvobgo paid *roora* or the bride price was a combination of guilt because of her lifestyle and not getting married in a church, which would be the church's stamp of approval on their relationship. Moreover, Zvobgo's inaction "in further cementing their relationship" (p.133) by marriage leads to many insecurities and inner conflicts in Tsitsi.

4.2.5.1.3.2 Blessee's inner conflict in *Sweet Medicine*

Panashe (2016) presents the theme of inner conflict throughout her novel *Sweet Medicine*. First of all, Tsitsi feels insecure in her relationship with Zvobgo because Chiedza reminds her that if he "... could do it to Mrs Zvobgo, surely he could do it to her?" (p.75). The *it* which Zvobgo can do refers to him leaving Mrs Zvobgo for Tsitsi, which creates insecurity in Tsitsi because it highlights Zvobgo's inability to be loyal. This inner conflict makes Tsitsi identify with Mrs Zvobgo because of her feelings of guilt. However, Tsitsi "... wouldn't mind how many he brought in, as long as she was looked after" (p.77). She was only concerned about him providing for her and was content that she, alongside Mrs Zvobgo, would have to sanction any new relationship.

The second cause of inner conflict for Tsitsi was the change in their relationship, "[w]hat kind of matters did he have to discuss that required that he shut the door on her?" (p.54). Tsitsi went to tell Zvobgo that dinner was ready, who, in turn, shut the door in her face on a call. The change in Zvobgo's attitude is significant because it

could mean that she was no longer a challenge for him to pursue now that Tsitsi had moved into the house with Zvobgo. It could also mean that now that she was living with him, he had found another woman with whom he was on the phone. Zvobgo's cold attitude towards Tsitsi leads her to depression coupled with dependence on sleeping tablets; "when the tears subsided... [s]he gulped, swallowed and waited for sleep to rescue her from the menacing questions that plagued her" (p.64).

Finally, this inner conflict leads to distrust that thrusts Tsitsi into her next plan. She reads an article on cheating and "Her heart leapt a little before she flicked to page 38. *38 Seven Signs Your Man Is Cheating*" (p.171). Tsitsi's interest and reaction to the article in a magazine are evidence that she suspects Zvobgo of cheating. For her, "It was a state that saw her mind begin to buzz with new ideas and strategies for her survival" (p.150). She was unwilling to lose the stability and decent livelihood she had crafted for herself. However, since her next plan was to conceive, this was another cause of inner conflict because although she had been sleeping with Zvobgo, "... she had not become pregnant. How could she have not thought about that? (sic) Was she infertile? Was he sterile" (p.149). Although relevant for the next plan, these questions cause more inner conflict for Tsitsi as she ponders on them. Her relationship expectations, coupled with her inner turmoil, lead to a lot of the psychological effects experienced by the Tsitsi.

4.2.5.1.4 Diverse psychological effects of transactional sex relationships in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

This section discusses the psychological effects of transactional sex relationships on the side-chick in the following order: emotional attachment, heartbreak, betrayal, disillusionment, inner conflict, insecurity and verbal abuse.

4.2.5.1.4.1 The side-chick's emotional attachment in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

Emotional attachment is a significant theme under psychological effects in Maphosa's (2019) novel because of how the transactional sex relationship between the blesser and the side-chick started. Fierce inadvertently becomes a side-chick because the blesser marries someone else behind her back, and she finds out after the fact. However, the blesser continues to be present in her life, attending her graduation, buying her clothes and giving her a watch as a graduation gift engraved with their initials.

In addition, the emotional attachment between the blesser and the side-chick is unhealthy to the extent that when the blesser moves from Cape Town to Johannesburg with his family, he asks the side-chick to choose the house he intends to live in with his wife. The blesser's move to another town is an opportunity for the side-chick to cut their emotional bond; "He relocated, and I thought that was my opportunity to move on" however "I was too dependent on him and couldn't survive on my own" (p. 20). Despite her efforts to try and cut off their relationship, she realises that her feelings for the blesser keep intensifying, and they seem to be reciprocated by the blesser, who asks: "What should I do Fierce? Should I get a divorce?" (p. 185). The reciprocated emotional attachment is significant as it is not evident in the other novels where the blessee is often the one with strong feelings for the blesser. The side-chick and blesser's emotional attachment is coupled with physical attachment because they have sexual intercourse to solve disagreements instead of discussing them.

4.2.5.1.4.2 The side-chick's misery in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

Misery is another psychological effect endured by the side-chick in Maphosa's (2019) novel. When the festive holidays came, the blesser and side-chick went to their respective destinations as a couple. However, upon her return, the side-chick receives devastating news in a video; "Elikplim Mawufeasi Nkrumah, do you take Komla Kwabe to be your lawfully wedded wife?", the pastor said. It was him! My heart shattered and the laptop slipped from my grip and fell off my lap" (p.17). The side-chick receives a video of the blesser getting married, which devastates her as described in the following quote: "[m]y heart was sore and the lump in my throat wouldn't go away (p.19).

Then, after having been the blesser's side-chick, the blesser breaks off their relationship without any warning because he wants to focus on his marriage. Again, this leaves the side-chick devastated; "[h]ow did I fall for this again? I can't even cry, I'm too shaken" (p.132) because he had promised not to leave her but is choosing to prioritise his wife. This devastation leads to the side-chick cutting off her hair to show her seriousness and deal with the pain to try and forget her blesser. The above is an example of how the psychological effect of heartbreak leads to a physical response, which is cutting hair.

After that, the side-chick and blesser's relationship is rekindled; however, the side-chick suffers another heartbreak when she discovers that the blesser has other side-chicks; "I think I'm going to cry. My heart is so sore. THREE! I don't believe this. In all honesty, I don't know why I am hurt" (p.192). The discovery of the presence of three more side-chicks leaves the side-chick heartbroken yet unable to cry as she

blames herself for having stayed so long. The blesser's infidelity could mean that the blesser cannot commit to one woman, and even if he had married the side-chick instead of his wife, he would probably still have other side-chicks.

In the last example about heartbreak, the side-chick is humiliated when the blesser's wife catches her in their home and she finds herself "... on the streets, in nothing but a torn T-shirt.... practically naked, barely covered by this thin, torn T-shirt" (pp.74-75). In the quote above, the wife beats the side-chick, who runs down the street in a t-shirt with no phone or money. The side-chick suffers because of her transactional sex relationship with the blesser; she is also humiliated because she must find means at a nearby fuelling station to get help and is forced to explain what happened. Significantly, when the fight ensues between the side-chick and the wife, the blesser breaks them up but remains behind with the wife, which clearly shows the position of the side-chick.

4.2.5.1.4.3 The disloyal blesser in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

Another theme under psychological effects is agony coupled with betrayal. Except for the agony the side-chick experiences, the blesser also betrays her trust; "[h]e hasn't called or anything since I left and that's worrying. I've left him a dozen voicemails and messages but nothing" (p.69). Ironically although the blesser betrays his wife by being with the side-chick, he also betrays the side-chick with other side-chicks.

The following quote exemplifies how the side-chick discovers the blesser's betrayal of her on his phone; "My heart is palpitating as I open the chat and my palms are

sweating....He tells her he is lonely, he misses her body... He sends her money....they agreed to meet on Sunday at the Hilton” (p.121). The quote describes the side-chick’s physical response when she discovers text messages between the blesser and another side-chick. When she confronts the blesser, he brushes it off as a “meaningless once off thing” (p.58), increasing her insecurity and reminding her of her position as a side-chick. The quote also reveals the transactional nature of the blesser’s relationship with other side-chicks; there is an exchange of sexual intercourse for money. The side-chick feels betrayed, yet unable to cry but with pain in her throat. This discovery leaves the side-chick disillusioned. Like the blessee in Phamotse’s novel, the side-chick, despite her heartache, chooses to remain in the transactional sex relationship.

4.2.5.1.4.4 The theme of disillusionment in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

Thus, another theme of psychological effects is disillusionment. The side-chick never imagined that the blesser would have other side-chicks and is thus disillusioned by the blesser’s unfaithfulness. She notes, “So Elik slept with her? Well, he doesn't answer to me but still. He can't cheat on someone he's cheating on his wife with! He just can't” (p.58). It is evident from the above quote that the side-chick is possessive. Although cognisant that the blesser is married, she does not want him to be with anyone except the wife and herself. In addition, spending romantic moments with the blesser reminds the side-chick of what could have been hers – a life with the blesser if he had not married someone else. She is disillusioned because she sadly realises it is just a dream that will not come to fruition. It seems as though the transactional sex relationship culture disintegrates women’s emancipation because women have become the enemies of other women. Women seem to think only of themselves rather than the collective.

Women do not seem to mind breaking up marriages and leaving children fatherless. However, the irony is that the same woman who destroys another woman's home could be on the receiving end tomorrow. Similarly, the wife with a husband with wandering eyes also has choices.

4.2.5.1.4.5 The side-chick's inner conflict *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

Similar to the blessees in Makholwa (2018) and Phamotse (2017), the side-chick in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1* experiences inner conflict as a result of her rowdy transactional sex relationship. According to Baumeister et al. (2017), those who engage in transactional sex relationships admit to anxiety symptoms. Firstly, the side-chick is consumed by feelings of guilt towards the blesser's wife when in her house; "I'm sleeping in her house, with her husband, bathing with her products, eating her food and now I'm driving her car?" (p.52). The use of the pronoun 'her' repeatedly in the aforementioned example reiterates that she is the side-chick and an intruder in someone else's space. However, she consoles herself that "Elik doesn't think he's cheating and I don't think I'm a side-chick and that denial takes most of the guilt away (p.63).

In addition, the side-chick justifies that their relationship is not based on financial gain for her when she says, "I'm not using Elik and I'm not after his money. I love him and he just happens to have money! (p.177). However, this is ironic and reflects the characteristics of transactional sex relationships because every time they meet, they have sexual intercourse, and the blesser gives her money. The side-chick also extorts money from the blesser with the excuse of taking revenge because he broke her heart. The following is one example, "[s]ince Elik has decided to hurt me this bad, I plan on

taking as much money from him as I can and sending it to my mother! It's only fair!... How much? R10000” (p.122). The blesser has always taken the initiative of giving the side-chick money. However, in the example mentioned above, she asks as a form of revenge which is insignificant because the blesser is a millionaire.

Moreover, when the wife of the blesser starts harassing the side-chick, she feigns ignorance, saying we “... have co-existed peacefully in Elik's life over the years. Why is she ruining that unspoken arrangement now?” (p.179). The blesser’s wife has never been happy with an arrangement in which she was not consulted. Thus, she has never accepted her husband’s affairs. Most importantly, in an attempt to silence her inner conflict, the side-chick starts feeling like an equal to the wife.

She married him for 4 years? Yeah well I've been riding him for that long too.

She has his children? Well I almost had them too and I plan on having a whole football team in the near future. She drives a white Fortuner? Newsflash, I do too! Same model even. So we are equal! (p.186)

Significantly, the side-chick and the wife have similar experiences from the years they have been with the blesser to driving the same car. The side-chick and wife’s similar experiences show that the blesser has never been in a relationship with just one woman at a time; the side-chicks and the wife have always been there concurrently.

4.2.5.1.4.6 The victimisation of the side-chick in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

Another psychological effect suffered by the side-chick is the harassment lashed out on her by the blesser’s wife, “I woke up this morning to a WhatsApp message from an

unknown number. It was Elik's wife saying 'leave my husband alone ... and name calling' (p.68). In the example mentioned above, the blesser's wife sent up to 20 messages, harassing the side-chick. The wife is aware of the side-chick in her husband's life because she caught them in her house. In addition to verbally abusing the side-chick, the wife blackmails her with naked photos she retrieved from her husband's phone as evident in the following example: "[d]o you recognize these?", she says scrolling through her phone. My jaw drops! It's naked pictures of myself that I sent to Elik sometime back" (p.175). In the scene above, the blesser's wife holds the side-chick hostage in the hotel room where she was supposed to meet the blesser. The wife then blackmails the side-chick with the photos by threatening to post them on social media if she does not stay away from her husband.

4.2.5.2 The physical impact of transactional sex relationships on the blessees in the selected literary texts

This chapter addresses the third research objective to explore the different issues that emerge due to transactional sex relationships. This section describes the physical impact of transactional sex relationships on the blessees in the selected literary texts: *The Blessed Girl*, *Bare: #The Blesser Game*, *Sweet Medicine* and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*.

4.2.5.2.1 The physical impact of the relationship on the blessee in *The Blessed Girl*

This section discusses the different physical effects of transactional sex relationships on the blessee. The following quote contextualises Bontle's relationship with money,

“[t]he thought of my finances makes me want to throw up” (p.103) ... “I get to the bathroom and empty all the morning’s breakfast into the toilet bowl” (p.103). Bontle becomes physically ill when she does not have money; this is evidence that her obsession with money affects her physically.

Another physical effect of transactional sex relationships in Makholwa’s (2018) novel is Bontle testing positive for HIV, which substantiates the finding that transactional sex is associated with a higher risk of contracting HIV (Wamoyi et al., 2016). She always used protection with her different blessers until one takes her on holiday to Bali and they run out of condoms. The blesser requests that they have sex without a condom, but she refuses, and he shows her HIV-negative blood test results that he receives via facsimile from his doctor. Against her better judgement, she agrees to have unprotected sex because she is in a foreign country, at her blesser’s expense and has no way of going home, even if she wanted. The example above shows how the blesser often has authority in the transactional sex relationship because he is financially independent.

Finally, when Bontle needs to contact her blessers, she needs a ‘confidence booster’, which entails skin bleaching because a lighter complexion is considered beautiful. The ‘confidence booster’ performed at a cosmetic clinic also entails vulva, anal bleaching and the purchase of Kegel balls. She assumes that her blessers are pleased by a light-skinned vulva and anus and a tight vagina. Hence, her efforts, because she considers being a lessee the source of her income. In a different incident, Bontle thinks that two of her lovers treat her like a business partner instead of a lover and feels she is losing her sex appeal and needs to bleach her skin. Bontle also had a buttock implant

performed, which was still painful after four weeks of insertion. The aforementioned examples highlight the blessee's need to please the blessers physically and prove that she would go to any length to do so. Although the blessers have not articulated their preference for a lighter complexion, a tighter or light-skinned vagina or bigger buttocks, Bontle's assumption covertly gives the blesser control over the blessee.

4.2.5.2.2 The physical impact of the relationship on the blessee in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*

The different instances of physical repercussions offered in Phamotse's (2017) *Bare: #The Blesser Game* are discussed in this section. Firstly, Tim declines when Treasure suggests they use protection the first time they have sex. The following quotes are evidence: “[d]on’t ruin the moment; that thing will kill my erection, ...I want us to bond” (p. 183) and “I’m sixteen weeks pregnant! We’re going to be parents!” (p. 190). He refers to a condom as a ‘thing’ and patronises her by saying that he wants them to bond as if using a condom would make them connect less. In addition, Treasure’s announcement of her pregnancy is evidence that they do not use protection against sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy. The blessee rarely has agency in transactional sex relationships, and thus decisions regarding the use of protection are made by the blesser. The examples corroborate the literature findings that young women allow men to control the conditions for sexual intercourse, such as whether condoms or contraceptives will be used (Luke & Kurz, 2002). This conclusion is corroborated by McIlwaine and Datta (2004), as young girls find it difficult to negotiate the use of contraceptives.

The second example provides evidence that the blessee has no privacy despite living alone in a flat that is supposed to be hers; “Tim arrived early the next morning, before six. He let himself in and stood next to Treasure’s bed, fuming while she slept. Eventually he kicked the bed” (p. 192). Tim lets himself into Treasure’s apartment as he pleases and this could be because he feels entitled since he paid for her flat.

Furthermore, the psychological effects of transactional sex relationships often lead to physical effects. Treasure feels neglected when she returns home after the unconsented abortion; “THREE WEEKS PASSED, and Tim didn’t visit Treasure once.... She was desperate for support. But she had no one to reach out to” (p. 194) and “[h]er morning tea was gin and tonic...Her doctor ... prescribed anti-anxiety medication” (p. 195). Treasure experiences an episode of depression after the abortion because she feels neglected and alone and thus resorts to abusing alcohol.

Finally, one of the most significant physical effects of transactional sex relationships is painful sex. Tim came over for sexual intercourse whenever he pleased, which was unpleasant for Treasure because it was painful. The following examples demonstrate the pain that Treasure had to endure every time they had sexual intercourse. “Tears flowed down her burning cheeks, dripping onto the carpet, yet she still kept her screams in. The rough carpet slowly peeled her skin off her knees” (p.202), and she “... kept her pain stifled in her gut; tears skated down her bare cheeks ... He moaned, oblivious to her pain, then dragged his fingers down her back, ripping the dress...” (p.229). Treasure felt like she was merely a body because he confirmed her feelings when he would tell her “...that is my cookie” (p.201).

In addition, Tim quotes the bible to justify his sexual demands and make her feel guilty; “[e]ven the Bible says: Don’t deprive your partner of sex” (p.201). So Treasure “... agreed to play out his fantasies, even though the sex was tougher than ever before and even toxic on some days” (p.266). Their sexual encounters often leave her physically wounded, and she takes warm salt baths to soothe the pain. The above adds to the evidence that although this is supposed to be a relationship with two people in it, operationally, it appears as if only the blesser decides and does as he pleases whilst the blessee does not have any agency in the relationship.

4.2.5.2.3 The physical impact of the relationship on the Small House in *Sweet Medicine*

Apart from psychological effects, transactional sex relationships also have physical effects. This section discusses the physical results such as sexual intercourse, appearance, demands, relationship disintegration, seduction and desperation in Panashe’s (2016) *Sweet Medicine*.

Sexual intercourse is the basis of transactional sex relationships because the woman offers her body in exchange for money or gifts. Tsitsi was sexually inexperienced when she pursued Zvobgo for a relationship; “She had been clumsy at first. Even after countless consultations with Chiedza, which included watching old porn DVDs, her nerves had ensured that she forgot to caress and stroke, rather than grope and grab” (p. 31). Despite her inexperience, Tsitsi had resolved to please Zvobgo sexually and thus spent time honing her bedroom skills. The sexual intercourse offered by the blessee is reciprocated with monetary and food provisions by the blesser.

Another crucial physical aspect is physical appearance and grooming. Prior to Tsitsi's transactional sex relationship, Tsitsi had not invested time in make-up and appearance because she had no money. However, when she started dating Zvobgo, she "... had now made her beauty and looking beautiful her full-time occupation. She ensured that her hair was always well maintained, ... she had now taken up membership at a gym" (p. 112). Tsitsi quit her job and spent her days maintaining her beauty, practising her make-up routine and keeping in shape at the gym – all for Zvobgo's pleasure. The evidence provided in this study reiterates the importance of appearance in transactional sex relationships.

The following physical aspect is the demands made by the blessee. Tsitsi complains about meeting the blesser in hotel rooms; "...how can a man your age be sneaking around in hotels and into his own house? You are too old for this. It's embarrassing - even for me" (p. 111). The blessee uses the blesser's age to make him feel guilty and subtly demands a place, leading to the blesser buying the blessee a flat. However, she continues to demand more, using sex; "...she sucked on his manhood, as if with the intention to drain the blood from his head, "I cannot be a Small House. ...I have parents who want an honest woman for a daughter" (p. 111). The aforementioned example shows how the blessee uses her body to her advantage to demand becoming the wife of the blesser, and he obliges.

Furthermore, Tsitsi and Zvobgo's relationship starts to disintegrate after she moves in with him. The first example is when Tsitsi goes to his study to call him to dinner and "... he shut the door and continued talking into the mouthpiece" (p. 53). Zvobgo shutting the door in Tsitsi's face leaves her baffled because he would usually demand

that she keep him company whilst he ate, even if he had returned late at night. However, it could mean that Zvobgo feels overwhelmed by her presence because they live together, and the excitement of 'stolen waters' has diminished.

The culture in a transactional sex relationship is to maintain the give (sex) and take (gifts) culture; however, Zvobgo and Tsitsi have not been having sexual intercourse. Thus, Tsitsi decides to take charge of the situation and win his affection back by dressing up, applying his favourite perfume and showing some cleavage to seduce him; "And what's the occasion for this dress of yours? Zvobgo was impatient, tugging at one of the straps" (p. 57). However, her efforts were met with annoyance and did not have the desired effect on Zvobgo. In addition, she mentions her jog "... as a reminder that she was working to maintain her figure, a roundabout way of hinting at a body fit to be fucked that night..." (p. 59).

Nevertheless, even this did not have the desired effect of seducing Zvobgo. After Zvobgo's annoyance with Tsitsi's attempt to seduce him, she does not give up and re-attempts to seduce him when they go to bed, "... she turned around, thrusting her buttocks in his direction so that he could not help but see her soft, round cheeks, the ones he had loved to grab, knead, pound and even slap" (p. 63). In addition, "Tsitsi eased into the bed. She stroked his back and he pulled away. ...She continued. She found herself kissing him...."Please, I am trying to think" (p. 63). Still, her ploy to arouse or seduce him failed, and Tsitsi found herself in a difficult situation because the commodity that was supposed to secure her in Zvobgo's heart was no longer in demand.

Another example of physical effects in transactional sex relationships is the blessee's desperation. Tsitsi is desperate to bear the blesser a son, hoping he will marry her in church. However, because they have not been having sexual intercourse and she has failed to seduce him, she resorts to fasting, hoping to change her circumstances. Her abstinence from food causes her to faint. In addition, Tsitsi's problem results in sleepless nights, for which sleeping tablets are ineffective because her body has become resistant to them.

Furthermore, she experiences unbearable migraines because of her inner conflict and lack of sleep. The most significant aspect that Tsitsi resorts to because of her desperation is to consult a *n'anga* who gives her *muti* to solve her problem. The effects of the *muti* are four-fold as she wins back the affections of Zvobgo, manages to have the young secretary replaced with an elderly lady, falls pregnant and sets a date at the church for their white wedding. In essence, this section has presented the extent to which the blessee will go physically to get what she wants from the blesser.

4.2.5.2.4 The diverse physical impacts of the relationship on the blessee in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

This section discusses the physical impacts of appearance, financial provision, gifts, relational limitations, possessiveness, sexual interaction and abuse in the blesser and side-chick's transactional sex relationship.

4.2.5.2.4.1 Appearance, financial provision and gifts in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

Firstly, the side-chick devotes a lot of time and effort to her appearance, as shown in the following quote: “You look good! He says... I know! It took me changing five times to settle for this dress and I’m glad he noticed. I even had my makeup done...” (p.51). She changes up to five times until she is satisfied with how she looks and has her makeup done at the airport. The aim of all the effort is for the blesser to notice her and be enticed. Similarly, in the following example, she buys brand-name clothes; “I have a weakness for H&M... so I buy a casual dress and boots. I go for an express facial, I need to glow. I get a nice dress at YDE, buy a Brazilian wig and I’m done” (p.53). Brands such as H&M, YDE and Brazilian wigs are popular in the transactional sex relationship culture, and she invests in them to impress the blesser with his money.

Secondly, the financial provision and gifts from the blesser have extensively improved the side-chick’s life and that of her family. The following are examples of the side-chick’s financial benefit from the blesser. In the first example, the side-chick sleeps over at the blesser’s hotel when they meet at a conference in Venice; “I take the Victoria’s Secret bag. Inside there’s 300 Euros... If I take this money does it mean I got paid for my services? I don’t care right now, I’ll take it...I deserve it” (p.29). When she wakes up, the blesser has left her lingerie and money, which leaves the side-chick wondering if she is being paid for the sexual intercourse.

In addition, in the following two examples, the blesser gives her money when she travels home to Zimbabwe; “Elik hands me an envelope with the US dollars. ‘That’s for home. I transferred yours into your account... R10 000 into my account. I count

the money in that envelope. It's US\$3000" (p.67) and "[h]ere, I only have about R3000, take it. You have this credit card too". I take the money and leave the card, I don't think it will be of any use to me in Zimbabwe" (p.83). These quotes exemplify how the blesser has provided for herself and her family. Thus, as the relationship grows, the side-chick has more money because of the blesser's generosity.

Furthermore, like a typical transactional sex relationship, the side-chick also receives gifts, as shown in the following examples. In the first example, the blesser buys the side-chick a car; "I received a box after lunch and I wanted to toss it in the bin so bad but I opened it anyway. There was a small car inside and Toyota keys!" (p.18). Similar to other transactional sex relationships described in this study, where the blesser buys the side-chick a car, the blesser buys the side-chick a Toyota Fortuner, which is an extravagant gift. Then, the blesser buys her a second car; "[j]ust like that, I'm the owner of a brilliant black Jeep Grand Cherokee Limited" (p.237), which is more extravagant than the Fortuner. The side-chick gives the Fortuner to her father, which shows how the blesser has indirectly taken care of her family. Strangely, knowing that his daughter is still a student, the father does not ask where she got the car. It could be that when Fierce arrives with the blesser for her sister's funeral, the father already knows that the blesser is not just a friend but feigns ignorance because of how he has benefited. The last example is about the gifts the side-chick receives from the blesser; "I quickly go through my presents, there's dresses, running shoes, lingerie and gift cards from so many stores I wonder when I'll get the time to use them. The best thing among the presents is a fuel card!" (p.243). Significantly, in transactional sex relationships, gifts and money are reciprocated with sexual intercourse.

4.2.5.2.4.2 Relational limitations and possessiveness in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

The section discusses the relational limitations and the blesser's possessiveness of the side-chick. One of the biggest challenges in transactional sex relationships is the limitations experienced by the couple. The side-chick has adapted to the limited amount of time spent with the blesser, as seen in the following quote: "I was used to having a limited amount of time with him so I was fine with that arrangement" (p.20). The side-chick has also learnt to keep quiet when the blesser's wife calls while they are together, as seen in the following example: "His phone rings...He reaches for it and puts his index finger on his lips, signalling me to stay quiet. I hate this part. It's his wife checking in" (p.28). In this example, signalling the side-chick to be quiet means that she knows her position in the blesser's life and the importance of the wife. In the last example, when the wife travels, the blesser calls the side-chick to come over; "Elik's wife is going away for a work trip to Mpumalanga. I didn't ask for details, all I'm happy for is that the house is vacant and so I'm flying to Joburg this afternoon" (p.119). The side-chick and blesser have thus accepted their limitations regarding time spent together.

Secondly, the lack of agency is further evident when the blesser is possessive of the side-chick. In the first example, the blesser questions the side-chick about her sexual history when they were apart; "There's been someone else, right? he snaps. I'm confused. What's going on? What is he talking about? Someone else where? "You slept with someone else, right?", he clears it up for me" (p.54). Despite having married someone else, the blesser expects the side-chick to remain his alone and not have a

boyfriend and admits it to the side-chick; “I just don't want you with anyone else. I love that I was the first with you and I really don't want any other guy touching you” (p.61). The blesser expects to be the only partner to the side-chick despite having a wife and several side-chicks.

Similarly, when the blesser's colleague shows interest in the side-chick, he questions her about their conversation; “After lunch, we get back to work. Elik wants to know what Musa was saying to me and I tell him. He says I must stay away from him and I roll my eyes” (p.57). The example proves that the blesser is not just physically possessive but is also prescriptive about whom the side-chick should engage with. Finally, the blesser requests the side-chick to have his child, further proving his possessiveness. From the above, it seems that in a transactional sex relationship, the blesser is the centre of the relationship. He expects to keep his family intact while having someone on the side who is not allowed to cause trouble or demand more.

4.2.5.2.4.3 Sexual interaction The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1

In this novel, central to transactional sex relationships is the sexual interaction between the couple. The following examples describe the couple's sexual escapades. In the first example, while attending an engineering conference in Venice, the blesser writes the side-chick a note for them to leave; “A waiter walks up to me and hands me a note....Baby, this conference is boring. Let's go to my room and find more interesting things to do, I really enjoyed you last night. I need some more” (p.29). Although not explicitly stated, it can be safely inferred that ‘*some more*’ refers to sexual intercourse.

Similar to the data presented by Makholwa (2018), Phamotse (2017) and Chigumadzi (2016), Maphosa (2019) in the following examples also reiterates the importance of sexual performance: “I really put in the work, I need him to miss me” (p.28) and “I’m bringing my porn-star game to the bedroom” (p.95). These examples highlight the side-chick’s effort to satisfy the blesser sexually to the extent that during one of their sexual escapades, she fell off a swing and dislocated her shoulder. These examples prove that the side-chick will do anything to please the blesser at the expense of her well-being. In addition, sexual interaction is reciprocated with money as is evident in the following examples:

I asked Elik to 'borrow' me a R1000 and he gave me R2500. I deserve it! I really need to stop telling myself this, I'm now one of those girls sleeping with married men and asking them for money, the girls I despise and call names. I'm one of them now. (p.34)

In the example above, the side-chick tries to convince herself that she deserves the blesser’s money but still categorises herself with the girls who sleep with married men and ask for money in return. She acknowledges that she is one of them. In another example, the blesser gives her R5000 after they have sexual intercourse, promising to send her more. Without a doubt, the direct exchange of money for sexual intercourse establishes transactional sex relationships. This transactional sex relationship is further strengthened because the couple’s mechanism for dealing with fights is to have sex. In the following example, the side-chick goes to the blesser’s house in a rage when she discovers he got married behind her back:

For whatever reason, I let him kiss me and I actually kissed him back. I directed my heightened emotions towards the wrong thing. Before long he was peeling

my pyjamas off me and the car was all steamy and we were going at it like rabbits. (p.18)

However, despite the seriousness of what transpired, they do not discuss their relationship and resort to sexual intercourse. The latter sets the trend for many other disagreements that follow and immediately turns Fierce into a side-chick. In another example, the side-chick goes to the blesser's office, intending to discuss why he got married to someone else; "Next thing he locked the door and I was on his desk with my legs flapping in the air" (p.19). In the scenario above, the blesser avoids discussing their relationship and instead asks whether the side-chick likes the new car he bought her. Afterwards, she becomes emotional, and they end up having sexual intercourse on his office table.

On the contrary, the sexual interaction of the couple is sometimes painful for the side-chick when the blesser tries to relieve himself of his frustrations. The following are examples of how aggressive the sexual intercourse between the side-chick and blesser becomes:

He switches off the light and without warning he grabs me and pushes me onto the bed and gets on top of me. He grabs me by the neck and I feel like I'm suffocating. He kisses me so hard I'm sure my lips are bruised. I can hardly breathe, clawing at his hand with mine so he can loosen the grip. From the get go there's no gentle or slow, it's a warzone. He struggles to find his way into me but with the force he's using he eventually does and I don't fight him. He holds me down and flat out murders me. I feel like he'll pull the weave right

off my head and I'm sure my legs will be cramped in the morning. It hurts, it's uncomfortable and I'm struggling to breath but he needs this. (p.221)

The above quote can easily be mistaken for a rape scene when it is consensual sexual intercourse between the blesser and the side-chick. The choice of words; grabs, pushes, suffocating, bruise, murders, struggle and hurts create a vivid image in the reader's mind. It, however, validates the finding that women who engage in transactional sex relationships are at higher risk of sexual violence (Atwood et al., 2012; Dunkle et al., 2004a, 2004b). In a similar example, “[h]e picks me up and throws me on the bed and is not even trying to be gentle about it. He actually bites me and I wince. It hurts.... Now I have bruises and bite marks...” (p.249). These two examples concur with researchers who posit that women do not have agency in deciding how and when sexual intercourse will transpire between themselves and the blesser.

4.2.5.2.4.4 Emotional, verbal and physical abuse in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

The transactional sex relationship in Maphosa's (2019) novel presents different kinds of abuse; emotional, verbal and physical. The most significant attack the side-chick experiences is the physical assault at the hands of the blesser's wife. In the first example, the blesser's wife returns home while the side-chick is visiting the blesser:

I swear I have no idea what's going on but there's shouting and I'm slapped so hard across my face and I'm being pulled off the bed by my braids. In between dodging these fists, I see Elik's wife and her sister. His wife warned me in one of her texts that she would rearrange my face if she ever saw me anywhere near

her husband...You little prostitute!... She kicks me and I stumble...I'm on the streets, in nothing but a torn T-shirt. (p.74)

In the quote above, the side-chick is humiliated, insulted and assaulted physically by the blesser's wife and sister-in-law. When she runs, the blesser cannot run after her as he tries to stop the duo from chasing the side-chick. The side-chick's misery forces her to fend for herself, although she wishes she could show the blesser her mental and emotional scars.

In another example, the blesser's wife arrives at the hotel room where the blesser usually meets the side-chick and holds the side-chick hostage; "Am I talking alone? The sooner you start talking, the sooner I'll leave!" (p.173). The wife knows the hotel and room where her husband and side-chick used to meet. She could demand answers from her husband about his mischiefs but chooses to come to question the side-chick. This is evidence of the disintegration of women's emancipation because it seems that the wife's pass time is to police her husband's movements and phone activity. McRobbie (2009) proffers that gender power perpetuates the idea that women are free to wear what they want, fight, and have casual sex (like men), which in essence is a victorious gesture for the revival of patriarchy. Therefore, a critical question arises; to what extent are women emancipated if they chase mistresses and attack each other – all on account of a man? Often the blesser's seem to be unscathed in transactional sex relationships. The blesser's wife is very proactive in fighting for and protecting her marriage against third parties but is also insecure and thus demands answers to the following questions from the side-chick:

What do you give him for him to keep chasing after you, huh? What do you have that I don't? I cook, I clean, I do laundry, I take care of the children, I even make the same bed you sleep on when I'm not around! But he still chases after you! Why?" (p.174)

The quote reveals the wife's insecurity because she does everything expected from a wife but fails to fathom why her husband keeps going to the side-chick. It is possible that her husband's first choice was the side-chick, but he married the wife out of obligation to her family. Alternatively, it could be that he has probably always been a ladies' man. The problem of the blesser going to the side-chick is thus not intrinsic to the wife. Furthermore, the wife shows the side-chick nude photos on her phone and threatens to post them on social if she does not stay away from her husband. The wife tried to dissuade her husband from seeing the side-chick but failed and has thus resorted to extreme measures to save her marriage.

In addition, to the interrogation and blackmail above, the wife physically attacks the side-chick. Firstly, she slaps the side-chick, smashes her phone against the wall, pulls her by the ears, throws a cup of tea, and finally starts throwing everything in sight. This physical attack is accompanied by verbal insults "I'm going to kill this bitch!... Allow me to squash her ..." (p.178). Consequently, her husband restrains her from injuring the side-chick and causing more damage to the hotel room.

When the wife insults the side-chick saying; "...Your mother failed to raise decent girls. She raised prostitutes! Your sister died doing what by the way? Oh yes, aborting an innocent baby!" (p.178) it angers the side-chick that she "... charge towards her

and grabs her by her weave” (p.178). Most importantly, the wife stabs her husband “...in the arm with the broken glass” (p.179) and “...punches me on the thigh and I feel a cramp run all the way down to my toes” (p.183). Then “I’m using the hands to protect myself so that she doesn’t hit my stomach. I haven’t fully healed and I want more children in the future” (p.183). When the fight described above ensues, the side-chick had just lost the twins she was expecting unsuspectingly and vehemently guards against being hit on the stomach. The examples provided above imply that the side-chick and blesser have not used protection in the form of condoms to protect themselves against sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy or his wife. In addition, the examples provide evidence of violence in transactional sex relationships, especially when the wife is as proactive as the one described

4.2.5.3 The social effects of transactional sex relationships on the blessees in the selected literary texts

This section describes the social effects of transactional sex relationships on the blessees in the selected literary texts: *The Blessed Girl*, *Bare: #The Blesser Game*, *Sweet Medicine* and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*.

4.2.5.3.1 The social effects of a transactional sex relationship in *The Blessed Girl*

In Makholwa’s (2019) *The Blessed Girl*, the first example is the blessee’s constant need to impress her blessers and social media followers, which results in her spending R200 000 over a period of three years. Apart from buying designer clothes and brands, she uses the money she receives from her blessers for cosmetic upgrades. Thus the transactional sex relationship cycle does not end because the blessee always has a need or perhaps a want. In addition, the worst season for the blessee is December because

her blessers spend time with their families. The blessee cannot spend time with her own family because of the impression that she has created of a busy life that has no space for them; thus, although her blessers are present for most of the year - she gets very lonely and spends the week from Christmas to New Year's Eve locked up in her apartment. Furthermore, her brother-cum-son develops a drug problem when he discovers she was his mother. However, because she often hosts her blessers in her apartment, she cannot take him to live with her because of her lifestyle. Her transactional sex relationships deprive her of a chance to raise her son and be present in his life every day.

Moreover, her blesser suggests giving her a Toyota Corolla when he takes back the Mercedes Benz. However, because she wants to maintain the blessee status quo, she cannot imagine driving a Toyota Corolla, which is too ordinary and declines the offer. Bontle is under pressure to maintain the image she has created on social media and with those who know her. Another example of the pressure on the blessee is insults from one of the blesser's wives, "...little bitch!...fake hair and bleached skin" (p.125)... "Jou hoermeisie! (p.127) which translates to 'you whore', "your body looks like it's gathered its air miles" ...cunt (p.195). Despite the insults, Bontle feels she had earned the Mercedes Benz because she had to please the blesser sexually when his wife did not. However, she is unhappy when Jeff's wife brings his luggage, diabetes medication and meal plan to her apartment. In the end, she calls and apologises to the wife because she does not want to replace the wife and finds the task of taking care of the sickly blesser full-time daunting:

I wonder why nobody ever tried to stop me, counsel me, guide me towards a better life. Instead, what I got were hundreds of thousands of Instagram

followers. Many likes on social media, and girls telling me I was ‘Master’ of the game. They looked up to me for being a prostitute. ...You are part of the society that worships money over all else. You click a thousand likes when you see a beautiful girl with no other talent than a beautiful backside, but you don’t do the same for the ordinary girl who is trying to make the best of her life through honest means. (p.277)

The quote reveals Bontle’s sentiments about society’s contribution to the life she has led. Society’s response on social media to the illusion of beauty and wealth has significantly impacted the decisions the blessee has taken.

4.2.5.3.2 The social effects of a transactional sex relationship in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*

The third objective of the study is to explore the social issues that emerge due to the existence of transactional sex relationships. This section thus discusses the social consequences of transactional sex relationships in Phamotse’s (2017) novel.

After a long absence and silence, Tim sends Treasure a gift box with a note that she should get ready to be picked up and go out for the night. Treasure feels he is demanding and is unhappy but obliges. She sleeps briefly but “A shock of fear woke her up from her peaceful nap and pushed her quickly out of bed...tears still running down her bony face” (p.219). The fear of Tim wakes her up because she does not want him to arrive whilst she has not prepared. However, Treasure is oblivious to the details of the event they are attending; “I never thought I would enjoy such a spectacular evening with my husband’s mistress!” (p.249). Tim has painful sexual

intercourse with Treasure on the bonnet of the car, after which he takes her to dinner, where she meets his wife, who calls her the mistress. Treasure is thus coerced into having public sexual intercourse and attending social events without knowing their details. Meeting Tim's wife humiliates Treasure as she is taken by surprise, and unsure how to interact with her. However, this is the beginning of a polyamorous relationship between herself, Tim and his wife.

Apart from feeling socially coerced, Treasure also feels judged by society; "She hated who she was becoming: a high-class prostitute, in expensive couture with a luxurious lifestyle"... . She had the modelling lifestyle to cover it up, but people on Facebook had already started calling her names" (p. 186). Although she was a model dressed up in expensive designer clothes, she felt like a prostitute, and the name-calling on Facebook exacerbated her situation. In addition, someone asked her whether it was true that she was dating an "old mafia millionaire?" (p.198), which aggravates her feelings of moral decay. In another example of societal judgement, Treasure is harshly judged by an elderly woman who does her make-up:

You're just a child! You know, I've heard of young women dating older men, but I didn't think it was genuine. There are documentaries about you people; it's actually revolting.... He probably has children yearning for their father! And yet you are here, eating his money with no sense of disgrace or concern! You have NO shame. ... You are just a child; where are your parents? ... "You need to think a bit before you spread your legs for balls and baubles! It's so selfish, wrecking homes because you need another handbag! My own husband was trapped by a little money-hungry sex-trap like you. (pp.237-8)

She hauls insults at Treasure in different ways by calling her *a child* to exaggerate her age and the age gap between her and the blesser. She also calls her *you people* categorising her as an outcast. She further accuses her of keeping Tim away from his children and accuses Treasure of shamelessly *eating* the blesser's money because she is *money-hungry*. She finally accuses her of being a *homewrecker*. However, when Tim comes into the room, she leaves quietly without insulting him like she did the blessee. In this instance, the blessee suffers judgement from society and not the blesser, perhaps because he is regarded as reputable in society.

Another example of the social effects of transactional sex relationships is that the blesser constantly controls the blessee. Tim is jealous and controlling, sanctions Treasure's friendships and activities, and calls her frequently to check on her location. Due to his controlling nature, he demands that Treasure quit her modelling career, stay at home, go out accompanying him, block her from studying, scrutinise her bank statements and threaten to kill anybody who gets close to her. Treasure accepts everything handed to her by Tim's controlling nature.

Furthermore, broken relationships are another social effect of transactional sex relationships as the blessee prioritises the blesser above other relationships. Treasure's relationship with her best friend Lintle, and her family, especially her mother and Paul, are all negatively affected because of Treasure's relationship with Tim. After an altercation, Lintle tells Treasure, "you add no value to my life (p. 254) and leave town for good. Additionally, her mother, whom she was close to, dies, and Tim prevents her from attending the funeral or visiting the grave. She is isolated from her family. Finally, her friendship with Paul is negatively affected when she discovers that he has

been sleeping with Tim. Tim succeeds with his divide and conquer strategy in which he isolates Treasure from everybody she loves and relates with to fully control her.

Another significant social effect is the shame that befalls the blessee at the hands of the blesser. When Treasure catches Tim and Paul having sex in the car behind her apartment, an altercation erupts that sordidly leads to Paul and Treasure having sex in the car with Tim watching. Consequently, Tim throws Treasure out of the car whilst insulting her “[y]ou...belong in the ash, and so you should face the sun and dress yourself with the earth’s soil...Then he threw her to the ground, her life laid bare for all to see, just as she was” (292). The above experience is a shameful experience for Treasure as her neighbours, and other passers-by witness her nakedness in public. The above quote exemplifies Tim’s controlling nature because although he also slept with Paul, Treasure is reduced to ashes when she does the same. Treasure feels ashamed because people know her on social media as the model and trophy girlfriend of the millionaire blesser.

Despite being coerced, judged, insulted, controlled, isolated and shamed as described in the examples above, which portray the blessee as a victim, she chooses to remain in the transactional sex relationship as if she has no options. The findings of a study conducted by Wamoyi et al. (2019a) validate the above when it links transactional sex to an increased risk of sexual coercion.

4.2.5.3.3 The social effects of a transactional sex relationship in *Sweet Medicine*

This section discusses the social effects of expectations, demands, insecurity and judgement of the transactional sex relationship on the blessee in Panashe's (2016) *Sweet Medicine*.

The blessee's social expectations or demands evolved just as her relationship with the blesser evolved. Firstly, she complains about her living conditions months after the onset of their relationship; "[t]he Catch-Me-If-You-Can electricity. The long tiring queues at clinics. The alternation between the 100,010 and 001 meal patterns..." (p.108). Her complaints allude to the load-shedding in Zimbabwe, the overcrowded health facilities and the meal rations for which the zero indicates no meal. The blessee, with her complaints, hints at her dissatisfaction with living in poverty when she has a blesser. The blesser acknowledges her complaints by buying her a flat, providing her mother's medicine and ensuring that her mother and uncle have three meals per day instead of the usual one.

Amidst the country's deteriorating economic conditions, Tsitsi ensures that her family is taken care of and also makes more considerable monetary demands from Zvobgo, which she saves in case their relationship does not work out and he obliges. After that, Tsitsi moves into Zvobgo's house because her subsequent complaint is that she cannot remain a 'Small house'. However, although he pays for her bride price, she is not content because "[s]he had everything but that elusive certificate" (p.75). Tsitsi wanted a 'white wedding' because of the social recognition and rights that come with marriage in the church. Similarly, the blesser had his expectations, although not verbalised;

“[y]ou know very well that Zvobgo must never come home to find you wearing tracksuits and a *dhuku*” (p.48). Tsitsi had to ensure that she looked like a wife because Zvobgo had started taking her along to official events; “I’m his traditional wife. ... I can’t be running around in mini-skirts. I live in the Main House. I am not a Small House” (p.44). How society perceives her is vital for Tsitsi; thus, she goes to great lengths to look presentable for Zvobgo’s sake and because she was often confused for his daughter.

Another social effect of transactional sex relationships in Panashe’s (2016) *Sweet Medicine* is that it leaves the blessee feeling insecure. When Tsitsi moves into Zvobgo’s house, she feels insecure because of Mrs Zvobgo’s presence in the elements in the house, “...the scent of flowers in the air, as they were brought in from the garden designed by and arranged daily as per Mrs Zvobgo's original instructions” (p. 30). In addition, she feels that any changes she would bring to the décor would be inferior to Mrs Zvobgo. The blessee is still insecure; although she achieved getting the blesser to divorce his wife, become his traditional wife and move into his house; she continues to live in Mrs Zvobgo’s shadow. As a result, she begins to plot ways to make herself feel secure, such as getting pregnant and having a 'white wedding’.

The subsequent social effect of transactional sex relationships on the blessee is that she feels judged by her friend, society, her mom, the church and her conscience. Chiedza, Tsitsi’s friend, keeps telling her that they are prostitutes; “...Tsitsi, you are so quick to point out that you are not a prostitute. I just want to laugh because you are just falling into rank” (p. 73). Tsitsi knows that Chiedza is right, but it is the prostitute

title that offends her because owning up to it would signify that she has surrendered to a complete disregard for her values. Tsitsi sometimes admits and defends her profession despite her objections to Chiedza calling her a prostitute; “Why can't this be my profession, one I have chosen for myself? I tell you, prostitutes are professional in their skills and practise it like the vocation of true apostles - and why shouldn't they?” (p. 73). In defence of the profession, she compares the professionalism of prostitutes to that of the apostles. Seemingly, Tsitsi communicates that if the economic circumstances had been different, she would still do whatever job diligently.

In addition, when she was out with Zvobgo, she could sense the onlooker's judgement; “[i]t wasn't as if he did not see the looks from others. He had just never addressed them, and so she did not address them either” (p. 122). Although it was unspoken, society judged their relationship because she was as young as his daughters, and they knew Mrs Zvobgo, thus considering her a home wrecker. The judgement from society made Tsitsi uncomfortable, but since Zvobgo had been silent about it, she followed suit. Furthermore, her mother added to the brunt of her judgement when she called her a whore; “[h]ure. Said angrily and yet with a soft deliberation. Whore. Prostitute” (p. 127). It was a burdensome insult she found heavy to bear because she had pursued Zvobgo to provide for her mother and uncle. Most importantly, Tsitsi feels judged by the church because they do not recognise her traditional marriage to Zvobgo. The above causes her sleepless nights of scheming to get Zvobgo to marry her in the church.

Finally, Tsitsi's most significant achievements are getting Zvobgo's young secretary replaced with an older woman, winning back Zvobgo's affections, falling pregnant

and booking a date for the white wedding, all with the aid of the *muti* that the *n'anga* gave her. The above shows that the blessee will go to any length to keep her transactional sex relationship intact, receive social acceptance and ensure the survival of herself and those she loves.

4.2.5.3.4 The social effects of a transactional sex relationship in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

This section discusses how Fierce's transactional relationship influences her social life by discussing the side-chick culture, humiliation, financial gain, judgement, public indecency and shame.

4.2.5.3.4.1 The side-chick's humiliation in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

The side-chick suffers extensive humiliation because of the blesser. The first example of humiliation is when the side-chick gets involved in a fight with another side-chick; "In no time we're fighting and weave pulling and screaming obscenities at each other. "Leave my man alone skank!" I yell at her and she punches me" (p.123). In this example, the side-chick and the blesser go out for drinks at a bar where the blesser's other side-chick comes to greet him, leading to a fight between the two side-chicks. Ironically, Fierce yells, 'leave my man alone' but the other side-chick could easily have yelled the same. Rightfully, or legally, the wife is the only one that could have yelled that the man is hers.

In another example, the side-chick follows the blesser to a hotel because of her suspicion: "I knock harder and the door opens. Mbali! ... She's wearing a dress very similar to the one Elik gave me for my birthday" (p.125). The side-chick's arrival at the hotel confirms her suspicion as the blesser's 'other' side-chick opens the door. This encounter reveals that the blesser has brought the 'other' side-chick to the same hotel

he has been using with Fierce, and he might have bought her a similar dress as the main character. In fact, the blesser always had side-chicks long before he met Fierce.

Furthermore, in the example below, the side-chick is shamed on Facebook.

Dude! Is this you?", he points at a picture on some Facebook page called 'Expose the Whores'. Apparently, it's where wives expose their husbands' side-chicks. ...The writer of the post is asking someone called 'Fierce' to leave her husband alone. (133)

In the quote above, the side-chick is exposed on Facebook by the blesser's wife and is alerted by a fellow student, which causes her embarrassment. After years of trying to keep the side-chick away from her husband, the blesser's wife resorts to exposing her on social media.

Another example of humiliation Fierce suffers is during a confrontation with the blesser's wife; "You didn't think you were the only one, did you? ... Elik has other girlfriends?" (p.173). The quote signifies Fierce's disillusionment because she was under the impression that she was the only side-chick until the blesser's wife informed her differently.

In the last example of humiliation, the side-chick accompanies the blesser to a family wedding in Ghana; "I'm literally picked up and shoved around and pulled by the weave. ...they push me from one woman to another. ...Wait! I think I just got thrown out like rubbish!" (p.217). The blesser's family members, who had been forewarned by the wife, attack the side-chick and throw her out. Moreover, the side-chick draws public attention and is humiliated when a fight erupts between her and the blesser's wife in a hotel room; "It's hotel security! They need us to get out because of the chaos

were (sic) causing. This is humiliating. Worse because for people looking there's no question that Komla is the wife and I'm the home wrecker" (p.180). The side-chick feels humiliated because of the onlookers, who, in her opinion, have concluded that she is the homewrecker. If it was not for the side-chick's relationship with the blesser, she would not have been humiliated by the blesser's wife, family members and on social media. As much as the relationship has been financially beneficial to the side-chick, it came with its fair share of emotional and physical problems.

4.2.5.3.4.2 The blesser's apparent financial provision in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent:*

Book 1

Although the side-chick keeps trying to convince herself that she is not with the blesser because of his money, she enjoys the financial benefits of the relationship. The following example demonstrates the blesser's generosity towards the blessee:

Elik says he'll give me \$2000. At least I'll have money when I go home and my mother will be happy. So as much as I'm not with him for his money, it helps that he has it. It comes in handy. (p.61-62)

The quote above shows that the side-chick does not enjoy the US dollars she receives from the blesser alone but often sends it home to her mother in Zimbabwe. Unlike other examples in this study, the blesser often gives the side-chick money without her asking for it. In another example, the blesser accompanies her to her sister's funeral in Zimbabwe: "They went to buy the coffin and everything else that's needed. I really can't believe Elik is doing this for me and my family. That's a lot of money!" (p.111). When the side-chick's younger sister dies, the blesser offers emotional and financial support to her and the family. This example proves that it is not only her mother who

benefits from the financial provision of the blesser but the entire family. The last example is another in which the blesser gives money to the side-chick's maternal aunt; "That man is the best Fierce! Can you believe he gave me \$100!" (p.113). The example partially echoes the research finding that some women engage in transactional sex relationships to provide for their families partially because money was not the initial reason for the side-chick to get involved with the blesser.

4.2.5.3.4.3 Societal judgement in The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1

First, the side-chick experiences indirect judgement from a random stranger she meets on the plane who remarks that "she wishes the worst on those type of girls and wonders who will marry them when the married men are done playing with them. I swallow hard. That really hit a nerve" (p.50). The side-chick's conversation with the strange lady is general and not directed at her. However, the bad wishes or harsh judgment offends her because she knows she is one of the girls the lady is talking about.

In another example, the side-chick experiences verbal judgement from the blesser's sister-in-law Who says, "You know Komla told me about these little prostitutes of yours and I told her to leave you. But she wouldn't. ...She's the mother of your children and you can't bring these hoochies here" (p.60). The sister-in-law finds the side-chick at the blesser's house and labels her a prostitute and hoochie in defence of her sister. Although she receives money from her blesser, it is not in the conventional sense like a prostitute, and although she might dress up in a sexually provocative way, it is often only for the blesser.

Furthermore, when the side-chick is stranded in a torn T-shirt at a fuelling station, she feels judged by the women she meets there; “These two women looking at me with wide open eyes. I can feel them judging me and saying I deserve it. ...A good 40 minutes later” (p.77). The side-chick, while running away from the blesser’s wife, ends up at a fuelling station at night with no phone or money. The quote above explains the side-chick’s feelings and the length of time she had to wait while giving people a full view of her body.

In the last example, the side-chick and blesser have an emotional altercation in full view of the people waiting for the bus to Zimbabwe; “Please Fierce, I'll do anything. What do you want me to do? Ok I'll leave her. I'll divorce her!" Great! He had to say that out loud! Now people know I'm a home wrecker” (p.81). The loud outburst of the blesser attracts attention from waiting passengers and makes the side-chick feel self-conscious as she is afraid to be judged. In all the examples, the side-chick has only been judged directly by the blesser’s sister-in-law. However, in the other examples, the side-chick assumes that people are judging her, even if they do not say anything, perhaps because of her guilty conscience.

4.2.5.3.4.4 Public indecency The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1

This section continues to discuss the social consequences of transactional sex relationships. The blesser and side-chick are in the habit of having sex in the blesser’s car and have thus been indecent in public on several occasions. The following is the first example:

The windows are all misty but there's no mistaking the blue lights flashing next to the car. It's the police! The tapping persists and Elik fixes himself up and gets out of the car. A cop opens the door and shines the light on me. I try to cover myself with my hands as my dress is nowhere to be found. (p.59)

In the example above, the blesser and side-chick are interrupted by the police whilst having sex in the car. They have to step out of the car, and unfortunately, the side-chick is naked, to her embarrassment. Meanwhile, the blesser 'fixes himself up' and 'gets out of the car' without assisting her to be decent by finding her dress first. The blesser appears to completely disregard the blessee's dignity. Would putting on a dress not be quicker than a shirt and trousers as it is one piece of clothing? Perhaps, he got out first because he had money he could bribe the police with.

In another example, they are again interrupted by the police whilst having sex in the car, and this time "Elik opens the door before I'm done dressing and a cop literally drags me out of the car" (p.127). The side-chick then finds her jeans and puts them on without any underwear whilst the cops are waiting. They get arrested for public indecency and are thrown into a cell. However, this is not because they cannot afford to get a room but rather in the habit of having sexual intercourse whenever they feel the urge irrespective of when and where.

However, the side-chick has also been denied in public by the blesser as shown in the following example: "We're still talking when he pushes me off him so quick, I stumble ... I don't understand what's going on. He's walking away. ...He hugs and kisses a woman" (p.67). In the above scenario, the side-chick waits to board her flight

while the blesser waits for his wife to return. Does the blesser, out of respect for his wife, hide the side-chick and push her off so abruptly? A transactional sex relationship should be disgraceful for a married man, but perhaps it is not because men have multiple partners or polygamy has been condoned in some societies; conversely, the side-chick is always disgraced and not the blesser.

4.2.6 Chapter summary

This chapter, employing the critical lens of Mwangi's (2009) postcolonial theory of writing back-to-self, sought to probe the catalytic incidents that lead to the initiation of transactional sex relationships as well as the social, physical and psychological issues that emerge from these relationships. Although the selected novels explored the social, physical and psychological as overarching themes, they all presented similar or different results. *The Blessed Girl*, *Bare: #The Blesser Game* and *Sweet Medicine* all have significant catalytic incidents, whereas *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1* has none. From the catalytic incidents identified in the novels, peer pressure is evident in the first two, whilst parental encouragement is in the first, materialism in the second, and poverty and disillusionment in the third. Although the third novel is the only one that explicitly unearths poverty as a cause for transactional sex relationships, all the selected novels provide evidence that all the blessees come from a disadvantaged background and are responsible for taking care of their parents. They take care of parents who, despite knowing their daughters are unemployed, have expectations.

Firstly, depression is an emerging psychological issue in *The Blessed Girl* and *Bare: #The Blesser Game*, while inner conflict is evident in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*, *Sweet Medicine* and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*. Depression is a serious emerging

reality. The general belief among black people has been that black people do not suffer from depression. However, the evidence provided in the novels proves that it is an issue that deserves attention. Depression has surfaced in an Africa that is independent and governing itself and can thus not be attributed to the *other*. Contrary to general belief, perhaps depression has been suppressed and is now yielding its head in an outspoken and self-aware youth.

Secondly, social media is another emerging psychological issue in *The Blessed Girl, Bare: #The Blesser Game* and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*. As alluded to earlier, social media is an emerging local form of oppression. It has influenced the youth's perception of beauty, resulting in the use of skin-lightening or bleaching creams to conform to the standards upheld by social media. This perception of beauty has also resulted in the booming of the cosmetic industry because some young women either visit authentic cosmetic clinics or buy illegal backstreet products to lighten their complexion, enlarge their buttocks or tighten their vaginas. Thus, in reflecting on self, Africa has to craft ways to combat the effects of beauty standards perpetuated by social media and ensure that youths craft unique identities for themselves.

Similarly, social media has also perpetuated materialism resulting in the desire for a luxurious life. People are constantly posting pictures of new cars, new homes, expensive vacations and a life that seems to be problem-free. However, the reality is that people only post images of how they want to be perceived on social media and hardly pictures of hardships or sad moments; either way, social media is an influential reality in our societies.

Regarding the emerging physical effects, physical abuse is evident in both *Bare: #The Blessor Game* and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*, primarily in sexual violence. The two texts mentioned above reveal that women suffer sexual violence from their partners through painful sex. Violent sex is often non-consensual as the partners want to realise their fantasies or relieve their frustrations through sexual intercourse. Women often refrain from discussing sexual violence, and thus the unrefined data presented in this study is a step towards addressing what would be considered taboo in African society.

Another emerging theme under physical effects is safe sex complacency across the four novels. Firstly, in *The Blessed Girl*, *Bare: #The Blessor Game* and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*, there is a similar physical effect where the blessor and blessees do not use condoms. The lack of protection results in HIV infection for the blessee in the first novel and pregnancy for the blessees in the second and fourth novels. Painful sex is also evident in *Bare: #The Blessor Game* and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1* as similar physical effects. Safe-sex complacency is thus an emerging issue in Africa, as revealed in the selected texts. Social science researchers have investigated and substantiated the belief that transactional sex relationships advance the spread of HIV and Aids (Wamoyi et al., 2019b). Young women do not have the agency to negotiate safe sex with older partners, or they could also use their agency to make decisions to not use protection because they want the maximum benefit from the partner, especially when they request not to use protection. The question then remains how Africa can mobilise safe sex to curb the HIV infection rate and protect young women from unplanned and unwanted pregnancies.

Another pervasive sub-theme is the importance of physical appearance or body grooming in *The Blessed Girl*, *Sweet Medicine*, and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*. The most extreme examples are evident in the first novel, namely, skin, vulva and anal bleaching, and buttock implants. Loneliness is only evident in *The Blessed Girl*, *Bare: #The Blesser Game*, whilst provision for close family members is evident in *Sweet Medicine*, and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*. Furthermore, other physical issues evident in the four novels independently are lack of privacy, desperation, physical limitations and possessiveness.

The last emerging theme is social effects across the four novels. The blessees in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*, *Sweet Medicine* and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1* receive harsh judgment from society whilst the blessee from novels two and four also judge themselves because of guilt. Another subtheme is the negative effect that transactional sex relationships have on the family relations of the blessee's in *The Blessed Girl* and *Bare: #The Blesser Game*. The blessees in *The Blessed Girl* and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1* are publicly insulted by the blesser's wives in contrast to the blessee in novel two that befriends the blesser's wife. Finally, both the blessees in *Bare: #The Blesser Game* and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1* are publicly shamed and guilty of public indecency, although the blessee in novel two had not consented to it. Other social issues independently evident include Bontle's preoccupation with maintaining an image that reflects a luxurious life via social media in novel one, the expectations, insecurities and use of muti by Tsitsi in novel three.

The next chapter aims to answer the last two research objectives. Firstly, it analyses if the transactional sex relationship culture encourages the possible disintegration of

women's emancipation. Secondly, it explores the possible character behaviour transformations and the experiences that lead to such transformations in the selected literary texts.

CHAPTER FIVE

DO TRANSACTIONAL SEX RELATIONSHIPS CONTRIBUTE TO THE DISINTEGRATION OF WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION?

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter sought to examine the catalytic incidents in the selected novels that led to the initiation of transactional sex relationships. It also explored the social issues that emerge from transactional sex relationships. This chapter aims to answer the fourth and fifth research objectives by critiquing the Lipstick Feminism theory. Through a critique of Lipstick Feminism, the chapter analyses how transactional sex relationships encourage the disintegration of women's emancipation in the selected literary texts. Finally, the chapter presents character behaviour transformations and the experiences that lead to such transformations in the novels.

5.2 How do transactional sex relationships contribute to the disintegration of women's emancipation in the selected literary texts?

As alluded to in the literature review of this study, Lipstick Feminism is criticised for different issues. However, the study critiques Lipstick Feminism's reproduction of patriarchy and objectification of women's bodies through the proposition that wearing make-up and profiting from sexual appeal empowers women (Marchetti, 2020). In transactional sex relationships described in the selected novels, appearance and profiting from sex appeal are central to the study.

The study argues that Lipstick Feminism seems to have inadvertently contributed to the disintegration of women's emancipation. According to Harrold (2014), a stereotype exists that feminists are unattractive; thus, for third-wave feminists, embracing beauty and fashion is deemed a feat of empowerment. This section discusses the importance of women's appearance in the selected literary texts vis-a-vis wearing makeup and how they have used their sexual appeal to feel empowered.

5.2.1 The importance of appearance in the selected literary texts

This section discusses the importance of appearance in the selected novels in the following order; *The Blessed Girl*, *Bare: #The Blessor Game*, *Sweet Medicine* and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent*.

5.2.1.1 The importance of appearance in *The Blessed Girl*

Physical appearance is essential in Makholwa's (2018) *The Blessed Girl* because it is Bontle's livelihood. This section presents two sets of data examples about appearance in the novel; that which is unacceptable and that which is acceptable according to Bontle's standards.

The first example of unacceptable appearance is presented early in the novel when Bontle makes a bold statement about appearance: "Can you imagine how much better off this country would be if we all just took extra care in how we presented ourselves in public?" (p.6). Bontle makes this statement after detailing the length and style of her hair, which are accentuated with a Louis Vuitton scarf, wearing Bobbi Brown red matte lipstick and driving a sports car. In her view, it is disrespectful for people to present themselves shabbily to their fellow citizens. The above statement makes the reader self-conscious and puts pressure on the reader because the narrator uses

authorial intrusion. In addition, she makes it seem as if there is a correlation between the country doing well and people dressing well.

In the following example, of unacceptable appearance, Bontle describes a man walking to their table in a restaurant; "...no-name brand shoes, boring grey jersey and pants, no swag, so...walk on by, boy!" (p. 9). However, she realises when she looks up that it is her maternal aunt's husband. In the same vein, she asks, "[w]ho in the world dates a guy who drives a Polo Playa?" (p.20). Thus, dressing as described above or driving a Polo disqualifies any man from talking to or dating the blessee. The example above amplifies the importance that Bontle attaches to physical appearance.

In another example of unacceptable appearance, Bontle describes a woman who is her business partner as wearing a "German-cut hairstyle, short nails, noname brand jeans and promotional T-shirts" (p.13). In the aforementioned example, the dislike for noname brands and promotional T-shirts is reiterated whilst a German-cut hairstyle is criticised because Bontle prefers Brazillian hair. In addition, "... how did she manage to score so many deals looking the way she does?" (p.13) she questions how her partner has thrived in business. For Bontle, physical appearance has a direct correlation to success in business which is ironic because the answer to her question is inherent in her question – her partner's success has not been based on physical appearance.

Bontle associates promotional T-shirts with the apartheid era and poverty, and thus should not be worn in a free South Africa which implies her hope for an economically

thriving South Africa. The aversion to African hair could be identified as an identity crisis on the part of Bontle however, that is beyond the scope of this study.

A close look at the following example describes how Bontle considers dark-skinned women ugly; “[g]rowing up, I used to deliberately call them ugly because I just didn't understand how a girl could be dark-skinned and still be considered beautiful” (p. 19). Now that she is an adult she considers it the “era of the Yellow Bone” (p.18) which implies that for a woman to be considered beautiful, she should be of light complexion. Similar to the aversion for African hair, this aversion for dark-skinned women could also be linked to an identity crisis experienced by Bontle.

Bhana and Pattman (2011) posit that in the transactional sex relationship culture, “fashion is hotly pursued by many young people identifying with the allure of the middle class” (p. 965). In contrast to the unacceptable appearance examples discussed above, the following are a description of Bontle’s favourite clothing brands; “Louis Vuitton scarf...Bobbi Brown... the make-up brand?” (p.6), “... Gucci sneakers...” (p.21), “... Prada bag on the table...” (p.22), “... Khosi Nkosi form-fitting African print dress” (p.32), “...form-fitting black Victoria Beckham dress” (p.65), “...Versace body lotion and perfume” (p.67), “I wear Diesel jeans...” (p.77), “...Roberto Cavalli jeans, a Gucci top and cap” (p.97), “...my Miu Miu stilettos...” (p.99), “body-hugging white Karen Millen dress” (p.102) and “Hugo Boss pin-striped suit” (p.135). The significance of the aforementioned brands has been explained in chapter four of the study. Makholwa’s (2018) detailed description of worn brands emphasises the importance of what the blessed girl considers an appropriate appearance in a

transactional sex relationship. Similarly, the blessee in *The Blessed Girl* advocates going to any length such as body modification to obtain the appearance that will appeal to the blesser. These examples are evidence of the pressure placed on women to look a certain way and wear brand names. In addition, these examples reiterate what Lipstick Feminism advocates because the focus on appearance covertly promotes patriarchy and the objectification of women's bodies (Marchetti, 2020). Ironically, all of the efforts that the women apply to look good are to impress the blessers and although it seems as though their sex appeal empowers them, they are disempowered. This aspect is discussed in detail in the following section.

5.2.1.2 The importance of appearance in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*

This section continues to analyse the manner in which the transactional sex relationship culture could encourage the possible disintegration of women's emancipation through a critique of the Lipstick Feminism theory. Similar to Makholwa (2018), the importance of physical appearance in the transactional sex relationship culture is reiterated in Phamotse's (2017) novel *Bare: #The Blesser Game*. This section therefore, discusses different examples of appearance.

Upon her arrival in Johannesburg, Treasure receives informal training from her best friend who is already acquainted with the transactional sex relationship culture in Sandton. In the first example, she receives advice on what shoe and clothing brands to wear. As appearance is an important factor in transactional sex relationships, Treasure is advised to choose the following brands when buying shoes; Gucci, Miu Miu, Stuart Weitzman, Alexander McQueen, Walter Steiger, Christian Louboutin, Jimmy Choos,

Manolo Blahniks, Tom Fords and Louis Vuitton. In addition, she is taught that she “...can't wear flat shoes around good people...as she will “... seem sloppy and out of balance” just as she can also not “wear flat shoes to an exclusive dinner party” (p. 152). These examples show that there is a level of sophistication and class expected from a blessed girl.

Similarly, Treasure is advised to mention the following clothing brands when her blessee offers to buy her clothes; “Valentino, Versace, Dior, Armani, Prada, and Chanel” (p.152). Apart from being expensive, these brands create an impression about the person who wears them as they are the epitome of class. Even exercise gear is required to be of a certain brand to suit the blessee’s sophisticated life; “Nike Aeroloft vest, Lululemon running shorts and Vivo barefoot shoes” (p. 284).

By the end of the novel, Treasure is the envy of others who admire what she wears: “A twenty-inch Brazillian weave...Black New York Cap...Cartier necklace... Cartier slim watch...White Loose vest... Pink Issey Miyake classic buckle belt...Black Palesa Mokubung skinny jeans...” (p. 267). In another example, Treasure, cum blessee, is taught transactional sex relationship culture etiquette; “[y]ou should start speaking fluent English; don't mix languages too much. Your posture must be on point. Sit up straight; hands on your lap, never on the dinner table” (pp. 151-152). The examples substantiate Bhan and Pattman’s (2011) finding that many young individuals who identify with the attraction of the middle class are fervently interested in fashion and Masvawure’s (2010) finding that eating at upmarket restaurants is an important component of transactional sex relationships, thus the above lesson in table etiquette.

In addition, she is taught body hygiene in the following example; “[m]y god, we must sort out your nails; you look like you came from a coal mine. Who would want a massage or blow job from those?... You probably need to wax too (p. 151). Significantly, the above lesson is directly linked to the transactional sex relationship culture because the blessee’s nails need to be manicured to have a sex appeal when performing fellatio on her blesser. Similarly, she also needs to wax her private parts when she is engaged sexually with her blesser. The lessons and advice from the blessee’s best friend are followed by a visit to the salon to do her hair because she looks like a “porcupine in those braids (160)” which are the normal braids that are not up to standard. These braids are replaced with a 22-inch Brazilian weave at the salon and a manicure and pedicure.

In summary, the examples above reiterate the importance of physical appearance in the transactional sex relationship culture. The same importance attached to appearance creates pressure for the women in these relationships to dress in a specific manner.

5.2.1.3 The importance of appearance in *Sweet Medicine*

A surprising finding is that Chigumadzi’s (2016) *Sweet Medicine* does not delve into the details of appearance concerning the transactional sex relationship culture as is evident in the aforementioned two novels. Appearance is thus not described in detail except for when the side-chick or Small House decides to seduce the blesser “[s]he had her twelve-inch weave brushed out in full display and wore a tight-fitting dress” (p.67). In addition, she dresses in her usual traditional attire when she becomes the blesser’s wife because “[p]eople need to see me as a respectable wife to Zvobgo. I’m tired of being confused for that daughter of his!” (p.44). Tsisti tries to look like a

respectable wife through her traditional attire instead of her usual youthful look that often has her confused with Zvobgo's daughters, that are her age-mates.

5.2.1.4 The importance of appearance in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent*

Similar to Chigumadzi (2016), Maphosa (2019) does not detail the appearance culture of transactional sex relationships. However, she provides a few examples, listed below, that establish the importance of appearance: "Elik bought these red bottoms overseas!" (p.41), "I have a weakness for H&M, I always feel the need to buy something there" (p.55), "... I get a nice dress at YDE..." (p.55), "I have lots of Victoria's Secret lingerie, red bottom heels, genuine Louis Vuitton bags..." (p.70) and "I can't believe I'm waking up in another woman's Egyptian cotton" (p.71). These examples allude to popular and expensive brands such as Louboutin (the red bottoms), H&M (Hennes & Mauritz), YDE (Young Designers Emporium), Victoria's Secret lingerie and Egyptian cotton bedding. This allusion to popular brands supports the argument that blessees love expensive brands more than the general public because they need to wear expensive brands to make a statement or send a message. Although the novel is not as detailed as *The Blessed Girl* and *Bare: #The Blesser Game* the importance of appearance is still significant.

5.2.2 Sex appeal as empowerment in the selected literary texts?

The objective of this chapter is to analyse the manner the transactional sex relationship culture may encourage the possible disintegration of women's emancipation. This section critiques the second part of Lipstick Feminism that posits that profiting from their sexual appeal makes women feel empowered (Marchetti, 2020) in the selected

literary texts in the following order; *The Blessed Girl*, *Bare: #The Blesser Game*, *Sweet Medicine* and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent*.

5.2.2.1 Sex appeal as empowerment in *The Blessed Girl*?

The significance of physical appearance in transactional sex relationships described in the section above cannot be detached from how the women in the selected novels use sex appeal to their benefit. The blessee in Makholwa's (2018) novel uses her sex appeal to feel empowered. In the first example the narrator makes a sarcastic comment about plastic surgery; "What do you mean it's un-African to use plastic surgery? Excuse me, is that Shaka Zulu I hear calling you?" (p. 49). The comment is remarkable because she insinuates that the reader's paradigm is as ancient as Shaka Zulu. She also implies that despite popular beliefs that Africans do not use plastic surgery, they do, like the rest of the world. Although this may be true for some it cannot be generalised to all Africans.

In another example that relates to sex appeal, the blessee explains the procedures she asked her surgeon to perform on her; "I asked my surgeon to do fillers on my skin and I also did some skin bleaching so that my complexion can be as luminous as possible" (p.61). In an attempt to continue looking youthful, the blessee has fillers done on her skin and she also bleaches her skin as she believes her blesser like her yellow skin tone and that we live in the era of the yellow bone. Then, when she finally goes to the clinic she has additional work done on her body; "When I was at the clinic, I decided to do some anal bleaching just to make sure my lady parts are in porn-star condition" (p.62). Apart from having her face bleached to be a lighter complexion, she also has her anal bleached for the same reason. This means that the blessee is well acquainted

with pornography and thus wants to also present her private parts in ‘porn-star condition’ to her blessers.

In addition, the following example is evidence that although the blessee has work done on one body part she always adds another. “... I need more skin bleaching. The yellower the better, is what I always say. And I haven't taken care of my lady parts in a while, so I will need anal and vulva bleaching as well ...I think I need to also invest in Kegel balls....” (p.98). Kegel balls are exercise balls that are used to strengthen the pelvic floor and vaginal muscles and thus give the vagina a tight feeling. The above intrapersonal communication of the blessee underscores the constant need for her to maintain and adjust her body because she believes this will satisfy her blessers. She starts with only wanting to bleach her skin, then she adds bleaching her anal area and finally bleaching her vagina.

In the last example, although she only had a buttock implant surgery, the blessee describes the impact of her weight loss on her body; “Since I lost that weight my butt looks extra big and luscious (p.111). She uses her body image to her advantage and sends her blessers pictures in a bikini so that they may be enticed by the way she looks.

5.2.2.2 Sex appeal as empowerment in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*?

Treasure in *Bare: #The Blesser Game* employs sex appeal as a tool to empower herself. Apart from receiving advice on how to dress she also receives advice regarding sexual relations in Johannesburg; “I hope you're well oiled about sex styles. People here don't just have sex with their partners. It's more for pleasure and entertainment than anything else” (p. 143). When Treasure’s best friend Lintle told her the above, she had just

arrived and was naïve. However, after months of dating Tim, whom at the time she regarded as a boyfriend; "...it dawned on Treasure that sex was the real key" (p. 177) and henceforth she became the blessee.

Other examples explain the blesser's fascination with the blessee's body and how she uses this fascination to her advantage; "He was entranced with her body and her small waist, with her nipples standing at attention" (p. 182). This example explains the blesser's reaction to the blessee's body during their first sexual encounter. Then in the same example "[h]er body glowed with sweat" (p. 183). Thus, the blesser told her "[y]ou're mouth-watering, Treasure" (p. 239) and this elevated her agency to use her sex appeal to her advantage.

Although the sex was rough, painful and even toxic sometimes, Treasure agreed to play out her blesser's fantasies. At times, "She wasn't sure what to do...[s]he squeezed her eyes shut and did her best to please him... ..use your tongue, that's my girl. Keep going...she almost gagged but forced herself to keep going" (p. 182); "She climbed rather awkwardly on top of him... although he was slightly big for her and it hurt" (p. 183). All of the aforementioned examples describe the blessee's discomfort and pain during her sexual exploits with the blesser and how she persevered because she could not imagine a life without the luxuries she was privileged to enjoy because of her transactional sex relationship.

5.2.2.3 Sex appeal as empowerment in *Sweet Medicine*?

Similarly, Tsitsi in Chigumadzi's (2016) novel uses her sex appeal to empower herself (Marchetti, 2020) during the harsh economic climate in Zimbabwe. This section thus discusses several examples of how the side-chick or Small House uses her sexuality to ensure that she and her family are taken care of. The first example describes the Small House and blesser's first encounter when she decides to seduce him, "...her eyes were asking him a question. A sexual one. Then his eyes seemed to question hers in an apologetic, ... as if he could not believe that she wanted him" (p. 100). In the same scene, "[a]lmost robotically, she took her hand and cupped his balls. She pushed open the bathroom door and led him into a stall. There she unfastened his belt, and knelt on the floor" (p. 100). The scene described above is when Tsitsi acts on her resolution to seduce the blesser before she became the Small House.

Another example describes the Small House's discomfort while she is intimate with the blesser, "...as she trembled and swallowed the knobkerrie, she disconnected herself, reminding herself that she needed to eat and, with time and Chiedza's encouragement, she learnt to engross herself wholly in the act" (p. 31). The latter quote describes the Small House performing fellatio on the blesser, described as 'swallowing a knobkerrie' which is a short stick with a knob at the top. Despite her discomfort, she reminds herself that she needs to eat and thus with time becomes acquainted with the act.

Furthermore, when Tsitsi becomes the main house, she struggles to keep her husband (former blesser) enticed sexually. She tries various means to seduce him like wearing his favourite perfume, showing her cleavage and even alluding to her exercise routine

“[w]hen I returned from my jog this morning... she mentioned the jog as a reminder that she was working to maintain her figure, a roundabout way of hinting at a body fit to be fucked that night... (p .59) but her husband remained disinterested. Similarly, she desired for her husband to look at her lustfully as she pranced in front of him “she turned around, thrusting her buttocks in his direction so that he could not help but see her soft, round cheeks, the ones he had loved to grab, knead, pound and even slap” (p. 163) but he remained disinterested. This could mean that the blesser is only enticed by the Small House as long as she remains as such because she represents adventure, fantasies and the unattainable whilst a wife represents the opposite; timidity and accessibility.

5.2.2.4 Sex appeal as empowerment in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent?*

The blesser and side-chick’s relationship described in Maphosa’s (2019) novel starts in the conventional ‘boy-meets-girl’ fashion until she discovers he got married behind her back and the relationship soon becomes a transactional sex relationship in which she ends up being the side-chick.

In the first example, the side-chick has sexual intercourse with the blesser soon after finding out that he got married. This sets the trend in their relationship because they never discuss issues but resort to having sex; “Next thing he locked the door and I was on his desk with my legs flapping in the air (p. 19). Despite the knowledge that the blesser got married, remaining the side-chick and the fact that they have continued to have sexual intercourse, could be what gives her a sense of empowerment. In another example, the side-chick acknowledges that she sleeps with her blesser for money:

I asked Elik to 'borrow' me a R1000 and he gave me R2500. I deserve it! I really need to stop telling myself this, I'm now one of those girls sleeping with married men and asking them for money, the girls I despise and call names. I'm one of them now. (p. 34)

It is evident from the example above that Fierce would have preferred not to be identified as a side-chick but she uses her situation to her advantage. The last examples are examples of the true nature of transactional sex relationships in which there is an exchange of sexual intercourse for money; "I'm bringing my porn-star game to the bedroom" (p. 95) and "[h]e gives me R5000 since I have no working bank account. He says he'll send me more when I reactivate my account" (p. 96). As evident in the example, the side-chick is very industrious about the sexual intercourse she has with the blesser. This could make the side-chick feel empowered as she is using her sex appeal to make money but similarly the blesser could also feel empowered that he can get sexual intercourse in exchange for his money.

This line of thought is buttressed by Chardon (2013) who posits that beauty practices that include grooming of private parts and plastic surgery have commercialized the pursuit of a perfect body. Plastic surgery and private part grooming are both aspects that have been explored in the study and the researcher opines that although Lipstick Feminism does not explicitly advocate for the aforementioned, its focus on make-up and women using their appeal has contributed to the commodification of transactional sex and thus the disintegration of women's empowerment.

Chardon (2013) further adds that the empowerment of women through sexual freedom is emphasised by popular culture and the media and this according to the researcher has succeeded to achieve the goals of Lipstick Feminism. The study found that social media is an important aspect of the life of the blessee – constant social media updates of designer brand outfits, expensive make-up, skin bleaching posts and covert marketing of sex.

Similarly, Gurrieri and Drenten (2019) corroborate the aforementioned when they state that postfeminism argues that the goals of feminism have been achieved, thus the focus should not be on feminist tenets of the past but rather on the vitality of individual empowerment, sexual agency and freedom. According to the researcher, Lipstick Feminists can counter that all the aspects; of individual empowerment, sexual agency and freedom are present in a transactional sex relationship. However, critical questions to this study arise. The first question is to what extent *individual empowerment* is empowerment if women depend on the men they have sexual intercourse with. Secondly, how is it *sexual agency* when women in transactional sex relationships often fulfil the extraordinary fantasies of men which they ordinarily would not have done, and they do not contribute to decisions about the use of protection. Finally, to what extent do women in transactional sex relationships enjoy their *freedom* when the blesser, according to the evidence in this study, is often controlling and alienating the blessee from friends and family? This implies that the discourse of empowerment disempowers women. Transactional sex relationships create the impression that women are free to do as they please with their bodies and free to live their lives the way they desire, however, the evidence states the contrary. Women in transactional

sex relationships end up being financially provided for but lack control in other areas of their lives (Gawas et al., 2022).

5.3 Character behaviour transformations in the selected literary texts

The last objective of the study is to explore the possible character behaviour transformations and the experiences that lead to such transformations, thus the purpose of this section is to gauge and discuss any blessee character behaviour transformations by the end of the selected four literary texts. The researcher hypothesised that perhaps the blessee experience would bring a paradigm shift to abandon risky sexual behaviour. Therefore, this section discusses the character behaviour transformations in the selected texts.

5.3.1 Character behaviour transformation in *The Blessed Girl*

In Makholwa's (2018) *The Blessed Girl*, the first example does not portray the blessed girl as having any behaviour transformation; "Everything that I found pleasurable about this life has been taken away from me. So, in a few days, I'll be ending it all. I'm still contemplating my limited exit options (I'm a paraplegic, remember?)" (p.275). According to the blessee, she lost *everything* in which she found pleasure; the blessed life of money, luxury cars, designer clothes, expensive cuisine and drugs. She blames this loss on her paraplegia for which she has decided to commit suicide. This implies that if she was not paraplegic, she would have continued to live as a blessee.

As a result of the lack of any behaviour transformation, the next example elucidates the blessee's efforts to reconnect with her blessers; "I called and sent him a few texts. At first he would respond to the texts, but in time, even his distant responses faded"

(p.276). This is evidence that she was hopeful and would have continued to live the blessed life if she was given an option. However, she soon discovers that “[t]he life of the blessed has no room for inconveniences like diseases and disabilities” (p.276) and thus comprehends why her blessers have not engaged her after the accident.

Subsequently, there is a change in Bontle’s tone as she apportions blame on the reader for having lived her life the way she did. “You are part of the reason that girls like me exist” (p.276):

Am I bitter? Of course, I am. I wonder why nobody ever tried to stop me, counsel me, guide me towards a better life. Instead, what I got were hundreds of thousands of Instagram followers. Many likes on social media, and girls telling me I was ‘Master’ of the game. They looked up to me for being a prostitute. I was called smart, savvy. Nobody ever questioned why I lived a luxurious lifestyle even though I had no job and no education. ... You are part of the society that worships money over all else. You click a thousand likes when you see a beautiful girl with no other talent than a beautiful backside, but you don’t do the same for the ordinary girl who is trying to make the best of her life through honest means. You glorify the things that mean nothing. Money, possessions and designer labels. Whatever you do after hearing my story, just do me one favour: look in the mirror. Ask yourself if you can consciously say you are not part of the problem.

In the above example, Makholwa (2018) writes back to self when Bontle through the use of allusion addresses the society we live in by requesting that we look in the mirror. In conclusion, the findings of this study are reiterated in the above quote; the role of social media and how social media acceptance has affected the lives of young women, whether women engaging in transactional sex can be considered agents or prostitutes, society's covert encouragement of materialism and the commodification of sex. Although there is no behaviour change, the above realisation of the blessee could be considered a paradigm change despite her choice to commit suicide because she feels useless as a paraplegic.

5.3.2 Character behaviour transformation in *Bare: #The Blessor Game*

The present study only focused on *Bare: #The Blessor Game*. However, without delving into the details of the sequel to this novel; *Bare: #The Blessor Game: The Cradle of The Hockey Club*, there is no behaviour change in Treasure by the end of *Bare: #The Blessor Game* despite being publicly shamed by the blesser.

In one of the most significant examples, Treasure finds Tim, her blesser, engaging in sexual intercourse in his car, with Paul, her friend's boyfriend. This results in a confrontation between the blessee and an indifferent blesser. Consequently, the blesser steps out of the car and the blessee gets in and also has sexual intercourse with Paul. This could be considered behaviour change as this is the first time the blessee has slept with another man in full view of her blesser. However, this could also be attributed to the devastation she feels because of the discovered betrayal by her blesser.

Furthermore, an enraged blesser throws her out of the car and leaves her naked, flushed and embarrassed on the pavement as described in the following quote:

What had been painted as an empress and star, had fallen. What was once whole was now shattered!

Her innocence stolen by the city,

Her heart lost to unavailable men,

Her love given to money,

Her truth stolen by greed,

Her life wasted in hope,

Her dreams eroded by illusions,

Her passion in the hands of those with false power,

Her inner voice silenced by the world's perceptions,

Her sweet tooth sinking in the luxuries of a rotten society,

Her faith in God misplaced by fear! (p.293)

In the quote above, Treasure is consumed with inner conflict about her stolen innocence because she gave up her dream of modelling when she fell in love with a man that was emotionally detached. This man woke her love for money and the finer things in life which in the end proved not to be pleasurable because they came with the loss of hope, passion and faith at an unaffordable price.

Finally, after the public shame she experienced, Treasure in Phamotse's (2019) sequel *Bare: #The Blesser Game: The Cradle of the Hockey Club*, desires to see Tim who has been avoiding her because she has resolved that; "[s]he needed him to let her go. She knew she couldn't just walk out. Tim was not the type of man you easily escape... he was a brutal man..." (p. 187). However, when she finally sees Tim after three months,

he tells her that she is part of a secret society and cannot leave him. This shows that although Treasure might have wanted to change her behaviour regarding transactional sex relationships, she was now forced by the controlling nature of her blesser and the secret society she found herself in, to continue with the same lifestyle.

5.3.3 Character behaviour transformation in *Sweet Medicine*

The Small House or side-chick in Chigumadzi's (2016) becomes the Main House through devious and calculated means. Thus, a transactional sex relationship with her then, married boss, was not her first option for survival in a tough economy but she seemed to be left with no other choice.

When Tsitsi's new position is threatened by her husband's lack of sexual interest and her failure to fall pregnant – she consults a *n'anga* who gives her *muti* to solve her problems which she carries in a pouch in her handbag. Therefore, there is no behaviour transformation in Tsitsi because she seeks solutions to retain her source of income, her 'Minister of Finance' – her septuagenarian husband. The first example shows that Tsitsi, with the use of her *muti*, succeeds to get her husband's younger secretary replaced with an older secretary. Thus, when "Tsitsi places her hand on the small of Zvobgo's back...restraining herself from showing too much visible pleasure at Tabitha's replacement" (p.187), this means that everything Tsitsi does is strategic, with an end goal in mind.

In the last example, Tsitsi succeeds to convince her husband to fulfil her desire for a white wedding in a church, "Fata, we have come to find out about dates for a wedding this year?" (p.188) and "[s]he grips the pouch in her handbag. As if willed by her

action, Zvobgo looks at her” (p.188). This is an achievement for Tsitsi as her husband was content with the traditional wedding and had no plans to marry in the church. There is thus no behaviour transformation in the Tsitsi, except the ones that serve as a means to an end.

5.3.4 Character behaviour transformation in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1*

Although Maphosa’s (2019) novel *The y in yOUR Man is Silent* has a sequel, the focus of the current study was on Book 1. Fierce is unwillingly forced to become a side-chick when her blesser gets married in secret. She thus never started the relationship based on her blesser’s material possessions but when she discovered this truth, the relationship had progressed. By the end of the novel, there is no character behaviour change as the side-chick agrees to marry the blesser and is also pregnant for him, “[t]hank you for agreeing to be my wife, for carrying my child” (p.388). The researcher concurs with Wamoyi et al. (2011) that there is a need for further enquiry on women knowing the limits between “knowing their worth, being proud of it, and exploiting it” (p. 12) although women seem to be aware of their worth and continue to use their bodies for material benefits.

5.4 Chapter summary

The purpose of this chapter was to respond to objectives four and five. Firstly, the chapter analysed the manner in which the transactional sex relationship culture could encourage the possible disintegration of women’s emancipation, and finally explored the possible character behaviour transformations and the experiences that led to such transformations.

This chapter summarised the representation of the importance of appearance such as wearing specific brand names in the selected literary texts. Each text significantly highlighted appearance except for *Sweet Medicine*. Lipstick Feminism is criticised for strengthening patriarchy and objectifying women's bodies, and using this as a basis, this study examined the proposition that wearing make-up and profiting from their sexual appeal makes women feel empowered. The assumption is that women feel more confident wearing make-up and stilettos. However, women who wear make-up, and stilettos and dress beautifully even if it is not brand names as well as women who do not can both feel empowered. Thus, outside elements like make-up do not have to be a determinant in whether a woman feels empowered or not. Make-up is thus not a determinant of women's empowerment unless used specifically for a purpose like in the selected novels where women have used their appearance in the form of make-up and designer clothes to attract a specific class of men; the blesser.

Furthermore, appearance in this study referred to a particular style of dressing and wearing designer brands. Women in the selected novels, sometimes with the help of others, change their style of dressing to attract specific men (blessers) they want. This agency could be considered as women empowering themselves to obtain material goods and money from men. The women use the money they receive from the men for the upkeep of their luxurious lives and the relationship which thus becomes a cycle. However, the blessers in the selected novels are also in positions of power because they have what the women want; money. Thus they are not at any loss as they also benefit from the relationship because the women materialize all their fantasies.

The blessees in the selected novels have all used their sex appeal to their advantage in one or more of the following ways; becoming a blessee, plastic surgery, skin, anal and vaginal bleaching, buttock enlargement, porn-star techniques, perfume, cleavage and physical exercise. The blessees used the aforementioned to maintain their transactional sex relationships in which they received money from the blessers.

This chapter also sought to gauge whether the blessees had any remorse when they assessed their life choices and how their choices impacted them and others. The findings show that even though there has been a paradigm shift in Bontle of *The Blessed Girl* and *Bare: #The Blesser Game*, there have not been noteworthy character behaviour transformations. The next chapter makes conclusions and recommendations for the present study.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The goal of this research was to look into transactional sex relationships in fiction and assess how they could contribute to the disintegration of women's emancipation through the blesser and blessee culture in fiction. The study was significant as it explored to what extent some contemporary fiction writers in Africa have succeeded in breaking the barriers of sexual taboos in writing about transactional sex relationships. This chapter revisits the objectives of the study, presents the restatement of the findings in the context of the research objectives, revisits the title of the study, presents the contribution to new knowledge, and makes relevant recommendations, before discussing the way forward and summarising the chapter.

6.2 Restatement of the study objectives

The study sought to address the following objectives, namely:

1. Examine how the selected novels innovatively employ literary devices and aesthetics for the representation of transactional sex relationships, colloquially known as the blesser, blessees, sugar daddies, sugar babies and side-chicks phenomenon;
2. Examine the catalytic incidents in the selected novels that lead to the initiation of transactional sex relationships;
3. Explore the social issues that emerge due to the existence of transactional sex relationships;
4. Analyse the manner the transactional sex relationship culture may encourage the possible

disintegration of women's emancipation; and

5. Explore the possible character behaviour transformations and the experiences that lead to such transformations.

6.3 Conclusion of findings in the context of research objectives

This section presents a summary and conclusion of the aforementioned research objectives, respectively and aims to help the reader understand how a fiction-focused analysis of transactional sex helps us understand the phenomenon in unique ways. Scholars agree that literature is a reflection of society because they are interrelated (Keerthika, 2018; Ogundokun, 2013). Ogundokun (2013) posits that literature creates a platform for socio-political, cultural and economic issues to be discussed because it is a "source of dialogue, debate, exchange and innovation"(p.120). He further states that the most basic function of literature in Africa is to expose different ordeals in society with the aim of sensitizing the African people about the challenges they encounter. Odinye (2015) concurs when he states that literature tasks the reader to judge whether something is right or wrong and thus the reader is presented with issues of morality in the texts. He adds that African writers have written to guide positive behaviour in society. Butale's (2015) study asserts that there is growing consensus that qualitative approaches can complement the data collected through quantitative analysis because literature provides an opportunity for multiple voices to articulate their experiences.

6.3.1 The literary and aesthetic representation of transactional sex relationships [Objective one]

The first objective of the study aimed to examine how the selected novels innovatively employ literary devices and aesthetics for the representation of transactional sex relationships, colloquially known as the blessers, blessees, sugar daddies, sugar babies and side-chicks phenomenon.

The selected novels employed the following literary devices: allusion, authorial intrusion, colloquialism, code-switching, hyperbole, idioms, imagery, rhetorical questions, repetition, similes, metaphors, and sarcasm to describe transactional sex relationships and its related issues. Makholwa (2018) employs all of the aforementioned literary devices except for euphemisms which all the other three writers employ. She is also the only writer who creatively employs authorial intrusion to allow the narrator to directly address the reader. In addition, Makholwa (2018) is also the only writer who employs colloquialism as a literary device to establish the setting and tone and creates a personality for the narrator. She also uses repetition whilst Phamotse (2017) is the only writer that employs hyperbole and metaphors. All the selected novels employ imagery, specifically visual imagery, idioms similes and allusion to vividly describe the transactional sex relationships and culture, except Chigumadzi (2016). Although they do not all employ the same literary devices, the selected novels aesthetically use language to describe transactional sex relationships vividly.

The extent to which these contemporary African writers employ different literary devices to vividly describe transactional sex relationships shows that they have broken sexual taboos. The topics, like sexual intercourse that have long been taboo in African homes, are now recorded and accessible throughout contemporary African narratives whose aim is not to deviate from what others would consider a culture but rather aims to help Africans to self-reflect on new postcolonial issues, without shifting blame to the West. Instead of writing in their vernaculars, which would have restricted their audience, perhaps these writers have opted to write in English to reach a broader audience beyond the writers' borders.

6.3.2 The causes of transactional sex relationships in the selected literary texts [Objective two]

The second objective aimed to examine the catalytic incidents that lead to the initiation of transactional sex relationships in the selected novels through the critical lens of the postcolonial theory. These catalytic incidents were discussed as causes of transactional sex relationships to align with the literature review findings.

Studies discussed in the literature review mention the following key issues as causes of transactional sex relationships: agency, consumerism, modernity, poverty, parental influence or encouragement, peer pressure, gendered norms, higher grades and job security and these same issues are evident in this study. Firstly, women have agency which they exploit to get access to power and money to meet their modern needs, thus women are not helpless victims. However, even though women believe they are utilizing their agency to their advantage, they instead reinforce patriarchal structures

even though at times women also employ the same agency to avoid reciprocating with sex. In addition, modernity and consumerism play a role in the emergence of transactional sex relationships because media images frequently create awareness in young women of their modern needs, which are often linked to living a youthful lifestyle of alcohol consumption, technology use, and keeping up with fashion trends. Furthermore, poverty is noted as a major factor in the commencement of transactional sex relationships which are frequently condoned and allowed by parents because the young women involved contribute to the family's financial well-being. Moreover, peer pressure was noted as a major factor in transactional sex relationships because young women are under pressure to obtain fashionable items that are associated with modernity and consumerism. In addition, because it is a culturally accepted practice, the gendered assumption of men being the providers leads to young women engaging in transactional sex relationships. Finally, students participate in transactional sex relationships at universities for a variety of reasons, including higher grades and employment security.

6.3.3 The emerging issues of transactional sex relationships in the selected literary texts [Objective three]

The exploration of the social issues that emerge due to the existence of transactional sex relationships was the aim of the third objective. The issues that emerged in the selected novels were categorised and discussed under three themes: psychological, physical and social.

The data revealed the following emerging psychological issues as a result of transactional sex relationships, in the selected novels. Makholwa (2018) presents depression, whilst Phamotse (2017) reveals blesser control, blesser threats, inner conflict, abuse, trauma and depression. They both reveal the extent to which transactional sex relationships contribute to depression. Chigumadzi (2016), Phamotse (2017) and Maphosa (2019) all present inner conflict as an emerging psychological issue. In addition, Maphosa (2019) unearths emotional attachment, heartbreak, betrayal, disillusionment and harassment as emerging psychological issues.

The following emerging physical issues as a result of transactional sex relationships were revealed, in the selected novels. Concerning the theme of physical issues, the blessee in *The Blessed Girl* feels nauseated when she has no money, tests positive for HIV because she stopped using protection with one of her blessers, experiences painful sexual intercourse, enlarges her buttocks and has skin, vaginal and anal bleaching. Furthermore, physical issues for the blessee in *Bare: #The Blesser Game* include experiencing painful sex, a lack of privacy, physical neglect and isolation, the blesser refusing to use protection, and the blesser taking her for an abortion she did not consent for. The blessee in *Sweet Medicine* learns new sexual techniques, upgrades her appearance, makes material demands, experiences sexual deprivation and uses *muti* to entice the blesser again whilst the blessee in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1* upgrades her appearance, experiences relational limitations, painful sexual intercourse and abuse. All the blessees in *The Blessed Girl*, *Bare: #The Blesser Game* and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1* experience painful sexual intercourse whereas Tsitsi in *Sweet Medicine* is deprived of sexual intercourse. Both the blessees in *Sweet Medicine* and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1* upgrade their appearance. The data

also reveals the blessees' lack of agency about decisions of using protection during intercourse in *The Blessed Girl* and *Bare: #The Blesser Game*.

The data revealed the following emerging social issues as a result of transactional sex relationships, in the selected novels. The data unearthed the following issues collectively from the selected novels: isolation, social media influence, castigation, blaming society, forced public indecency, voluntary public indecency, societal judgement, public shame and insecurity. The blessees in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*, *Sweet Medicine* and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1* experience judgement and castigation from society because of their transactional sex relationships. Both the blessees in *Bare: #The Blesser Game* and *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1* experience public shame whilst both also experience public indecency, although for the one it is forced and for the other it is voluntary. The results yielded by the study are a benefit of a qualitative study because although fictional, it mirrors what happens in society.

6.3.4 The disintegration of women's emancipation through the blesser/blessee culture [Objective four]

The penultimate research objective aimed to analyse how the transactional sex relationship culture or blesser/blessee culture may encourage the possible disintegration of women's emancipation. This objective was analysed through the critique of the Lipstick Feminism theory.

The analysis explored two characteristics that are assumed to contribute to the disintegration of women's emancipation: firstly, the importance of appearance and secondly, sex appeal as empowerment in the selected four novels. The representation of the importance of appearance, such as wearing certain brand names was discussed in the selected four novels, except for *Sweet Medicine*. Lipstick Feminism proposes that wearing make-up makes women feel empowered. The assumption is that wearing make-up and stilettos gives women more confidence. However, women who wear make-up, stilettos, and attractive clothing, even if it is not a brand name, can also feel empowered just as much as women who do not. As a result, external factors such as make-up do not have to be a determining factor in whether or not a woman feels empowered. Make-up is thus not a determinant of women's empowerment unless it is utilised for a specific goal, such as in the selected novels where women use their appearance in the form of make-up and luxury clothes to attract a specific kind of man: the blesser.

The second characteristic that is assumed to contribute to transactional sex relationships is sex appeal as empowerment. Firstly, Bontle in Makholwa's (2018) novel is very industrious and deliberate with her sex appeal. She has had plastic surgery to enlarge her buttocks, and skin, anal and vaginal bleaching all to improve her sex appeal. However, the blesser in Phamotse's (2017) novel is fascinated with the blessee's body and although she has been advised to be knowledgeable of different sex styles, there is not much effort on her part to keep her blesser enticed. In addition, although the sexual intercourse is painful she perseveres because she wants to maintain her lifestyle. Thirdly, Tsitsi in Chigumadzi's (2016) novel resolves to seduce her blesser as a means of survival because of the unfavourable economic conditions in

Zimbabwe and she also perseveres despite her discomfort. However, after she becomes the main house (wife) she struggles to keep the blesser sexually enticed and thus resorts to using *muti* and thus maintaining her sexual power. Finally, the blessee in Maphosa's (2019) novel employs her sex appeal by becoming the side-chick when she discovers that the blesser married someone else. She also acknowledges the transactional nature of their relationship to herself and how she needs to remain sexually shrewd to keep the blesser enticed.

Plastic surgery and private part grooming were explored in the study and the researcher opines that although Lipstick Feminism does not explicitly advocate for the aforementioned, its focus on make-up and women using their sex appeal as empowerment has contributed to the commodification of transactional sex and thus, the disintegration of women's empowerment.

In Chinua Achebe's words, *the novelists are teachers* and have through their productions taught us different lessons. Firstly, women are at liberty to do as they please with their bodies. Women can bleach their skin or private parts and enlarge their buttocks. However, this freedom is accompanied by negative consequences for which women must take accountability in a postcolonial Africa. In addition, women need to self-introspect their desire to be lighter, have a smaller waist or have a bigger behind. The culture of consumerism advanced in the blessee/blesser culture promotes individualism instead of collectivism. The onus is on women to make decisions for the collective good or just themselves. Perhaps the question should be how decisions made today impact other women and possibly future daughters because childhood trauma resurfaces in our adult lives and its brunt is felt by those close to us.

6.3.5 Character behaviour transformations in the selected literary texts [Objective five]

The final research objective aimed to explore the possible character behaviour transformations and the experiences that lead to such transformations in the selected novels. In *The Blessed Girl*, there is no behaviour change however, Bontle experiences a paradigm shift regarding her blessed life and society's contribution. According to Bontle, she lost everything she finds pleasure in and thus contemplates suicide. This implies that despite meditating on the negative consequences of the blessed life she had lived and if she had not lost everything and if she was not paraplegic, she would have continued to live as a blessee. This is elucidated by the efforts the blessee makes to reconnect with her blessers after the accident but soon realises that the blessed life will not accommodate disabilities.

Similarly, Treasure in *Bare: #The Blesser Game*, out of spite sleeps with her friend's boyfriend who is also a mutual friend of her and Tim. The blesser's behaviour seems reckless but could also be attributed to the betrayal she feels upon her discovery. Treasure contemplates leaving her blesser for months because there has been no contact. However, when she finally sees him, he tells her that she is part of a secret society and cannot leave him and is thus forced by the controlling nature of her blesser and the secret society to continue with the same lifestyle.

Tsitsi who grew up a staunch catholic is forced by economic circumstances to act outside of her moral values; she has a transactional sex relationship; breaks up a marriage; visits a *n'anga* and uses *muti* to get the blesser to, ironically, marry her in the church. There is also no behaviour transformation in Tsitsi in *Sweet Medicine*,

except for the ones that serve as a means to an end for her; having the blesser's baby and a white wedding. She is not remorseful about her actions and continues in her endeavours to secure her future.

Fierce in *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1* comes from a traditional home where she for example could not bring a boyfriend. Her family is under the impression that she is a virgin but she takes her blesser to her family home under the guise of him being a friend. Similarly, she is set against getting married but later contemplates settling for the second wife position and is finally content with the blesser divorcing his wife. Thus, by the end of *The y in yOUR Man is Silent: Book 1* there is no character behaviour change as the side-chick agrees to marry the blesser and is also pregnant for him.

This question was designed to examine if the blessees had any regrets about their life choices and how these had affected them and others. The findings demonstrate that, despite a paradigm shift in the primary characters of *The Blessed Girl* and *Bare: #The Blesser Game*, there were no significant changes in the characters' behaviour.

6.4 Revisiting the title of the study

The overarching aim of the study was to interrogate how transactional sex relationships may contribute to the disintegration of women's emancipation through the blesser/blessee culture in selected African novels. In the literature review, the study attributes the economic situation of women as the major contributing factor to the disintegration of women's emancipation. However, the study reveals several issues that contribute to the disintegration of women's emancipation:

Firstly, the importance that has been attached to appearance by women who engage in transactional sex relationships, through prioritising the wearing of make-up, brand names, skin lightening and buttock enlargement procedures contribute to the disintegration of women's emancipation. Scholarly studies that found that gadgets like cell phones, fashionable hairstyles and clothes, pedicures and manicures were used to achieve flashiness substantiate the above (Kamndaya et al., 2016; Masvawure, 2010). Additionally, consumerism is also a direct motivation for young people to engage in transactional sex (Kamndaya et al., 2016). These women's agency to choose the products they want to apply to their bodies or the complexion they want could be seen as liberatory. Similarly, these women's agency to choose their buttock size could also be considered as emancipatory. However, when these decisions lead to health problems, attacking dark-skinned women and performing different, dangerous sexual activities to get access to money- from men, to enable them to wear the brands they want then women's emancipation has disintegrated. Women's financial dependence on men in exchange for sexual intercourse worsens the disintegration of women's emancipation because they promote patriarchy.

In addition, African beauty standards are undermined by the preconceived ideas of beauty popularised on social media which means that women with natural hair and darker skin are considered ugly. Gurrieri and Drenten (2019) argue that women have been conditioned by the beauty industry to focus, work on and change their appearance to achieve a dominant feminine ideal which results in an unhealthy obsession with body image. Women who engage in transactional sex relationships consider beauty as light in complexion, Brazilian hair, wearing make-up and a body type that accentuates

big buttocks. The focus of women in transactional sex relationships on appearance and the extent to which they would go to look or live differently is proof of the disintegration of women's emancipation. If women are comfortable with transactional sex relationships in order not to look African and to have access to money from men, that helps them look different from their original selves, then women do not only break down fellow women's self-esteem but have an identity crisis of their own.

Thirdly, Lipstick Feminism promotes the objectification of women's bodies when it posits that women feel empowered when they profit from their sex appeal (Marchetti, 2020). Scholars argue that transactional sex relationships should be seen as an effort by women to be industrious and provide for themselves (Bandali, 2011; Moodley & Ebrahim, 2019; Wamoyi et al., 2019b).

The question is, if a woman is to profit in any sphere of life using her sexuality, then is she really empowered? This study has illustrated how women use sex appeal to initiate or maintain transactional sex relationships by wearing tight-fitting or revealing clothes that are meant to entice men and modifying their bodies on the black market to please their blessers. However, body modifications like backstreet buttock implants are a health risk. These women would probably not have modified their bodies if they were content with their identities and if they were earning their own money from holding a job.

Another issue arising from transactional sex relationships that leads to the disintegration of women's emancipation is women's financial irresponsibility and

lavishness. The gendered belief that men should provide financially and materially persists (Stoebenau et al., 2016) and this perhaps is the reason why women are lavish. The amounts of money that women spent in transactional sex relationships receive are sufficient to start a business or help them further their education. However, these women are so extravagant and materialistic that the money they receive from the blessers is not used sustainably; it is depleted as soon as they receive it. Their focus is entirely on clothes, make-up, hair, expensive alcohol and trips around the world. This consumerist nature in women is nurtured and encouraged by the influence of social media.

In addition, women in transactional sex relationships employ social media extensively and its influence inadvertently contributes to the disintegration of women's emancipation. Social media is one of the most significant and pervasive local forms of oppression according to Mwangi's (2009) postcolonial paradigm of writing-back-to-self. Women in transactional sex relationships feel obliged to update their social media pages. Although there is nothing wrong with updating social media, it creates a false image, hope, and expectations for young women that idolize the ones that post. It also lures them into transactional sex relationships because they want to attain the same material gains that others post. It is thus the influence of social media that contributes to the disintegration of women's emancipation because young women see the different posts and envy the lavish lifestyle and are often willing to attain it at whatever cost. Penultimately, unresolved psychological issues like trauma also contribute to the disintegration of women's emancipation. The evidence in the novels studied attests to the fact that unresolved childhood traumas problematically resurface in adulthood.

Traumas like rape, engaging in sex at an early age and teenage pregnancy, and domestic violence all have the potential to derail the lives of women, if unaddressed. These traumas leave women vulnerable to issues like transactional sex relationships which not only disintegrate their emancipation but also promote patriarchy.

Finally, black tax also contributes to the disintegration of women's emancipation. This validates the findings of a study by Maclin et al. (2015) who found mothers that encouraged their daughters to earn money for the family by way of transactional sex relationships. The problem with black tax is when parents expect, even their unemployed children to support them financially. The evidence in the study shows that although some parents do not explicitly encourage their children to engage in transactional sex relationships, the expectations are often registered through their requests whilst others encourage them blatantly.

6.5 Contribution to new knowledge

The problem statement of the study aimed to assess to what extent contemporary African writers have succeeded in breaking sexual taboos in their writing. The writers wrote extensively and without inhibition about transactional sex relationships and presented different unrefined issues considered taboo. These writers have highlighted other taboos such as skin and private part bleaching, indecent public exposure, polyamory, black tax and men who have sex with men (MSM). Utilising their writing style, contemporary writers covertly invite the reader to ponder transactional sex relationship issues which could lead to further research.

In addition, Lipstick Feminism inadvertently reproduces the patriarchal system and promotes the objectification of women's bodies by encouraging women to wear make-up and to feel empowered by profiting from their sex appeal. Nuances considered, the study provides a different perspective regarding physical appearance and the utilisation of sex appeal by women to empower themselves. Firstly, the evidence from the study shows that women exercise their agency about their physical appearances such as body modification, the type of clothing brands and the make-up they wear. However, the study also showed that women could not exercise this agency without the financial provision of the blessers which insinuates that if it was not for the blesser's provision they would feel disempowered. Secondly, the evidence from the study shows how all the women have exploited their sex appeal in one or more of the following ways: becoming a lessee, plastic surgery, skin, anal, and vaginal bleaching, buttock enlargement, pornography star methods, perfume, cleavage, and physical activity. Lipstick Feminism's emphasis on make-up and women's appeal has aided in the monetization of transactional sex and, as a result, the disintegration of women's empowerment. The study found that social media is an important aspect of the life of the lessee. This implies that the discourse of empowerment disempowers women.

Moreover, the study has shown that women use their agency to make decisions about their sexual relationships, thus the safety of women should still be advocated for. Organisations like the *Rights Not Rescue Trust* in Namibia which offers peer education amongst others and ensures workplace safety for sex workers could benefit from this study by educating sex workers on their right to say no as well as refuse to perform acts that are physically, psychologically or sexually harmful to them.

Another highlight of the study is depression, which is a significant problem that is becoming more prevalent in Africa. However, the general belief among Africans is that it is a condition primarily experienced in the West perhaps where it has been discussed openly. Also, the data shown is sufficient to demonstrate that it is an emerging issue that requires to be addressed because Africa is independent, self-governing and self-reflecting. Transactional sex relationships are a sensitive and private issue and many will perhaps not freely talk about it to a psychologist or counsellor as they would perhaps have depression. However, the findings of this study could benefit psychologists or counsellors in their engagements with different patients by providing a possibility of an area to be probed.

In addition, the study highlights the negative impact of social media and how it is an influential reality in our societies. It has influenced young people's perceptions of beauty, leading to the use of skin-lightening or bleaching creams to meet social media standards. The cosmetic industry has thrived as a result of this perception of beauty and social media has also fuelled materialism, leading to a desire for a lavish lifestyle. Since social media is such a vital influence in our society the *Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture*, Regional Education Officers could include it as a topic of discussion in Life Skills classrooms. This will allow the Life Skills teacher to engage learners on different issues like transactional sex relationships, their socio-emotional literacy, how to be safe online, and accepting their identity, all by discussing the dangers of social media. The researcher further intends to engage with different Regional Education Officers to liaise on the best way to create different platforms to create awareness of transactional sex relationships among learners.

Furthermore, amid our societies battling Gender-Based Violence, the study presents new insight into a subcategory of Gender-Based Violence; sexual violence. The study reveals that although sexual violence is rarely discussed publicly among consenting partners, sexual violence is a reality experienced by women who engage in transactional sex relationships because the partner wants them to fulfil their fantasies whereas the women want the financial return. The findings of the study provide critical information for social workers in the *Ministry of Gender, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare*. The findings of this study could aid social workers when they engage with young women who fit the portfolio but are perhaps afraid to divulge information because of the blesser's reputation in society or fear for their safety. Similarly, apart from providing data on sexual violence, the study also provides insight into issues of poverty and the connection with transactional sex relationships.

Finally, the findings of the study also proved the prevalence of transactional sex relationships among university students. The researcher thus intends to engage the Department of Student Services at the *Namibia University of Science and Technology* to seek an opportunity to address the students on transactional sex relationships at the institutions' relationships, date rape and sexual harassment workshops.

6.6 Recommendations for future research

In consideration of the findings outlined above, the following recommendations are made:

- Transactional sex relationship studies of bisexual men who have sex with men (MSM) in Africa could be conducted, using the postcolonial paradigm by

Mwangi (2009) of writing-back-to-self. A study of this nature would examine whether men sleep with other men to provide for the needs of their women, whether it is just their sexual preference or for personal monetary gains.

- Furthermore, future studies can aim to respond to the sexualised portrayal of women in the media and women's consumer behaviour using the critique of the Lipstick Feminism theory. This will help to gauge to what extent women see themselves as sexualised in the media as well as assess their views on their spending habits.
- A feminist stylistic study that analyses how language has been used to describe how gender concerns are linguistically inscribed in texts.
- A transactional sex relationship culture study through the critical lens of the theory of aesthetic hedonism which is the pursuit of happiness through the pursuit of beauty.
- Lastly, based on the results of this study in which depression emerges as a concern, future studies could assess the impact of Covid-19 on transactional sex relationships and women's mental health.

6.7 The way forward

The researcher intends to pursue the following to ensure that the research findings reach the relevant audiences:

- The researcher, to reach an audience of women, intends to publish an article in the *Sister Namibia* magazine on Lipstick Feminism, to debunk the false standards of beauty that have been created primarily on social media and that women have so easily embraced.

- Organisations like the *Rights Not Rescue Trust* in Namibia which offers peer education amongst others and ensures workplace safety for sex workers could benefit from this study by educating sex workers on their right to say no as well as refuse to perform acts that are physically, psychologically or sexually harmful to them.
- The researcher further intends to engage with different Regional Education Officers in the *Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture* to liaise on the best way to create different platforms to create awareness of transactional sex relationships among learners.
- The researcher intends to engage the *Ministry of Gender, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare* as the findings of the study provide critical information for social workers. The findings of this study could aid social workers when they engage with young women who fit the portfolio but are perhaps afraid to divulge information because of the blesser's reputation in society or fear for their safety.
- The researcher also intends to engage the Department of Student Services at the *Namibia University of Science and Technology* to address one of the institutions' relationships, date rape and sexual harassment workshops with the aim of engaging students on transactional sex relationships.

6.8 Chapter summary

The study's objective was to assess how the transactional sex relationships culture undermines women's emancipation in selected literary texts. The study was significant as it explored the extent to which some contemporary fiction writers in Africa have

succeeded in breaking the barriers of sexual taboos in writing about transactional sex relationships. The chapter revisited the objectives of the study, restated the findings in the context of the research objectives, revisited the title of the study, presented the contribution to new knowledge, made relevant recommendations and finally discussed the way forward.

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APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



CENTRE FOR RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

Office of the Pro-Vice Chancellor: Research Innovation and Development

UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA, Private Bag, 13301 Windhoek, Namibia

340 Mandume Ndemufayo Avenue, Pioneers Park, Office D090 ☎ +264-61-2064624 ✉ research@unam.na Fax+264-61-206 4624

12 August 2020

Dear **Emelda U. Gawas**,

CERTIFICATE OF EXEMPTION FROM ETHICAL CLEARANCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA (UNAM)

Your application of exemption from ethical clearance at UNAM for the study entitled: **Transactional Sex Relationships in Fiction: The Disintegration of Women's Emancipation Through the Blesser/Blessee Culture in Selected African Novels?** was considered and granted based on the understanding that your studies does not INCLUDE human, plant and animal subjects. Hence, **exemption** is hereby granted under the following conditions:

1. During the course of your research activities at UNAM, you are required to observe the required procedures, norms and intellectual property rights in accordance with the relevant Research Policies and Guidelines. Any deviations and amendments to the original documents submitted (i.e. research proposal) must be submitted again for approval, before the research activities may commence. If unsure, please consult the *Centre for Research and Publications* at UNAM for guidance.
2. **The results of the findings must be shared with the PVC: Research, Innovation and Development, and the Centre for Research and Publications, before they are disseminated or published in the public domain.**
3. Upon completion, a copy of the Research Report must be lodged with the UNAM Library for record keeping.
4. Proper, full acknowledgements of the sources consulted must be done in the Research Report and any subsequent publications arising from this research.

If you are in agreement with the above conditions, the document must be completed, signed and returned to the Centre for Research and Publications (Email: research@unam.na). If you do have any queries, it should be clarified with the Centre for Research and Publications.

Regards

Dr. Hileni M. Kapenda

Director: Centre for Research and Publications.

I accept and agree to all the conditions

Emelda Uaundjua Gawas

Full Name and Surname

Signature

12 August 2020

Date

APPENDIX 2: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION LETTER 1

23 July 2020

The Administrator
Porcupine Press
South Africa

cc: Ms Jackie Phamotse

Dear Sir/Madam

Request for permission to use novels

I am a PhD student in English at the University of Namibia with student number - 202020657 and have been privileged to read Ms Jackie Phamotse's ***Bare: The Blessor Game*** amongst others. Due to the interest it sparked I have been working on a proposal for my doctoral studies. My study would like to focus on the blesser/blessee culture.

Thus, as explicitly stipulated in the books; permission is hereby sought to reference and quote from Ms Phamotse's two books; ***Bare: The Blessor Game*** and ***Bare: The Cradle of the Hockey Club*** for the above-mentioned research.

Your consideration of my request is highly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Emelda Gawas
BA (UNAM), BA Hons TESOL (UNISA), MA (UNAM)
Department of Technical and Vocational Education and Training
Namibia University of Science and Technology
Tel: +264207 2213
Cell: +264 81 318 1940
Email: eucham@nust.na OR emeldagawas@gmail.com

APPENDIX 3: PERMISSION FOR *BARE: THE BLESSER GAME*

On 23 Jul 2020, at 08:28, Gawas, Emelda (DTVET) <eucham@nust.na> wrote:

Dear sir/madam

I hope this email finds you well.

I have attached a letter in which I seek **permission** to use Ms Phamotse's novels.

Bare: The Blessor Game and ***Bare: The Cradle of the Hockey Club*** for PhD research.

Warm regards
Emelda

From: Jackie Phamotse <info@jackiephamotse.com>
Sent: 27 July 2020 21:01:54
To: Gawas, Emelda (DTVET)
Subject: Re: Jackie Phamotse novels: **Permission** request

Good day Gawas

I hope you are well.

Thank you so much for getting in touch with me, I am deeply honoured to have inspired your research. I think it would be best to also include BARE 3 EGO in your research as it forms part of the series. The book is available at Exclusive Books in Windhoek.

It will be a great honour that you complete the series and let us know if it will be relevant to your writing.

When will you be starting with your reach paper?

Please feel free to use this email address for further communication.

Jackie Phamotse
CEO Phamotse & Co
info@jackiephamotse.com

APPENDIX 4: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION LETTER 2

13 August 2020

The Administrator
Pan Macmillan
South Africa

cc: Ms Angela Makholwa

Dear Sir/Madam

Request for permission to use novel

I am a PhD student in English at the University of Namibia with student number - 202020657 and have been privileged to read Ms Angela Makholwa's *The Blessed Girl* amongst others. However, Ms Makholwa's novel triggered my interest and sparked the idea for my doctoral studies. My study would like to focus on the blesser/blessee culture.

Thus, as explicitly stipulated in the book; permission is hereby sought to reference and quote from *The Blessed Girl* for the above-mentioned research.

Your consideration of my request is highly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Emelda Gawas
BA (UNAM), BA Hons TESOL (UNISA), MA (UNAM)
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Namibia University of Science and Technology
Tel: +264207 2213
Cell: +264 81 318 1940
Email: eucham@nust.na OR emeldagawas@gmail.com

APPENDIX 5: PERMISSION FOR *THE BLESSED GIRL*

From: Sandile Nkosi <sandile@panmacmillan.co.za>
Sent: 13 August 2020 15:36:52
To: Gawas, Emelda (DTVET)
Subject: Re: Request for **Permission** to use novel

Dear Emelda

I hope you are well and apologies for the delay.

Pan Macmillan grants **permission** for you to quote from the book on condition that the book is properly referenced and acknowledged.

I would just like to point out that *The Blessed Girl* is a novel, that is, fiction, and so while it portrays aspects of the blesser/blessee culture, it is not a non-fiction account.

Thanks and best wishes
Sandile

SANDILE NKOSI
Digital and Editorial Coordinator

T: + 27 11 684 0400/1/2 | **F:** 011 327 6500
E: sandile@panmacmillan.co.za

APPENDIX 6: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION LETTER 3

09 May 2021

Ms Yvonne Maphosa
The Y In Your Man Is Silent
South Africa

Dear Ms Maphosa


Request for permission to use novel

I am a PhD student in English at the University of Namibia with student number - 202020657 and have been privileged to read your novel, *The Y In Your Man Is Silent* amongst others. Due to the interest it sparked and particularly the side-chick theme I would like to include the book in my doctoral studies. My study focuses on the blesser/blessee, side-chick and sugar daddy culture.

Thus, as explicitly stipulated in the book; permission is hereby sought to reference and quote from *The Y In Your Man Is Silent* for the above-mentioned research.

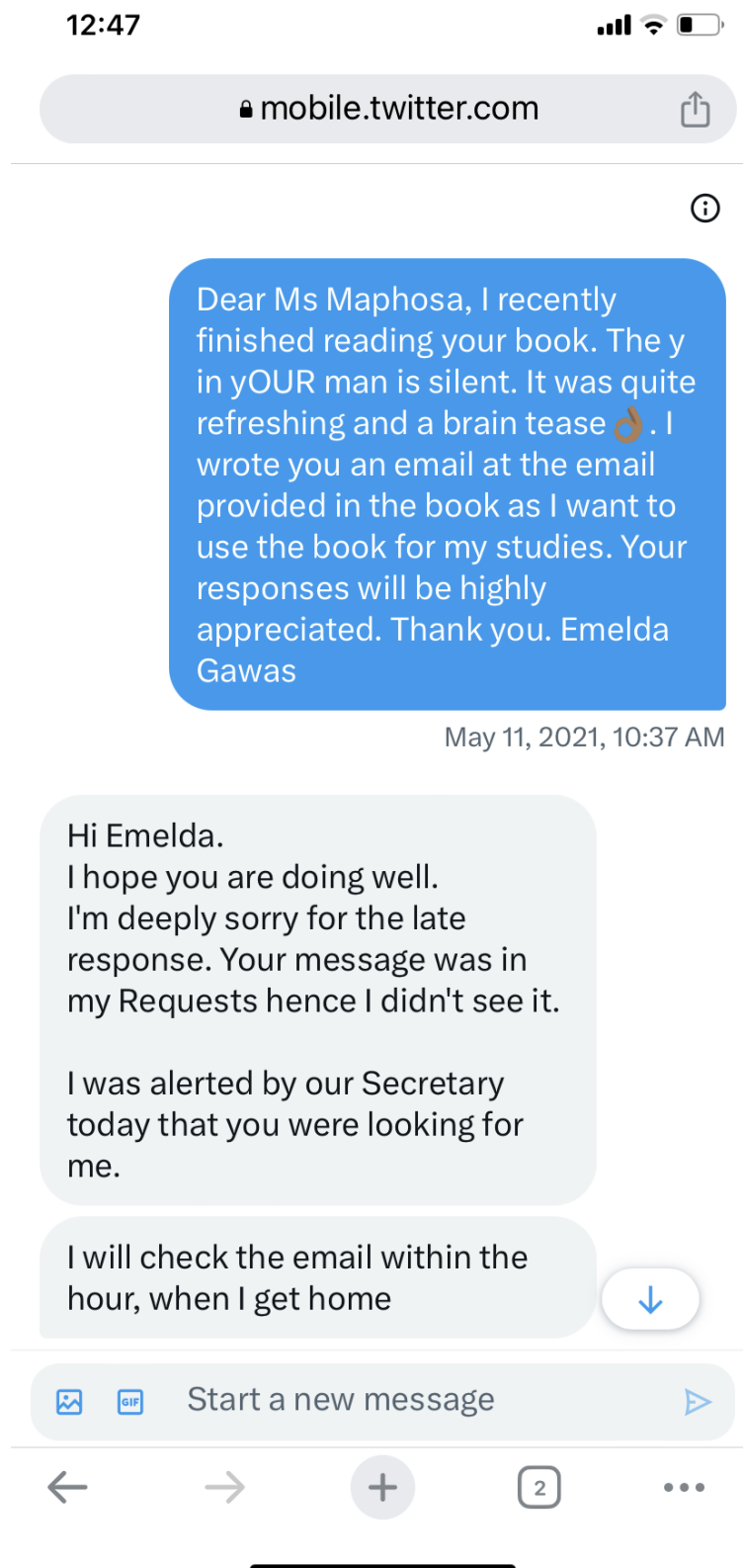
Your consideration of my request is highly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Emelda Gawas
BA (UNAM), BA Hons TESOL (UNISA), MA (UNAM)
Department of Technical and Vocational Education and Training
Namibia University of Science and Technology
Tel: +264207 2213
Cell: +264 81 318 1940
Email: eucham@nust.na OR emeldagawas@gmail.com

APPENDIX 7: PERMISSION FOR *THE Y IN YOUR MAN IS SILENT:BOOK 1*





Dr. Yvonne Maphosa



Please forward the email to
yvonnemaphosa@gmail.com
I can't remember my password
for that other email

May 17, 2021, 5:07 PM

Okay, will do.

May 17, 2021, 5:07 PM

I saw your email 🙏
I don't think it should be a
problem as long as you reference
accordingly. I'm sure it's just like
referencing any other source out
there.

I will just ask my lawyer before I
give the written permission via
email. Just to be 100% sure.



Dr. Yvonne Maphosa



Hi Emelda. So we decided it really shouldn't be a problem just as long as you reference (Which I know you already know 😊). I hope your PhD journey is going well. I know how hard it can get sometimes

May 30, 2021, 9:27 PM