

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND WOMEN'S SEXUAL HEALTH:
FRAMING THE FEMININITY, AGENCY AND VULNERABILITY OF
YOUNG EMPLOYED WOMEN IN RELATION TO HIV/AIDS**

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DECLARATION

I, Nompumelelo Sibusisiwe Tshabalala declare that:

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This thesis does not contain another persons' data unless explicitly acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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ABSTRACT

South Africa has one of the highest number of people living with HIV in the world. Despite all the interventions to combat HIV, HIV incidence continues to increase. Studies have shown that young Black African women lead in HIV incidence. Socioeconomic factors such as gender inequalities, poverty, economic inequalities, and intimate partner violence, have been identified as some of the key factors that lead to a high HIV incidence amongst young women. These factors are said to affect young women's agency to negotiate sexual safety in their relationships. To manage vulnerability to HIV amongst women, some studies have proposed that ensuring financial independence amongst young women might enable them to exercise their agency in their relationships. This study aimed to explore how young working women managed their HIV risk in their sexual relationships. It employed a qualitative interpretive research design using individual interviews with four tertiary level qualified working women between the ages of 25 and 35 years in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The findings highlight the significance of higher levels of education for young working women's agency. This potentially contributes to the development of HIV strategies which aim to decrease HIV incidence amongst young women.

Keywords: agency, femininity, hegemonic masculinity, HIV, vulnerability, young working women

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Chapter 1: Introduction

South Africa has the highest number of people living with HIV (PLHIV) in the world (UNAIDS, 2020). UNAIDS estimated the number of PLHIV in South Africa at 7.5 million in 2019, as shown in Figure 1 below (UNAIDS, 2020). This shows an increase from the 2017 data that had estimated the number of PLHIV in South Africa to be 7.2 million (UNAIDS, 2018). Since 2010 the number of PLHIV grew from 5.9 million to 7.5 million in 2019 (UNAIDS, 2020). Another South African survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in 2017 revealed that there were approximately 7.9 million PLHIV in South Africa by then (HSRC, 2017). This survey also reflects an increase from the 2012 HSRC survey which had reported the number of PLHIV to be 6.2 million (Shisana et al., 2014).

SOUTH AFRICA			
EPIDEMIC ESTIMATES			
	2010	2015	2019
New HIV Infections			
New HIV Infections (all ages)	420 000 [390 000–450 000]	280 000 [260 000–310 000]	200 000 [180 000–220 000]
New HIV Infections (0–14)	47 000 [36 000–63 000]	17 000 [13 000–20 000]	10 000 [8100–20 000]
New HIV Infections (women, 15+)	230 000 [210 000–250 000]	160 000 [150 000–180 000]	120 000 [110 000–140 000]
New HIV Infections (men, 15+)	140 000 [130 000–170 000]	98 000 [88 000–120 000]	66 000 [57 000–77 000]
HIV Incidence per 1000 population	9.48 [8.88–10.26]	5.94 [5.46–6.57]	3.98 [3.58–4.42]
AIDS-related deaths			
AIDS-related deaths (all ages)	180 000 [150 000–220 000]	89 000 [70 000–110 000]	72 000 [58 000–89 000]
AIDS-related deaths (0–14)	24 000 [18 000–30 000]	6400 [4600–7800]	4100 [3000–6100]
AIDS-related deaths (women, 15+)	87 000 [69 000–110 000]	44 000 [33 000–58 000]	33 000 [25 000–42 000]
AIDS-related deaths (men, 15+)	72 000 [58 000–95 000]	38 000 [29 000–53 000]	35 000 [29 000–45 000]
People living with HIV			
People living with HIV (all ages)	5 900 000 [5 400 000–6 400 000]	7 000 000 [6 400 000–7 500 000]	7 500 000 [6 900 000–8 000 000]
People living with HIV (0–14)	380 000 [290 000–450 000]	390 000 [300 000–470 000]	340 000 [260 000–420 000]
People living with HIV (women, 15+)	3 600 000 [3 200 000–3 800 000]	4 300 000 [3 900 000–4 600 000]	4 700 000 [4 300 000–5 000 000]
People living with HIV (men, 15+)	2 000 000 [1 800 000–2 200 000]	2 300 000 [2 100 000–2 600 000]	2 500 000 [2 200 000–2 700 000]
HIV prevalence (15–49)	18.2 [16.2–20]	19.3 [16.7–21.2]	19 [16.1–20.9]

Figure 1: South African 2019 HIV/AIDS data (UNAIDS 2020)

The 2019 UNAIDS survey showed that there were 200 000 new cases of HIV infections in 2019 in South Africa (UNAIDS, 2020). Although the number of new cases has been declining over the past 10 years, they remain particularly high among women aged from 15 to 49 years (UNAIDS, 2018; UNAIDS, 2020). UNAIDS (2020) revealed that there were 120 000 new HIV infections reported among women from age 15 and only 66 000 new HIV cases among men within the same age group in 2019 (UNAIDS, 2020). The UNAIDS (2017) reported that young women between 15 and 24 accounted for up to 37% of new infections in South Africa in 2016. The HSRC (2017) also reported the HIV incidence to be particularly high in women aged 15 to 49 years. The UNAIDS (2020) shows that women aged 15 to 49 years also lead in the HIV prevalence with an estimated 4.7 million to 2.5 million men in 2019 having HIV. The UNAIDS (2017) estimated HIV prevalence among young women in South Africa to be four times higher than that of men within the same age group. Black African women, in particular, have been reported to account for the highest HIV prevalence and incidence rates in South Africa (Shisana et al., 2014; HSRC, 2017; UNAIDS, 2018). The HSRC (2017) reported HIV prevalence at 20.6% among Black African women and only at 12.5% among Black African males in 2016. In terms of provinces, the KwaZulu-Natal province has the highest rate of this epidemic despite HIV campaigns and HIV education (HSRC, 2017; UNAIDS, 2018).

The abovementioned statistics clearly show that young women, especially, black African women, are the group in South Africa which has the most HIV infections. Various studies conducted with young black South Africans such as those of Jewkes and Morrell (2007), Reddy and Dunne (2010), and Sofika and van der Riet (2016) have shown that young women are more vulnerable to HIV due to their lack of agency in their sexual relationships. Young women's agency is limited due to socioeconomic factors such as poverty, intimate partner violence, and the effect of gender constructions and discourses, among other factors. The term "young" used in this study refers to "youth" in the South African context, which means young people between the ages of 14 and 35 (National Youth Commission Act, 1996; National Youth Service Policy Framework, 2015).

Studies by Pattman (2005) and Sathiparsad et al. (2010) revealed that men and women are normally constructed in inequitable and opposite ways. Male gender constructions relate to and reinforce patriarchy whereas female gender constructions reinforce submission and passivity. Such constructions reproduce gender inequity. Bhana and Anderson (2013) argue that gender

inequity may constrain young women's agency and increase their vulnerability to the HIV epidemic, especially within heterosexual relationships. Some of the studies show that gender is also constructed in terms of men and women's sexuality (Pattman, 2005; Sathiparsad et al., 2010). There are discourses that relate to men and women's sexuality and such discourses further perpetuate patriarchy and constrained agency (Pattman, 2005; Sathiparsad et al., 2010). Some of these discourses relate to assumptions that men possess a high sexual drive and women possess little or no sexual drive. In some discourses, boys/men are constructed as initiators of sexual relationships and girls/women are constructed as innocent virgins that need constant protection from boys (Pattman, 2005; Bhana & Anderson, 2013). Pattman (2005) and Sathiparsad et al. (2010) studies further revealed that women are constructed as sex objects which men must have sex with, to prove their manhood. Such discourses or gender constructions perpetuate gender inequity and create unequal power dynamics between men and women from a very young age.

Gender constructions also create a particular type of a gendered social organization (Harrison, 2008). Gendered social organization relates to a social hierarchy that "provides an overarching framework" within which the understanding of the meanings of social and sexual life are enacted (Harrison, 2008, p.176). A gendered social organization reproduces certain types of masculinities that are adopted by most men and they legitimize patriarchal power (Stern, Buikema & Cooper, 2016). These also lead to how young women frame their femininities. Some types of femininity are characterized by women who are more complicit with patriarchal power and inequitable gender relations (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012). Young women who align with such femininity are potentially more vulnerable in their sexual relationships. There are other types of femininities which oppose male domination and violence, and these are discussed in Chapter 2.

Gendered social organization is also sustained through ensuring that valuable assets, for example, land and housing are distributed to or owned by men (Sofika & van der Riet, 2016). Jewkes and Morrell (2012) and Wood and Jewkes (1997) argue that such realities maintain gender inequity and male domination and also keep many women dependent on men, and these further constrain women's agency and increase their vulnerability to the risk of HIV and intimate partner violence in their relationships. Bhana and Pattman (2011) conducted a study in a poor township in the KwaZulu-Natal province with young Africans aged 16 to 17 years

that found that young women hold ideals such as that men can be ‘providers’. Sofika and van der Riet’s (2016) study in a rural area of the Eastern Cape province with 23 young people aged between 18 and 35 found that “masculine and feminine ideals in sexual relationships often underpin young men’s and women’s vulnerability” (p.3). Jewkes and Morrell (2012) argue that these ideals also often lead to some women providing sex in exchange for monetary gifts. Their expectations and ideals for a particular lifestyle further increases young women’s vulnerability to the risk of HIV as it limits their agency and ability to negotiate safety in sexual encounters, for example condom use.

Further, Connell’s theory on gender and power revealed that economic factors such as poverty, is one of the issues that make women vulnerable to the risk of HIV and intimate partner violence (Wingood & DiClemente, 2000). Wood and Jewkes (1997) also found their study with pregnant teenagers in a South African township that women in violent or male dominated relationships have constrained agency. Jewkes et al. (2015) argued that changing gender inequity in relationships could be an important strategy in the prevention of HIV infection among both men and women. Some studies such as those of Campbell and McPhail (2002) and Stern et al. (2016) proposed making young women economically independent through creating employment, and through microfinance programmes, thus suggesting these as a way of intervening in the problem of women’s limited agency. They argue that this focus on economic independence may alleviate poverty that has an impact on the agency of young women and their ability to control their social and sexual lives (Campbell & McPhail, 2002; Stern et al., 2016). This could, in turn, decrease young women’s vulnerability to HIV risk.

Drawing from this proposed suggestion, and the literature reviewed above, this study attempted to investigate how young working women manage their vulnerability to HIV risk in their relationships. The term ‘working women’ used in this study refers to women who are financially secure, through having employment with a stable monthly income (Department of Women, 2015). Wingood and DiClemente (2000) argue that women that have a low income are more vulnerable to HIV than those with a higher income. This study therefore aimed to explore women in this higher income bracket, that is, women with an income above the poverty line. A report by the South African Department of Women (2015) show that there is a strong relationship between financial status and intimate partner violence; when financial status

increases, it is likely that the intimate partner violence decreases. This could result in increased agency and a decrease in vulnerability to HIV risk.

There are relatively few studies that focus on working women in relation to how they manage their HIV risk. A lot of studies focus on unemployed women. Given that some researchers have proposed economically empowering young women as an intervention to address the issue of HIV incidence among young women, this study aimed to find out how working women manage their vulnerability to HIV. The focus of this study was on what kind of agency these women have, how they are or are not vulnerable to infection in sexual relationships, and how they framed their femininity.

Chapter 2: Literature review

In South Africa, there has been several HIV prevention programs, such as, the ABC (Abstinence, Be faithful, Use a Condom) campaign, Brothers for Life and youth programmes, however, the HIV prevalence continues to increase. Young African Black women are those who are most at risk of HIV. Literature shows that most HIV prevention programs focus on changing individuals' behaviour, and do not consider the social and economic factors that may influence individual behaviour (Kelly, Parker & Lewis, 2001). For instance, for some people, sexual safety practices, such as condom use, may have consequences for their social and economic lives and it may not simply be an individual decision. Kelly et al. (2001) indicated that socio-economic factors, such as poverty, unemployment, poor education and gender inequity, just to mention a few, have significant influence on HIV risk. Therefore, in understanding HIV incidence and prevalence as well as in developing effective HIV programmes in South Africa, it is important to explore sexual activity in terms of social, cultural and economic aspects rather than to merely focus on individual factors such as behaviour change (Kelly et al., 2001). To better explore this, a theoretical framework of gender and power is discussed in relation to the HIV pandemic. This literature review also discussed gender constructions to show how women and men are defined, and how they define themselves. It also presents literature on how gender identity is constructed in relation to social and sexual life, and how it leads to gendered social positions. It will also discuss how these constructed and gendered identities are reproduced in sexual relationships and how they relate to intimate partner violence and HIV risk. This literature review will also discuss the framing of masculinity and femininity and dominant discourses that increase young women's vulnerability to HIV risk. Young women's expectations and investments in their sexual relationships are also explored in terms of how they relate to their vulnerability to HIV risk.

2.1 Overview of the current dimensions of HIV epidemic in South Africa

Studies have identified several key factors that relate to the discrepancy between men and women in HIV. Some of the factors are poverty, high unemployment rates, transactional sex, gender inequity, traditions, limited education levels, multiple sexual partners, inconsistent condom use and intimate partner violence (IPV) (Shisana et al., 2014; Ranganathan et al., 2017; Wand, Reddy & Ramjee, 2019; UNAIDS, 2020). IPV contributed to approximately 20–25% of HIV incidence in young women (Ranganathan et al., 2017). The 2012 HSRC survey showed

that Black Africans and people between the age group of 15-24 have the highest percentage of people with multiple sexual partners within a period of 12 months compared to other race groups (Shisana et al., 2014). Multiple sexual partnership is more common amongst men than amongst women (Shisana et al., 2014). Connell's theory of gender and power has been used to explain the gender effects in the spread of HIV. It might be helpful to also use Connell's theory to better understand the contributing factors to high HIV infections in young Black African women.

2.2 Theoretical framework underpinning women's health risks

2.2.1 Connell's theory of gender and power

Connell (1987) developed a gender and power theory which provides an understanding of the complex interplay between gender and power. It is centred on three critical social structures that symbolise relationships between women and men. These social structures involve the sexual division of power, such as authority; the sexual division of labour, such as financial inequality; and the structure of affective attachments, or cathexis, such as, social norms (Wingood & DiClemente, 2000; Mbonu, Van den Borne & De Vries, 2010). Connell (1987) indicated that these social structures are deep-rooted and maintained in society through some forces used in dividing power and assigning social norms based on gendered roles (Wingood & DiClemente, 2000; Mbonu et al., 2010). She argues that these social structures are evident at an institutional level such as schools, workplaces, families and relationships. She believes that these structures are sustained through social mechanisms such as discriminatory practices at schools and workplaces, economic inequity between men and women and gender inequity and unequal power dynamics within relationships. Such social mechanisms restrain women's livelihoods by creating gendered inequities in women's economic opportunities, control of resources and expected gendered role in societies. Fleming, DiClemente and Barrington (2015) described the first two structures, i.e., the sexual division of labour and the sexual division of power, as being where norms are established for men to hold power for decision making and economic advantage within their heterosexual relationships. Without this power, men in relationships may feel or be seen as being emasculated. They may, therefore, assert their power through their sexual behaviours, amongst other ways (Fleming et al., 2015). They described the third structure, which is the structure of cathexis, as a way of imposing different sexual behavioural norms for men and women. These social norms increase vulnerability for both men and women since their sexual behaviours are constrained. Each social structure and the

potential risk factor are discussed in detail below to show how they relate to the increased HIV risk for women.

2.2.1.1 Sexual division of labour

The concept of the sexual division of labour refers to how men and women are assigned to different and unequal jobs. Segregation of labour according to gender is perpetuated at a societal level and institutional level through social mechanisms such as confining women to the nurturing roles of caring for the household, the children, the sickly and elderly people (Connell, 1987). Such segregation of work according to gender limits women's economic potential and restricts their economic independence as they are usually stuck in unpaid or low paying jobs. This economic inequity usually forces women to rely on men financially. Connell (1987) argues that the economic inequalities are further preserved by discriminating against women through favouring the educational goals of men over those of women, and also by providing men with well-paying jobs over women. This allows men to be in control of the family assets. When economic inequalities between men and women increase in favour of men, women's health risks increase. According to this structure of Connell's theory, women with limited or no economic potential may be more exposed to HIV risk (Connell, 1987). Women who live in poverty, are unemployed, less educated and young and are also more vulnerable to HIV risk. Connell (1987) argues that unemployed women are usually financially dependent on their male sexual partners and this increases their HIV risk. A study, cited in Wingood and DiClemente (2000), conducted among black women in the United States compared employed and unemployed women and found that unemployed women were less likely to use condoms. According to the findings of this study, some of these women had few or no alternatives but to engage in risky sexual behaviours, i.e., non-condom use, as they were economically dependent on their male partners (Wingood & DiClemente, 2000). Wingood and DiClemente (2000) also cited a study that was conducted in the United States (US) with 580 women which found that women with lower incomes were less likely to use condoms during sex when compared to women with higher incomes, and this increased their HIV risk. Wingood and DiClemente (2000) argue that educational level is linked to an increase in women's HIV risk and this was evident in a study of 932 women in the US between the ages of 17 to 44, with less than a high school education. This study found that these women were less likely to use condoms. This was associated with limited understanding of, or access to, HIV prevention programs.

Connell (1987) also argues that being a young woman is an HIV risk factor on its own. Being a young woman is linked to a higher risk of sexual infections when compared to older women or to men. Connell's theory argues that young women usually have low agency in their sexual relationships and are unable to negotiate condom use when compared to older women. Their lack of agency increases their risk of HIV. This theory provides a good foundation for the study of economically empowered and educated young women, to explore how they manage their agency and vulnerability to HIV risk. Unequal power dynamics in heterosexual relationships, according to the concept of the sexual division of power, are also responsible for the vulnerability of young women to HIV risk.

2.2.1.2 Sexual division of power

The concept of the sexual division of power is based on unequal power dynamics between men and women in sexual relationships. Sexual division of power is preserved through control in relationships and the disempowering of women (Connell, 1987). This social structure is highly intertwined with the structure of labour. The power in heterosexual relationships is usually unequal, as men are usually economically privileged with more assets and women are usually forced to depend on them for financial support (Connell, 1987). According to this social structure, when power inequity between genders increases to favour men, HIV risk increases for women (Wingood & DiClemente, 2000). Studying women who are as economically privileged as men, may help in understanding the possibilities of agency for women and in developing better strategies for young women in the fight against HIV.

Unequal power dynamics increase the risk of abuse i.e., physical or sexual or emotional abuse in relationships. The concept of the sexual division of power shows how physical and sexual abuse increase women's HIV risk. A study by Marin, Gomez and Tschann (1993) and Wingood and DiClemente (1997) conducted among Black and Latina women (respectively), who were with physically abusive partners, illustrated that they were less likely to use condoms. According to this theory, women in physically abusive relationships are often unable to negotiate the use of condoms due to the fear of angry responses from their male partners which may threaten their survival (Wingood & DiClemente, 2000). Connell (1987) and Wingood and DiClemente (2000) argue that power inequity in heterosexual relationships often restrains women's agency to make decisions about their sexual behaviours such as condom use, and thus increases their vulnerability to HIV.

Connell (1987) argues that limited self-efficacy to negotiate condom use and change in sexual practices increases women's HIV risk in their sexual relationships. A lack of self-efficacy to negotiate condom use is highly correlated with poor condom use and HIV risk. Wingood and DiClemente (2000) indicated that women who regard themselves as unable to negotiate condom use or unable to negotiate change in their relationships are most likely to engage in risky sexual behaviours. Women's agency to negotiate condom use becomes even more limited in instances where sexual partners are older or abusive, or in instances when women are in committed relationships. According to Wingood and DiClemente (2000) enhancing women's belief that they have agency to negotiate condom use and effect change in their relationships, is an effective HIV prevention strategy.

Wingood and DiClemente (2000) argue that power inequity is also apparent in men's sexual risky behaviours such as multiple sexual partnering, cheating in their relationships and their refusal to engage in condom use (Connell, 1987). Women with such sexual partners have increased vulnerability to HIV risk. Multiple sexual partnering increases the chances of transmitting sexual infections to a steady sexual partner. Wingood and DiClemente (2000) said that some studies have proven that practising safe sex is highly dependent on the nature of the relationship. Women who are in steady relationships are less likely to use condoms when compared to women in casual relationships (Wingood & DiClemente, 2000). In such cases, women's HIV risk increases as outside sexual relationships are often never disclosed. Social norms further complicate women sexual and social life as they police how they should behave, as described in the next section.

2.2.1.3 Structure of cathexis

Connell (1987) argues that this structure is the structure of social norms and affective attachments. It creates appropriate sexual behaviours for women as well as expectations that society has about women's sexuality. It defines women's sexuality in terms of purity and morality. This structure is maintained by perceptions and biases about how men and women express their sexuality (Connell, 1987). Cultural norms, gendered roles and gendered stereotypes are thus formed. These create restrictions on women's sexuality and enable the labelling of behaviour. For example, if a woman has premarital sex, the term "bad girl" may be used to describe her (Connell, 1987). Further, women's sexuality is confined to monogamy

as opposed to having multiple sexual partners, which is an accepted social norm for men and but not for women. Connell (1987) argues that women who accept such social norms and beliefs, are more vulnerable to HIV risks.

Connell's (1987) theory of gender and power has clearly shown how certain risk factors increase young women's vulnerability risk to HIV. In the next section, South African studies will be reviewed to better understand how social construction of gender identity increases young Black African women's vulnerability to HIV in their sexual relationships.

2.3. The social construction of gender increases vulnerability for young women

Gender is a term grounded in the social constructivist framework rather than a biological framework. It defines qualities of men and women as they result from socialization and not biology (Fleming et al., 2015; Sathiparsad et al., 2010). Gender identity is constructed through messages that are received by individuals from the environment about how to interact socially and behave within the society, as well as about how society judges them (Fleming et al., 2015; Sathiparsad et al., 2010). As a result of social constructions, men and women are defined or categorized in opposite and inequitable ways (Sathiparsad et al., 2010). From a very young age, children become aware of gendered identities as their behaviours and feelings are regulated according to gender norms that exist within the society. Pattman (2005) argues that male identities emphasize strength and being active, whereas women are positioned as physically and emotionally weak, as passive, innocent, and as accountable for how men treat them. Such gender constructions become embedded in culture and enforced into the society and a gendered social organisation is created. A gendered social organisation reproduces hegemonic masculinity which is described as "a set of social norms and practices men are encouraged to subscribe to in order to be legitimized as men and imposes on all other forms of masculinity (and femininity), meanings about their own position and identity" (Stern et al., 2016, p.135). This type of masculinity is associated with heterosexuality and is based on the domination and control of both women and non-hegemonic men, and it is highly valued in societies (Currier, 2013; Jewkes & Morrell, 2010; Jewkes, Sikweyiya, Morrell & Dunkle, 2011; Jewkes et al., 2015). Hegemonic masculinity norms encourage toughness and feelings of sexual entitlement in men, which leads to multiple sexual partners, risky sexual behaviours and IPV (intimate partner violence) (Jewkes et al., 2011; Wood & Jewkes (2001, as cited in Jewkes & Morrell, 2012; Sofika & van der Riet, 2016; Stern & Buikema, 2013). As stated by Connell's theory,

social norms and gender inequalities have HIV risk implications for young women in sexual relationships because they undermine their ability to negotiate sexual conditions and safe sexual behaviours (Jewkes et al., 2011; Wood & Jewkes, 1997; Zembe, Townsend, Thorson, Silberschmidt, & Ekstrom, 2015). Fleming et al. (2015) argue that men constantly have to demonstrate their hegemonic masculinity through repeating actions of dominance over women and through sexually conquering women. Men who fail to prove their manhood are socially ostracized and may be criticized as homosexuals or as being asexual (Fleming et al., 2015).

2.4 Framing of femininity increases young women's vulnerability

Connell (1987), Jewkes and Morrell (2012), Stern et al. (2016) and Wingood and DiClemente (2000) argue that the majority of women that have accepted hegemonic masculinity norms and adhere to gender, traditional and cultural norms are likely to be more vulnerable to HIV risk. Women who are characterized by traditional or conservative femininity are more complicit with patriarchal power and inequitable gender relations (Connell, 1987; Jewkes & Morrell, 2012). Jewkes and Morrell (2012) argue that women that adopt this form of femininity are the most vulnerable in their sexual relationships as they do not resist male domination. They idealize, support and reward hegemonic masculinity (Jewkes et al., 2015). They also attempt to replicate it in other men. These women also potentially become victims of sexual coercion in their sexual relationships (Jewkes et al., 2015, Stern et al., 2016). According to Wingood and DiClemente (2000) these women generally believe that insisting on condom use with a sex partner implies a lack of trust for him. Despite the way in which it creates vulnerability to HIV risk, this is the most adopted or dominant form of femininity (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012).

Although it might be under constrained conditions of patriarchy, there are, however, women who adopt forms of femininity that oppose traditional femininity. These women are able to negotiate, or oppose, condom use in their heterosexual relationships (Campbell, 2000). This is evident in Jewkes and Morrell's (2012) study, conducted in the rural Eastern Cape Province with young women which found that some women are characterised by 'modern' and 'emerging' femininity. Jewkes and Morrell (2012) argue that women who are characterized by these forms of femininities regard themselves as being in a better position than of those women characterised by traditional femininity, as they are not acquiescent to patriarchy. The concept 'modern femininity' is characterized by women who believe that they are in control of their lives and fiercely reject traditional femininity. In doing so, these women may adopt or replicate

some men's behaviours. They consider themselves to have better control of their relationships than women characterized by traditional femininity. Jewkes and Morrell (2012) however argue that these women's claim are part fantasy and part reality, as they do not necessarily have control in their relationships.

Women characterized by what they call 'emerging femininity' aspire to have mutual respect and control and oppose violence in their heterosexual relationships (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012). This form of femininity emerged out of a cultural and traditional model of gender relations and does not necessarily oppose traditional femininity. Jewkes and Morrell (2012) argue that although emerging femininity and modern femininity are less complicit with male domination, they do not significantly change young women's vulnerability to HIV risk in their heterosexual relationships, as they do not significantly challenge the patriarchal power that exists. Jewkes and Morrell (2012) argue that irrespective of the form of femininity that the young women adopt, all forms of femininities are still subordinate to hegemonic masculinity. In the context of HIV, it is important to investigate the types of femininity that young working women adopt and explore if these have any significance for their vulnerability to HIV risk.

A gendered social organisation results in the use of social rewards, judgement, local moral discourses, as well as threats of violence, to ensure women adopt a particular form of femininity (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012). This reveals how gender constructions provide a framework for social and sexual life which subsequently confine women's sexuality and behaviour, thus potentially increasing their vulnerability to HIV (Connell, 1987). There are dominant discourses that frame heterosexual relationships and further increase young women's vulnerability to HIV risk. Living within these gendered constructions and discourses leads to insurmountable pressure on both men and women to behave in particular ways to prove their gender identities.

2.5. Young women's sexual vulnerability and the dominant discourses in sexual relationships

Literature has identified certain masculine and feminine discourses that shape sexual behaviours in relationships across societies or cultures (Fleming et al., 2015; Hollway, 1984). Some of these discourses are the male sexual drive discourse and the have/hold discourse.

The male sexual drive discourse assumes that men have a biological, uncontrollable and insatiable sexual desire, whereas women's sexual drive is portrayed as lacking (Sathiparsad et al., 2010; Stern & Buikema, 2013). This discourse constructs men as having no control over their sexual desires and as constantly wanting to have sex to satisfy their sexual needs. This discourse and the way people draw on it enables a sense of sexual entitlement in men which can lead to sexual and physical violence against women who refuse to consent to sex (Fleming et al., 2015; Hollway, 1984). A study by Stern et al. (2016) with 25 South African women in five provinces from the ages of 18 revealed that men believe they are sexually entitled to women. Stern et al. (2016) argue that this sort of mentality often results in women being victims of rape or being coerced to have sex or experiencing physical violence when they refuse to consent to sex. Fleming et al. (2015) and Mindry, Knight and van Rooyen (2015) argue that such a discourse constructs sexual activity as important to men and therefore having sex with women becomes a conquest for men. It ensures dominance and control over women as women are reduced to being sex objects. Sexual prowess and sexual accomplishment are a measure of masculinity. These increase men's status and power over women and other men, hence, they often share their sexual experiences with peers to build their sexual reputation (Fleming et al., 2015; Sathiparsad et al., 2010). The assumptions underlying this discourse may lead to young people engaging in risky behaviours which increases young women's vulnerability to HIV. Fleming et al. (2015) state that to demonstrate manhood through their sexual ability, assumptions underlying this discourse may lead some men to refuse condom use, as condoms are believed to interfere with sexual pleasure. Once their sexual drive has been triggered, some men may forgo condom use when condoms are not available as they assume that they are incapable of abstaining from sex (Fleming et al., 2015). Furthermore, based on these assumptions, men are encouraged to have multiple partners, and an unwillingness to do so, or even have sex with women, may lead to teasing about one's masculine status (Fleming et al., 2015). Drawing on this discourse, men's high-risk sexual behaviours are justified, and their sexual drive is positioned as more important than that of women. This discourse further ensures that men dominate over women and it pressurises women to tolerate men's infidelity (Hollway, 1984; Stern et al., 2016). The assumptions underlying this discourse can be seen to shape young people's views on sexuality and further enable their vulnerability to HIV (Fleming et al., 2015, Helman & Ratele, 2016; Sofika & van der Riet, 2016). Young women's ability to negotiate their safety in sexual relationships is constrained. Based on Connell's (1987) theory, in such patriarchal conditions, young unemployed women are more vulnerable to risks in sexual

relationships. However, this leaves a question about how young working women manage their vulnerability, if they are more economically empowered, and perhaps drawing on different forms of femininity.

Bhana and Anderson (2013), Fleming et al. (2015), and Mindry et al. (2015) argue that while men are encouraged to have sex and multiple sexual partners to show their sexual prowess, and are applauded for taking women's virginity, on the contrary, young women are encouraged to be monogamous, and invest in their virginity and innocence. Importance is attached to women's virginity by both men and women. These constructions around women's sexuality are linked to the have/hold discourse (Hollway, 1984). Women's sexuality is under constant surveillance and it is regulated or controlled on a good girl/bad girl binary (Bhana & Anderson, 2013). Young women are labelled according to their sexual conduct as either 'good' or 'bad' girls (Bhana & Anderson, 2013). They also argue that women's sexual surveillance "produces a sexual double standard" (Bhana & Anderson, 2013, p. 28). Young women's reputations suffer damage when they engage in sexual activity, whilst men's masculinity is certified and their reputations, power and fame increase with each sexual conquest (Bhana & Anderson, 2013).

While young women are constantly anxious about maintaining a good girl image, they are also anxious about losing their boyfriends or having their boyfriends cheat, if they do not have sex with them. Jewkes and Morrell (2012) and van der Riet and Nicholson (2014) state that having and keeping a man is viewed as feminine success which confirms a woman's attractiveness and desirability to men. Young women's fears of losing their boyfriends put them under pressure to give in to their boyfriends' sexual demands to preserve their relationships. In such cases, sexual activity becomes an investment for young women, as they use it to keep their relationships (Sofika & van der Riet, 2016). This kind of investment complicates their ability to negotiate sexual conditions in their sexual relationships and therefore put them in vulnerable positions (Sofika & van der Riet, 2016). Their investment in preserving their sexual relationships and ensuring feminine success may also lead to young women abdicating self-care and sexual safety by engaging in risky sexual behaviours (Fleming et al., 2015; van der Riet, Sofika, Akhurst & Daniels, 2019). Reddy and Dunne's (2007) study conducted in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa within young people between age 15 and 19 years found that young women associated unprotected sex with signifying trust and love for their sexual partners.

Young women draw on discourses which shape their sexual behaviours, thus enhancing their vulnerability to sexual coercion and HIV risk. When young women conform to certain sexual practices in order to maintain their sexual relationships, their agency to negotiate is significantly reduced and the men's sexual domination over women is preserved (Bhana & Anderson, 2013; Sofika & van der Riet, 2016; van der Riet & Nicholson, 2014; van der Riet et al., 2019). Zembe et al. (2015) argues that poverty, economic inequalities, gender inequalities and high-risk sexual behaviours, such as, transactional sex, multiple sexual partnering and age disparate sexual relationships create vulnerability to IPV and HIV.

2.6. Young women's vulnerability increased by economic inequalities

A gendered social organization is also maintained through economic inequalities such as distribution of possessions of land and housing to men (Sofika & van der Riet, 2016; Wamoyi et al., 2019). Most young South African women live in poverty-stricken conditions because of the high rate of unemployment (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012). Jewkes and Morrell (2012) and Wood and Jewkes (1997) argue that such economic inequalities maintain gender inequity and male domination as it keeps a lot of women dependent on men. Economic inequalities reproduce young women's vulnerability to HIV risk and intimate partner violence in their sexual relationships as their agency becomes constrained (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012). Fleming et al. (2015), Ratele (2015) and Shefer (2014) argue that marginalized men, or poor men, are more prone to using violence towards women to demonstrate their masculinity, as they may feel emasculated. To preserve control and power over women in their sexual relationships, IPV may be used (Zembe et al., 2015). Zembe et al. (2015) also mention that IPV is one of the leading causes of the high incidence of HIV amongst South African women. Jewkes et al. (2011) argue that there is a high correlation between male domination, IPV and vulnerability to HIV as abusive men are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviours, such as multiple sexual partnering and non-condom use. Wingood and DiClemente (2000) argue that women in abusive relationships are often unable to negotiate the use of condoms due to the fear of anger responses, and the threats of verbal, emotional and/or physical abuse from their partners.

Fielding-Miller and Dunkle (2017) and Stoebenau, Heise, Wamoyi and Bobrova (2016) argue that poverty and economic inequality may lead to some young women being stuck in abusive sexual relationships in order to access basic needs and monetary benefits. Connell (1987) and

Fielding-Miller and Dunkle (2017) argue that inequality and dependency on men reproduce hegemonic masculinity within sexual relationships. Most South African men that endorse the male provider role in their sexual relationships feel entitled to physically and sexually perpetuate violence against their sexual partners (Fielding-Miller & Dunkle, 2017). In this way, they assert their masculinity and protect their reputation. Fielding-Miller and Dunkle (2017) and Jewkes et al. (2015) state that male providers show less receptive attitudes towards gender equity. Watt et al. (2012) argue that there is a widespread belief that men are able to buy their right to have sex with women by providing them with monetary goods. Young women's vulnerability to HIV risk increases when they are stuck in abusive relationships, or economically depend on men (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012).

Furthermore, poverty and economic inequality results in some young women fantasising about men who will provide a better life for them and get them out of their impoverished conditions (Bhana & Pattman, 2011). Constrained by poverty, some young women make a choice to engage in transactional sex to survive poverty (Zembe, Townsend, Thorson, & Ekström, 2013). Other young women engage in transactional sex to access fashionable consumer goods (Fielding-Miller et al., 2016; Fielding-Miller & Dunkle, 2017; Stoebenau et al., 2013). Transactional sex is a form of non-commercial sex that occurs between casual sexual partners, where sex is exchanged for monetary benefits or favours (Ranganathan et al., 2018; Wamoyi et al., 2019; Zembe et al., 2013). The exchanges for sex vary from money to food, electricity, alcohol, and fashionable commodities. Young women use their physical appearance, men's social status, men's wealth status, and love, or romance, to select a partner who will assist them to gain financial, material or social benefits in exchange for sex (Formson & Hillhorst, 2016; Hunter, 2002; Ranganathan et al., 2018). Some young women may even engage in multiple or concurrent sexual partnerships, or agree to non-condom use, to increase their monetary rewards (Connell, 1987; Formson & Hillhorst, 2016; Ranganathan et al., 2018). In conditions where young women are dependent on men for survival, young women's agency is usually constrained as they may be unable to negotiate safe sexual conditions, such as condom use.

Transactional sex provides greater power and control in the relationship to men to determine the conditions of sexual activity, such as the type of sex and condom use, which puts women in a vulnerable position, as they depend on these men for their survival and self-esteem (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012; Jewkes et al., 2015; Stern et al., 2016; Wamoyi et al., 2019). Ranganathan et

al. (2018) and Zembe et al. (2013) state that young women choose older and wealthier men, popularly known as ‘sugar daddies’, to provide social, financial and material benefits. Connell (1987) and Zembe et al. (2015) argue that young women who have sugar daddies increase their vulnerability to HIV risk as they may be unable to negotiate sexual conditions such as condom use. In this regard the risk of HIV increases as non-condom use and multiple, or concurrent, partnering become strategies employed to access basic or desired needs (Ranganathan et al., 2018; Wamoyi et al., 2019). Stern et al. (2016) argue that young women’s agency regarding their sexual behaviour should also be understood within the context of economic inequalities and gender constructions, which further maintain gender inequalities.

As the above review of research studies reveals that economic inequalities further reproduce unequal power dynamics and perpetuate young women’s economic dependency on men, therefore preserving patriarchy and gender inequality. But the question remains whether this is also the case for young working women and their vulnerability to HIV. A study which explores these issues with educated and employed young women could inform the strategies needed to tackle the HIV incidence amongst young women.

2.7. Interventions to reduce HIV risk amongst young women

There have been many suggestions related to interventions to enhance women’s agency in their sexual relationships and reduce their risk of HIV. Jewkes et al. (2015) propose the promotion of gender equity to assist in managing risk of HIV among young women. Campbell and McPhail (2002) propose enhancing economic equity by assisting women to be economically independent and not dependent on men. They further suggest reducing the high levels of unemployment and poverty that undermine young women’s agency to control their sexual health (Campbell & McPhail, 2002). Some studies have reported that increases in young women’s financial status reduces intimate partner violence and HIV risk (Benson, Fox, DeMaris & Van Wyk, 2003; Benson, Wooldredge, Thistlethwaite & Fox, 2004; Raphael, 2000 as cited in South African Department of Women, 2015). Wingood and DiClemente (2000) found that women who have lower incomes are more vulnerable to HIV infections when compared to women who had higher incomes. Further, a lack of education among women increases their vulnerability to HIV (Wingood & DiClemente, 2000). However, there might also be disadvantages to creating more equitable conditions for women. Shefer (2014) states that efforts towards gender transformation may contribute to rising gender-based violence

rates, as men may be experiencing social marginalization and disempowerment due to the promotion of women. Some men also believe that women's economic and social empowerment contribute to the increased rates of male unemployment, and these notions are used to rationalize male violence against women (Shefer, 2014). The body of evidence reviewed above lays the ground for this study specifically in showing how gender and economic inequalities perpetuate male domination and IPV in sexual relationships. The next chapter focuses on the aims and rationale of the study.

Chapter 3 – Aims and rationale

3.1 Aim of the study

This study aimed to explore how young working women manage their sexual relationships. It focused on their framing of femininity, their agency within their relationships, and their vulnerability to HIV. The studies reviewed in the previous chapter showed how young women's sexual agency becomes constrained in their sexual relationships as they may be unable to make decisions about their sexual health, and this elevates their risk to HIV. One of the proposed interventions suggest that economic independence on the part of young women might be beneficial (Campbell & McPhail, 2002; Jewkes & Morrell, 2012). There are, however, few studies that show how economically independent women manage their vulnerability to HIV. This study, therefore, explored whether economic factors have an impact on their framing of femininity, agency, and vulnerability to HIV.

3.2 Research objectives

The study sought to explore how young working women manage HIV risk in their sexual relationships through the following objectives:

- (i) To explore how young working women frame their femininity.
- (ii) To explore the interaction between the framing of femininity, and young women's agency, in their sexual relationships.
- (iii) To explore if young women's economic independence assists in increasing their agency and reducing their vulnerability risk to HIV in their sexual relationships.

3.3 Research questions

The study aimed to address the following research questions:

- (i) How do young working women frame their femininity?
- (ii) What is the interaction between the framing of femininity and young women's agency in their sexual relationships?

- (iii) Does the economic independence of young women assist in increasing their agency and reducing their vulnerability risk to HIV in their sexual relationships?

Chapter 4 – Methodology

This chapter focuses on the methodology chosen to guide the research process. In doing so, it outlines the research design used in conducting the research study and explore the research problem. It also discusses the sampling method, data collection procedures and tools, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations, as well as measures used to ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings in terms of their credibility, transferability, and dependability.

4.1. Research design

This study used a qualitative interpretive research design to explore how young working women manage their sexual relationships. Qualitative research is relevant in this study because it allowed this phenomenon to be studied in depth and as it emerged in reality (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). It allowed openness for participants to provide “thick descriptions” (Babbie & Mouton, 2005, p.270) to develop a more holistic and detailed picture of how participants managed their sexual relationships and the meaning of their experiences (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The interpretive approach helped the researcher to understand the participants’ experiences in the context in which they occur and through how the participants narrated their lived experiences. Transcripts were used to imaginatively recreate the participants’ experiences to better understand the context of their experiences. It allowed the researcher to immerse herself into the participants’ lived experiences and have an “emphatic reliving” (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p.274). It also allowed me to closely look at the language and words or expressions used by participants in describing their lived experiences to help understand the meaning of these experiences (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). In interpreting I had to ensure that I stay close to the data to understand the subjective meaning of the experiences. The meanings of the lived experiences were interpreted to understand how the participants framed their femininity, agency and vulnerability, in their sexual relationships. This approach allowed the researcher to be the main instrument in the research process.

4.2. Sampling and sampling method

A purposive sampling method (Marshall, 1996) was used to target a specific group of women. For convenience and pragmatic reasons, this group was sampled from Pietermaritzburg. The

participants were 'young' working women between the ages of 25 and 35 years. The literature reviewed above showed that HIV prevalence and incidence is highest amongst women from age 15 years to 49. There are number of reasons the sample group was between ages 25 and 35 years. Firstly, the study was targeting 'youth' because as shown in the literature review in South Africa, youth are mostly affected by HIV because of their limited agency. The category of 'youth' ranges from 14 to 35 years old in the South African context, as was described in the literature review. The study also specifically targeted young 'working' women that were in occupations that earned them a gross salary of at least R20 000 per month. The literature showed a strong correlation between higher incomes and low HIV risk. The Statistics South Africa (STATSSA) 2020 survey revealed that unemployment rates are the highest amongst youth between ages 15 and 24 (STATSSA, 2020), hence, the sample group started from age 25. The participants of this study included Project Officers, a Training Coordinator and Geographic Information Systems Coordinator. Moreover, the participants of this study had to possess tertiary qualifications. As stated in the literature review, there is a strong correlation between higher education and vulnerability to HIV infections (Banerjee, Galiani, Levinsohn, McLaren & Woolard, 2008, as cited in Department of Women, 2015; Wingood & DiClemente, 2000).

This study used a snowball sampling method (Marshall, 1996) to recruit these participants. In doing so, the researcher used her network of personal contacts to assist in identifying potential participants as per the recruitment criteria. These personal contacts were the researcher's previous work colleagues and friends. However, these friends and colleagues did not participate in the study. They were only requested to give a letter to potential participants, to recruit them into the research process, and ask them to contact the researcher. This was done to ensure that there was no undue influence on people to participate.

This sampling method resulted in recruiting people who had the potential to provide rich data for the study. Eight to ten people were approached through these personal contacts and were initially interested in participating in the study. The identified potential participants were provided with a letter regarding the study (see appendix 1). The letter contained the minimum criteria to be met by potential participants, the names and contact details of the researcher, and a request that potential participants contact the researcher if they were interested in participating in the study. However, instead of contacting the researcher, they communicated

with the recruiters and provided their verbal consent to be contacted. After receiving their requests to be contacted, each person was then telephonically contacted by the researcher. To ensure “voluntariness in participation” the researcher ensured that each potential participant that was reached was provided with “clear, detailed, factual information about the study” (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p.72) as contained in the recruitment letter.

The study initially planned to recruit six to eight participants, however there were some attrition after recruitment. Lack of time due to work and family commitments was cited by some as reasons for pulling out of the study. The final sample for the study as outlined in Table 1 below, was four female participants who were all employed Black African females between the ages of 29 to 31 years. They were all based in Pietermaritzburg, have tertiary level qualifications, and they all earned a gross salary above R20 000 per month. At the time of the study, they were all in heterosexual relationships. One of the participants was married and the others were in long-term relationships.

Pseudonym	Age	Marital status	Highest level of education	Job position	Salary level	Children
Kekeletso	29	Single	Master’s degree	Training Coordinator	R20000 – R25000	Unknown
Pajuju	31	Single	BTech: Agriculture Management	Project Officer	R20000 – R25000	Yes
Samantha	29	Married	Honours degree: Geography & Environmental Management	Geographic Information System Coordinator	R25001 – R30000	Yes
Talitha	30	Single	Master’s in Commerce	Project Officer	R25001 – R30000	Unknown

Table 1: Demographic information

4.3. Data collection methods

In-depth interviews were conducted with each participant to explore their framing of femininity, their agency, and their vulnerability in their sexual relationships. The interviews provided an opportunity to have an in-depth conversation with the participants to access their

“subjective understanding” (Seidman, 1991, p.5) and meaning attached to their sexual relationships. Schuman (1982, as cited in Seidman, 1991) suggested that a three-step series model be followed when conducting an in-depth interview. According to Seidman (1991), each step in the series has a specific focus. Following this phased approach in this study created an interactive and cumulative interviewing sequence. First, rapport was established with the participants to understand their histories (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984) in relation to their work history and family history as well as how they managed their past sexual relationships. This helped with building rapport and eased the participants into an interactive conversation. Focusing on their life histories helped with gaining an in-depth understanding of the participants and to determine whether their background impacted on their ability to negotiate safe sex in their relationships (Seidman, 1991). Open-ended questions were used to allow the participants to provide rich and descriptive responses during the interviews. Terre Blanche et al. (2006) state that using open-ended questions allows participants to communicate their experiences in their own words, without any restrictions hence the use of these types of questions was important for this study. The questioning sequence (see interview schedule attached as Appendix 2) ran from general and easy questions that focused on their life histories, to questions that were meant to elicit more descriptive and in-depth details of the participants’ current experiences (Seidman, 1991). Their experiences in their sexual relationships were described to understand how they framed their femininity, and agency, and to determine their vulnerability in their sexual relationships. The questioning sequence then moved on to questions that required the participants to reflect on the meaning that they attached to their experiences and sexual behaviours (Seidman, 1991), to understand the investments they made in their sexual relationships.

Each participant was interviewed in a single session. The original research design involved interviewing each participant in more than one interview. These interviews would have been spaced across two weeks, but this did not happen because the participants could not avail themselves for more than one session. Arranging suitable meeting times for both the researcher and the participants was also a challenge since the researcher lived in a different province from where the study was conducted. This affected the opportunity to establish trust with the participants over a series of interviews. Due to this challenge two of the interviews had to be completed over the telephone. This affected the study as it was apparent that some of the participants struggled to open up even with further probing. The venues used for the face-to-

face interviews were chosen by the participants according to their convenience. All the questions were asked in English, but some participants used both English and *isiZulu*, especially when they felt the words were not available in the English language.

Information sheets (attached as appendix 3), consent forms (attached as appendix 4) and the consent forms for audio recording (attached as appendix 5) were emailed to all the participants prior to their interview dates to give the participants time to carefully read through them. At the interview but before the interview commenced, the researcher explained the content of the information sheet such as, the aims, the risks and benefits of the study, voluntariness of the study, and confidentiality. The participants signed consent forms before data collection. For telephonic interviews, this process was done a day prior. The participants gave verbal consent to participate and a photo of a signed consent forms (appendix 4 and 5) were sent by phone to the researcher before the interview could be conducted. For those that completed the documents and were then interviewed telephonically, the friends who had recruited the participants sent the signed consent documents (the original documents of appendix 4 and 5) to the researcher by registered mail via POSTNET.

Recording was used to assist with efficiency of data collection. Using digital recording in the interviews was also to ensure precise transcription of data because data can be listened to repeatedly to identify such things as the pauses or overlaps. For the in-person interviews, the participants signed consent forms agreeing to this audio recording (attached as appendix 5) before interviews commenced. For the telephone interviews, verbal consent was given, and a photo of the copy of this form was sent by phone. During the interviews, handwritten notes were also made on the interview questionnaire for each participant as a backup to the recording. For in-person interviews, the researcher also tried to note the non-verbal gestures during the sessions, though it proved to be difficult to do so while writing. For the first telephonic interview, a call recording app and an audio recorder as a backup were used. The conversations were put on loudspeaker for the audio recorder and it was placed close to the speaker. The call recording app was only used once because it was problematic since the participant's voice could not be heard on the other end.

Even though this study did not anticipate causing harm to the participants, a referral process to the Child and Family Centre (CFC) at the University of KwaZulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg

campus was set up. Participants were provided with a letter (see Appendix 6) referring them for psychological counselling should they need it. For the telephonic interviews, this letter was forwarded via email after the interview.

4.4. Transcription

Transcription of data was done after all the interviews were completed. This was done after all the interviews were completed and it was done verbatim to produce speech as it was spoken (Hepburn & Bolden, 2013). Some audio recordings were not of good quality due to background noise. To ensure that the transcripts were representative of the conversation, the recordings were listened to over several times to produce word-for-word accounts of what was said. Handwritten notes were also helpful in this case. The researcher speaks *isiZulu* as her first language, this was helpful in translating words that were in *isiZulu*.

4.5. Data analysis

This study used a deductive thematic analysis to identify themes, analyse and report them (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in order to understand how the young working women, manage their sexual relationships. Thematic analysis was used because it helps to produce a rich thematic description or detailed accounts to provide readers with a sense of the important themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The deductive thematic approach, also known as the theoretical thematic approach, was used to analyse data for this study since it is driven by theories from other researchers such as gender and power theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is also “more explicitly analyst driven” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.84). A data analysis at a latent level was embarked on to “identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations and ideologies that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.84) This approach helped in deeply understanding how working young women manage their vulnerability in their sexual relationships. Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis guide was used to help during this process. The researcher immersed herself in the data during transcription of data since she did her transcription. Transcribing and listening to audio recordings over several times helped the researcher to familiarise herself with the data. Repeated reading of data as the researcher did while she was searching for patterns or codes also helped to get her to further familiarise herself with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Codes that were identified were organized in a table form. To ensure quality of data analysis, repeated coding was done after the initial coding, until no new themes were identified (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Hewitt-Taylor, 2001). The initial coding was theory driven. After coding, all codes that were common were grouped together to form main themes and sub-themes and they were labelled (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The themes were reviewed repeatedly until the researcher was satisfied with all the themes. Throughout the process of writing the report, themes were reviewed, reorganised, relabelled and scrapped. Deviant themes were considered with the aim of looking at different views (Silverman, 2000).

4.6. Trustworthiness

The key criterion for a good qualitative study is its trustworthiness (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). This refers to the level of confidence that a researcher has in the data, interpretation and methods used to ensure the quality of the study. To ensure trustworthiness of a study, credibility, transferability and dependability are established.

4.6.1 Credibility

This is one of the most important factors in ensuring trustworthiness of a study (Shenton, 2004). It ensures congruency between the findings of the study and reality. The credibility of the study is partly dependent on the “ability and effort of the researcher” (Golafshani, 2003, p.600) since the researcher is the main instrument of research in qualitative research (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). In this study, credibility was ensured through an iterative thematic analysis conducted by employing the constant comparative method. This method “involves repeated to and fro between different parts of your data” (Silverman, 2000). The researcher immersed herself in the data collected, through transcribing it, and reading it repeatedly to identify codes. These codes were grouped to form themes. This process was repeated until the researcher was satisfied that no new themes could be identified. Themes were compared constantly to each other to ensure that there were no repetitions or overlaps and they also represented the data collected. Each time data was read, the researcher attempted to distinguish between their own preconceived ideas or predetermined findings and what the data collected was presenting. This allowed the researcher to work closely with the data. Data from each participant was thoroughly inspected repeatedly and this helped to identify contradictions and interpret the meaning of these contradictions. Data from different participants was also compared. Comprehensive data

treatment was used to help in tackling the problem of ‘anecdotalism’ which refers to reporting only on well-chosen examples that are claimed to represent the findings (Silverman, 2000). Extracts were included in the findings section to give the reader an opportunity to make their own judgement regarding findings. Deviant cases were also included as the “researcher should not be satisfied by explanations which appear to explain nearly all the variance in their data” (Silverman, 2000, p.181). A peer was used to review the interview questions to check if they were clear. This led to changing the wording of some of the questions and scrapping some of them. Another peer was used to go through the written document and the transcripts at the same time as the researcher to see how the understanding of data differed and was similar.

Additionally, to ensure credibility steps were taken to ensure that the participants were willingly participating in the study. The researcher informed them about their rights to withdraw or refuse to participate in the study at any time and this was done to ensure that they provide genuine data freely during data collection (Shenton, 2004). To further ensure genuine participation, they were not informed about the compensation for their participation before they agreed to participate. The use of audio recording ensured accurate data collection.

4.6.2. Transferability

Transferability of the findings to “other contexts or with other respondents” (Babbie & Mouton, 2005, p. 277) is dependent on the reader of the final research report. Transferability was ensured by conducting in-depth interviews and using open-ended questions which provided thick and detailed descriptions of the lived experiences and the meanings of the participants (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). This allows readers to understand the findings in the context in which they occurred and then compare these findings reported to those emerging in their situations (Shenton, 2004).

4.6.3 Dependability

Dependability is the “degree to which the reader can be convinced that the findings did indeed occur as the researchers say they did” (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p.93). Dependability of this study was ensured by thoroughly describing the aims and rationale of the study, research problem, research questions as well as the context of the study. It was enhanced by providing a detailed outline of the methodology used to collect and analyse data, to enable the reader to

thoroughly understand the effectiveness and limitations of the study. The sampling method, sample group and the characteristics of the sample group are also described in detail. The research findings are reported in detail referring closely to the transcribed data illustrated by the extracts (Stark & Trinidad, 2007).

4.7 Ethical considerations

4.7.1 Independent ethics review

The proposal of this study, with a protocol reference number: HSS/1243/017M, was granted an ethical approval by the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (UKZN HSSREC) (see ethical clearance attached as Appendix 7). The proposed study was approved with the title “Socio-economic status and women’s sexual health: framing the femininity, agency and vulnerability of young, employed women in relation to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs)”. However, an approval to change the title of the study was sought from the Committee.

4.7.2 Informed consent

The participants received information sheets (attached as appendix 3) which informed them about the research aims, the risks and benefits of the study, voluntariness of the study and confidentiality. These were emailed to them prior to the interviews and then they were discussed with the participants. This informed them about their right to refuse to participate in the study at any time. The participants were asked to provide consent by signing a consent form (attached as appendix 4) and a consent form for audio recording (attached as appendix 5).

4.7.3 Confidentiality

Participants were informed that the findings of the study would be used for academic purposes. They were informed that to protect their privacy and their right to confidentiality, only pseudonyms would be linked to their responses. Only these pseudonyms would be used throughout the data and in reporting on the findings in a Master’s thesis or in any other publication. Each participant was requested to choose a pseudonym at the beginning of their individual interview. They were informed that their responses in the interview would be stored electronically in a password protected file accessible only to the researcher. All other

identifying information, electronic or written data would be kept securely in the supervisor's office. All audio recordings would be deleted after the completion of the study.

The participants were also informed that a summarised version of the findings of the study will be made available to them upon request and a session to discuss these findings would be arranged if they requested one.

4.7.4 Favourable risks/benefits ratio

The participants were informed that there were no anticipated risks associated with participation in this study. They were also informed that should they become distressed due to their participation in the study, arrangements had been made with the University of KwaZulu Natal: Child and Family Centre (CFC). They were provided with a letter related to the services of the Child and Family Centre (attached as appendix 6) permitting them to contact UKZN CFC should they need psychological support. They were also provided with the university clinic's contact information as it appears on the information sheet (attached as appendix 3). They were further informed that there were no immediate benefits from participating in this study, other than an opportunity to reflect on their lives and relationships. They were also informed that the study might potentially create a broader understanding of issues relating to women's sexual health.

4.7.5 Compensation

All the participants were compensated with R50.00 for their participation and time. For the in-person interviews, they were also compensated R50.00 for their transport costs to the interview venues of their choice and provided with refreshments especially because the interviews were long. For the telephonic interviews, compensation was sent via the Capitec cashsend. The participants were only informed about the compensation after they had agreed to participate in the study. This was done to eliminate any undue influence and to enhance autonomy.

4.8 Summation

To summarise this chapter outlined the research methods used to collect the data and analyse it. The sampling methods and sample size were discussed. Credibility, transferability and

dependability were discussed to help the reader decide on the trustworthiness of the findings of the study. Ethical considerations were also discussed. The next chapter focuses on the findings of the study.

Chapter 5 – Findings

This study aimed to explore how young working women manage their sexual relationships. It focused on their framing of femininity, their agency within their relationships and their vulnerability to HIV. It sought to examine how young working women frame their femininity. It also sought to examine the interaction between the framing of femininity and young women's agency in their sexual relationships. Lastly, it sought to examine if young women's economic independence assists in increasing their agency and reducing their vulnerability to HIV in their sexual relationships.

This chapter focuses on presenting the findings from the analysis of the data collected from all four participants. The themes identified are used to present the findings. Extracts from the transcripts are used to illustrate the themes identified in the data. The themes relating to sexual agency, construction of femininity, women's expectations and vulnerability in sexual relationships will be discussed.

Extracts from the transcripts will be used to illustrate the findings. In presenting the extracts the name of the participant, age of the participant, degree level and salary scale will be given. A code was developed to represent degree level and salary scale. The participant's marital status is annotated by S (single or unmarried) or M (married). Their degree level is annotated by UG to indicate that they have an undergraduate degree or PG to indicate a postgraduate degree. Their job position is annotated as follows: GISC to represent Geographic Information Systems Coordinator, PO to represent a Project Officer; and TC to represent a Training Coordinator. Their salary scale is annotated as follows: SL1 to represent a salary scale R20000 – R25000; SL2 to represent a salary scale R25001 – R30000; SL3 to represent a salary scale R30001 – R35000; and SL4 to represent a salary scale R35001 – above. A set of dots (...) in an extract indicates an ellipse, which is an omission of a sentence or section. A set of square brackets '[']' in an extract indicates information added. A set of closed brackets '()' in an extract is used for explanatory information. The letter 'I' is used to represent the interviewer. The line numbering on the left side of the extracts are included for the reader's easy reference and to reflect where it appears on the transcripts.

5.1 Sexual agency

The analysis of the data showed that the participants had sexual agency in their relationships. Sexual agency in this theme means they had the ability to talk about their sexual needs and make decisions relating to their sexual behaviour, in their relationships. The participants positioned themselves as being in control of the conditions of sex, or the timing of sex. They constructed themselves as having no fear of rejecting their partners' sexual advances. Some positioned themselves as having no fear of being rejected, or of being left by their partners, if they denied them sex.

5.1.1 Engaging in discussions about sex in relationships

When asked about discussing sex with her partner, Pajuju positioned herself as having agency in her relationship. Her agency is linked to being able to engage in discussions about sex in her relationship.

216 P: I do engage in sexual discussions openly and express my satisfactions and
217 dissatisfaction, being honest with your feelings in a relationship is important

[Pajuju, 31y, S, UG, PO, SL1]

She positioned herself as being able to “engage in sexual discussions openly” (line 216). She constructed her relationship context as one in which engaging “honestly” (line 217) and openly in sexual discussions is “important” (line 217). She constructed herself as someone that is able to openly express her sexual experience to her male partner about her sexual “satisfaction and dissatisfaction” (line 216 – 217). Being able to negotiate about sex in a relationship demonstrates sexual agency and it reduces women's vulnerability in their relationships.

During a similar discussion, Talitha said the following,

466 T: Communication is key as I have mentioned. Sex is a great way to solidify the
467 relationship, partners are able to bond. Talking about sex is important.

468 I: Have you ever rejected your partner's sexual advances?

469 T: Yes. Sex should not be forced. It should be a mutual agreement.

[Talitha, 30y, S, PG, PO, SL2]

Talitha constructed communication as a “key” (line 466) element in a relationship. She positioned “talking about sex [as] important” (line 467) in a relationship. She constructed sex as a mechanism that “solidify” (solidifies) (line 466) the relationship and it is able to create a “bond” (line 467) between partners. The use of words such as “solidify” and “bond” are almost suggesting the building of a structure, a relationship in this case. Her constructions positioned her as someone that understands that being able to communicate is important when it comes to sex. She regarded a relationship as something in which partners should be able to openly communicate to reach a “mutual agreement” (line 469) about the activity of sex before engaging in it as it “should not be forced” (line 469) on anyone. In describing sex in terms of being ‘forced’ or ‘not forced’ she shows that she is aware that partners need to negotiate and reach a mutual agreement when engaging in sex. She is aware that she can exercise her sexual agency.

However, in a similar discussion with Kekeletso, she did not answer the question. She did not want to specifically say if, and how, she and her partner engage in discussions about sex. She said:

362 K: we use condoms, contraceptives. we always have consensual sex.

...

364 I: Like have you ever felt forced or pressured to have sex?

365 K: ...never felt forced or pressured [to have sex] in my relationship.

[Kekeletso, 29y, S, PG, TC, SL1]

Although she did not answer the question asked, what she said is significant because it shows that she has agency to decide on whether to use a condom or not, or maybe to use another form of contraception. In this extract, she said, “we always have consensual sex” (line 362) to position herself and her partner as being able to engage in discussion and reach an agreement regarding a sexual activity. This implies that discussions about sex ‘always’ take place in her relationship as she has also “never felt forced or pressured [to have sex] in my relationship” (line 365). All this implies that she has sexual agency in her relationship, and it relates to her ability to engage in discussions about sexual activity.

In a similar discussion Samantha said:

101 S: I’m a bit reserved so I would talk about sex once in a while especially about

102 contraceptives.

103 I: Do you normally have consensual sex?

104 S: Usually we have sex when my husband wants it, which is all the time. (rolling eyes)
[Samantha, 29y, M, PG, GISC, SL2]

In this extract, she constructed herself as “a bit reserved” (line 101) to rationalise that she struggles to engage in discussions about sex with her partner. She indicated that she only “talk[s] about sex once in a while” (line 101). Her sex discussions are mostly “about contraceptives” (line 101 – 102). She usually has “sex when [her] husband wants it, which is all the time” (line 104). Her statement in line 104 implies that her sexual agency is at times constrained with regard to her sexual activities in her relationship. She positioned herself as not wanting sex as much as her husband, who wants it ‘all the time’. She is constructing him as someone who wants and desires and requests sex much more than her. During this discussion, Samantha rolls her eyes (line 104), which could suggest that she is ridiculing her partner’s dominant sexual needs.

Further, she positioned herself as sometimes feeling pressurised to have sex in her relationship as seen in the following extract.

105 I: do you ever feel forced or pressured? [I]

106 S: yeah sometimes especially when he’s complaining that I have rejected him too

107 many times.

[Samantha, 29y, M, PG, GISC, SL2]

Her words “rejected him too many times” (line 106 – 107) constructed their sexual needs and desires as different which leads to the husband complaining and Samantha feeling pressurised. The lack of sexual discussions in the relationship perhaps prohibits Samantha and her partner from reaching a mutual agreement about the timing of sex. Failure to engage in sex discussions in her relationship results in the husband “sulking for the whole night...or for a couple of hours.” [Samantha, 29y, PG, SL2, line 110-111] when he is denied sex. Her struggle with engaging in sexual discussion puts her in a position whereby she feels forced or pressured to have sex and it constrains her sexual agency sometimes. However, the fact that she does not give in to having sex when she does not want to, shows that she has agency although she does not have it all the time.

The next section looks at sexual agency in terms of their ability to deny their partner sex.

5.1.2 Denying their male partner sex

Sexual agency was also constructed in relation to the participant's ability to prioritize themselves in terms of their own needs and wants in their relationships. This is demonstrated through their ability to deny their male partners sex without any fear. In the have and hold discourse, women may not be able to refuse their male partners sex because of fear of losing them. Sexual activity seems to be used as a way to maintain the relationship. They also refused to have sex with their male partners despite the fact that the male sexual drive discourse is based on the assumption that men have an uncontrollable sex drive. This uncontrollable sex drive is always used to justify their infidelity or multiple partnering as men are assumed to be unable to live without sex especially once the sex drive has been triggered.

In a discussion about denying their male partners sex, Pajuju was asked if she was afraid of losing her partner if she refused him sex.

- 228 P: I am not afraid that if I reject his sexual advances he might leave me because if it's
229 time to leave he might leave, either you satisfied him or not...
230 I can't do what I don't want just to satisfy his feelings therefore if he chooses to go to
231 someone else it is his choice as a grown man.

[Pajuju, 31y, S, UG, PO, SL1]

Pajuju demonstrated an ability to prioritize herself and her needs in her sexual relationship. She positioned herself as being able to deny her partner sex. She constructed herself as unafraid of the potential negative consequences for example, that he might cheat on her or leave her. Pajuju does not draw on the have and hold discourse. She positions herself as not needing to 'hold on' to her male partner as it is implied by "I am not afraid that if I reject his sexual advances he might leave me" (line 228). Her words "I can't do what I don't want just to satisfy his feelings" (line 230) demonstrate that she positions herself as prioritising her own needs above those of her partner. Such words also constructed her as someone with firm boundaries and as being a strong woman. She positioned herself as someone that has limits to what she will do and not do in her relationship. She is not 'holding' on to him as in the have/hold discourse. She constructed being in their relationship as a choice for both him and her. She constructed a narrative around maturity by pointing out that he is a "grown man" (line 231) who is able to

make a choice. She constructed herself in a similar way, as someone who is able to make a choice about what she wants to do in a sexual relationship. She also does not position herself in relation to the male sexual drive discourse as she is not constructing herself as a sex object there to satisfy her male partner in her relationship.

Pajuju's statement "if it's time to leave he might leave" (line 229) presents the situation fatalistically. She is constructing her partner's leaving or staying as not her choice and as something out of her hands. She is positioning herself as unable to change it or control it as nothing can be done to control or stop it. Interestingly, by mentioning the issue of sexual satisfaction, whether she is able to satisfy her male partner (line 229), in relation to the act of leaving or staying, she is constructing sexual satisfaction as the act used by woman to hold on to a male partner. Although she says that his leaving or staying is not related to sexual satisfaction, the fact that she mentions it means that there is still some positioning in relation to satisfaction of male sexual desires.

During this discussion, Talitha said.

471 T: ...I do not fear being rejected due to denying him sex. I fully trust my partner. I

472 have no reason to believe my actions could lead to infidelity.

[Talitha, 30y, S, PG, PO, SL2]

Talitha constructed herself as someone who does not fear being rejected by her male partner if she denies him sex. However, her lack of fear is constructed differently from Pajuju as it is around infidelity and not around her personal needs or desires. She rationalised her lack of fear by the amount of "trust" (line 471) she has for her male partner. Her being able to "fully trust" (line 471) her partner, provides her with a sexual agency to deny sex to her partner. She constructed her partner as trustworthy and faithful and as someone who is not affected by being denied sex. She also constructed her relationship as not being based on sexual activity. Talitha's response positions her as someone that does not draw on the male sexual drive discourse. She has constructed her partner as someone with a controllable sex drive.

Kekeletso did not expand much when she was engaging in a discussion about the same issue, but she was insistent. In her response she said,

372 K: No, I do not fear that he might leave if I reject his sexual advances. No, No.

[Kekeletso, 29y, S, PG, TC, SL1]

Similar to Talitha, Kekeletso constructed herself as someone who has no fear that her male partner might leave her if she denies him sex. She did not rationalise her lack of fear, however, she repeatedly said ‘no, no’ to emphasize how much she does not think that denying him sex would lead to him leaving. Her insistence can be viewed as constructing her relationship as a strong and trustworthy one, and one that is not based on sexual activity. Unlike Pajuju, Kekeletso does not leave everything to fate, she presents herself as being able to hold on to her male partner. Her response also constructs her as someone who has sexual agency as she is able to refuse her partner sex without any fear.

Although most of the participants presented themselves as not being afraid of losing their partners, or fearing that their male partners would commit infidelity, if they refused them sex, Samantha positioned herself differently. When asked if she was afraid of losing her male partner, or of him cheating on her, if she rejected his sexual advances, Samantha said the following,

116 S: Sometimes at the back of my head, I do think he might have sex with someone else
117 if I reject him often.

[Samantha, 29y, M, PG, GISC, SL2]

Samantha positioned herself as needing to ‘hold on’ to her male partner. She constructed herself as fearing that her husband “might have sex with someone else if [she] rejects [his sexual advances] often” (line 116 – 117). Samantha draws on the have/hold discourse in her rationalisation of her fear. Unlike Pajuju, who presented her situation fatalistically, Samantha constructed herself as having the ability to keep her male partner from having an extramarital affair. She constructed sexual activity as a possible way to keep her male partner from infidelity. Samantha’s fear of losing her partner and her need to hold on to him is also implied in how she, earlier in the discussion, constructed herself as sometimes feeling pressurised to have sex when her partner complained that she has rejected him too many times (line 106 – 107, section 5.1.1). It is also evident in how she has sex because her male partner wants it “all the time” (line 104). In this extract, Samantha is also drawing on the male sexual drive discourse and its assumptions that men may cheat or have multiple partners if they are denied sex, as their sexual drive is uncontrollable. Although Samantha presents as fearful and needing to hold on to her male partner which sometimes constrains her agency, her use of words “if I reject him often” (line 117) positions her as someone who has been able to reject her male

partner's sexual advances a few times. Although her sexual agency is sometimes constrained, she is able to exercise it.

In summary, most of the participants constructed themselves as having a sexual agency in their relationships. They demonstrated their ability to negotiate sexual activity and deny their partners, sex. Although, some show constrained agency at times, most of them have agency. Their agency seems to be related to being able to decide when to have sex, have discussions about sex, being able to decide about the use of contraceptives and being open about their sexual desires and needs. The next section focuses on how the participants constructed their femininity.

5.2 Constructing femininity

During a discussion with the participants about the expected role of women in their relationships, they constructed their femininity around societal/cultural norms. Some positioned themselves outside the societal norms, and some within the societal norms. These societal norms related to gendered roles, culture, submission, discipline, and so on. In constructing their femininity, the participants contrasted two different worlds. For example, Samantha said:

30 S: As a woman in the African culture, you are expected to be a submissive wife, to run
31 the household, clean, cook, wash etc. To respect and take care of your in-laws,
32 *ukukotiza* (to perform expected duties as a new daughter-in-law at the in-law's place
33 after the wedding day) and to bear children. Therefore, if you have mastered the
34 above... the community and families will be happy. Our culture, Zulu, advocates for
35 such when it comes to the role of women in a relationship but most importantly in a
36 marriage.

37 I: Are these the same expectations in your relationship?

38 S: In our community or culture these roles are still vital but however times have
39 changed, even though we are still guided by culture and traditions, such roles do not
40 become as important. For instance, I'm a working wife. I have a helper that helps me
41 with running the household, she washes and cleans. When our helper is not around, I

42 do the work [house chores] but sometimes my husband assists as well with maybe the
43 dishes or even washing of clothes. This happens in our own space but however I do not
44 think such would happen if we back in our community, the in-laws, due to traditional
45 influences.

[Samantha, 29y, M, PG, GISC, SL2]

Samantha presented and constructed a ‘culturally acceptable woman’. This is a married woman who is expected to master certain tasks and skills that make her acceptable to the in-laws and the community. She constructed “African culture” (line 30) and “traditions” (line 39) as a frame of reference for women, especially a married woman. She constructed a woman within the African culture as someone who is expected to be “submissive” (line 30) and to do “*ukukotiza*” (line 32) as a sign of “respect” (line 31) to the in-laws and to demonstrate her ability to take care of others. A woman’s success is achieved when “the community and families [are] happy” (line 34) with how she has “mastered” (line 33) the tasks and skills that she is expected to perform. She said that within the “community or culture these roles are still vital” (line 38) but she constructs “such roles” (line 39) as not “as important” (line 39 – 40) in her relationship as “times have changed” (line 38). Sometimes her “husband assists with the house chores” (line 42) in their own “space” (line 43) and when their helper is not around (line 41), and this demonstrates that fulfilling these roles is not as important. Being a “working wife” (line 40) also influences how she positions herself within this construction, as she has a helper. Having a helper means she does not have to perform all the duties that a culturally acceptable woman is expected to perform. She further said, “due to traditional influences” (line 44), her husband cannot perform house chores at her in-law’s house, as he sometimes does in their own home.

So, Samantha draws a sharp contrast between the world outside her relationship, and the world inside. In contrasting the two positions, she demonstrated the different sets of expectations which are related to the world outside their relationship and the world ‘inside’. She demonstrated how the gendered expectations and practices are different in relation to her relationship.

During a discussion on the same topic, Talitha also constructed two different worlds for women.

422 T: We now live in a world where men and women are equal. We see this, especially in
423 the working environment. However, culture will never change. The women’s role is to

424 be a nurturer, to make sure the home is in order and see to her partner's needs. The role
425 of the man is to be the provider. The woman plays extremely significant roles in the
426 relationships.

427 I: Are these the same expectations in your relationship?

428 T: In my relationship we are both equals. However, my culture seems deep, I am rooted
429 with the behaviour of my mother, to be a nurturer, to be gentle, to do home duties and
430 make sure the home is warm.

[Talitha, 30y, S, PG, PO, SL2]

In her response, Talitha constructed a world of equality which is a working environment, “a world where men and women are equal” (line 422). She also constructed a world that is embedded in culture. She constructed culture as being fixed and she says it “will never change” (line 423), meaning culturally accepted gendered roles will not change despite now living “in a world where men and women are equal” (line 423). This implies that women have to position themselves according to where they are, for example, at work they can be equal to men but outside of this work context they have to position themselves according to cultural norms. She further constructed masculinity as being based on being “a provider” (line 424 – 425).

She constructed herself as being in a relationship of equals, a space where she and her male partner are equals (line 428). It seems as if equality, in her case, does not end at work but also extends to her relationship. Although she is in a relationship of equals, she however, was quick to position herself as a culturally embedded woman, as demonstrated by how she framed her culture as “deep” (line 428). She said she is “rooted with the behaviour of her mother” (line 428 – 429) constructing her mother's behaviour as her frame of reference in how she positions herself within the culture. In saying this she is embracing cultural norms and the expectations that exist within a culture. So unlike Samantha, it seems that Talitha positions herself in a cultural frame, but she focuses on the positively toned qualities from that context, and the set of motherly practices and roles such as being a nurturer, being gentle, being responsible for the home, being dutiful in the home and warming the house (line 429 – 430).

During this discussion, Kekeletso said,

295 K: Women in relationships are generally expected to be nurturers, take care of the
296 family. In the current economic climate, women generally have to work as well, so
297 cannot be home just taking care of the household needs. They also have to study further.

298 Generally, I find that women are all under too much pressure to be the perfect mom,
299 wife and be smart. And generally, there is not enough support because one comes back
300 from work there are kids, homework, cooking and other chores which in most cases
301 partners or husbands do not help out with, and these are daily needs.

302 I: Are these the same expectations in your relationship?

303 K: My partner tries where he can, to help out with chores but it is not every day. And
304 in some cases he will say do not cook, I will get takeaways or do not wash the dishes
305 will see another day however, because of my specialization, at the back of my mind
306 there is always the guilt, ‘what will my mom think with an untidy house on that
307 particular day’.

[Kekeletso, 29y, S, PG, TC, SL1]

Kekeletso constructed femininity around women’s ability to nurture and take care of the family as contained in the statement “women in relationships are generally expected to be nurturers [and] to take care of the family” (line 295). She constructed an overwhelmed woman, and this relates to a working woman who is also solely responsible for taking care of the family and the house chores. She constructed these women as being “under too much pressure to be the perfect mom, wife” (line 298) and also “be smart” (line 299). She positions women as overwhelmed because they have to meet everyone’s needs such as attending to children, help their children with their schoolwork and also ‘cook and do other chores (line 300). In their attempts to meet everyone’s needs usually “there is not enough support” from the male partners or spouse. She constructed male partners as ‘not helping out’ in terms of the all the housework that needs to be done by a woman after she comes back from work.

Like Talitha, Kekeletso constructed her outside world and the inside of her relationship differently. She positioned herself outside the construction of an overwhelmed woman as she says her male partner “tries where he can, to help out with chores but it is not every day” (line 303). She constructed a relationship that has gendered roles but she positioned her male partner as someone who does not expect her to always perform her gendered roles as in some cases he tells her “do not cook, I will get takeaways or do not wash the dishes” (line 304). It seems whether she performs her role or not is dependent on her partner. Although, her male partner helps out and releases her from her expected duties, she, however, struggles with “guilt” (line 306) whenever she does not perform the expected house chores. She linked her guilt to the fear

of being judged, and the fear of disappointing her mother. This is implied by “what will my mom think with an untidy house on that particular day” (line 306 - 307). She also constructed her role of doing house chores as her “specialization” (line 305) which was interesting. This implied that she frames her femininity around her ability to perform her house chores, and nurturing.

Unlike the other participants, during the discussion on this issue, Pajuju did not contrast two worlds. Her outside and inside world were constructed similar to each other. In describing women’s expected role in their relationship, she said,

174 P: ...Just humbleness, a woman who knows when and how to speak with her man.
175 Respect is the main key to every relationship or family. As woman you need to care for
176 your family, change the house to be a home. She’s expected to be welcoming...a place
177 where every member cry on and find the words of encouragement and wisdom and
178 resting place where no questions asked only solutions are obtained.

179 I: Are these the same expectations in your relationship?

180 P: ...these are my expectations most especially the respect for my partner and the entire
181 family because as I am sowing respect... am definitely expecting to reap one. So, if am
182 raising my kids with respect, I am building the respectful future community. If am not
183 meeting my expectations, am killing the community by firstly raising the disrespectful
184 children and also they will try and find some other things like drugs, boyfriends or
185 girlfriends to console them since they do not find this warmth at home.

[Pajuju, 31y, S, UG, PO, SL1]

In these words, she presented and constructed a humble (line 174) and disciplined woman. She positioned this type of woman as a strategist and diplomatic as she “knows when and how to speak to her man” (line 174). This woman has discipline and constraint, meaning she has no freedom to talk to her man when she wants to, only at certain times and in certain ways. Pajuju constructed “respect as the main key that women need to have in their relationships or family” (line 174 – 175). Referring to respect as the ‘main key’ in a relationship suggests that the relationship is dependent on women’s obedience and discipline, and the ability to constrain themselves and show humility. She further constructed a woman’s role in a relationship as that of someone that “need(s) to care” (line 175) for the family, providing refuge, support, comfort and guidance to her family members (line 176 – 177).

Pajuju positioned herself with this construction of femininity. She presented herself as someone that highly values “respect” (line 180) for her partner and the entire family. She said, “because as I am sowing respect... am definitely expecting to reap one” (line 181) to rationalise her positioning. She is constructing women and children as expected to show respect. This is evident in how she positioned herself as instilling respect in her children as well. In instilling it, she is hoping that she is “building the respectful future community” (line 182). She further said, “if (I) am not meeting my expectations [of instilling respect], (I) am killing the community by firstly raising the disrespectful children” (line 183). This construction holds women solely responsible and accountable for the momentous burden of how children are raised and taught acceptable societal values. She constructed femininity in relation to her success with being able to solely carry such a huge burden. She also linked it to having done her job of ensuring that her children do not seek comfort in “other things like drugs, boyfriends or girlfriends” (line 184 – 185). In this case, femininity is about being able to successfully provides refuge, comfort within the house, as well as instil respect. Her construction of femininity is positioned with ‘traditional femininity’ as it was described in the literature review.

In a discussion on a different matter, Pajuju constructed her femininity around discipline and nurturing. She said,

189 P: ...My role is to encourage him [referring to her male partner] and have positive
190 inputs and solutions when required.

[Pajuju, 31y, S, UG, PO, SL1]

Here she constructed her femininity around her role of being able to give to, or provide for, her man, in their relationship. She has to provide “encouragement and positive inputs and solutions to her male partner” (line 189 – 190). However, this role cannot be spontaneous or initiated by her, it is provided only “when required” (line 190). This kind of a relationship seems very dependent on her male partner.

In summary, societal and gender norms seemed to underpin the participants’ framing of femininity. Some participants are more deeply entrenched in these norms, but some are torn. Although some of the participants considered social norms relatively unimportant, this does not seem to be the case as they had to abide by social norms in other social contexts because they feared being judged. Some of the male partners were constructed as making attempts to achieve gender equity in their relationships. This section shows how gender constructions are

maintained in relationships and how they become part of an identity. The next section focuses on women's expectations in terms of the male provider role, and the have/hold discourse.

5.3 Expectations in relationships

The participants had similar constructions around their expectations in relationships. These constructions were based on the male provider role, and on the have/hold discourse. Their views varied regarding the male provider role, but they seemed similar in relation to the have/hold discourse.

5.3.1 Male provider role

Each participant was asked about women's expectations in relationships, as well as their own expectations, and some constructed their expectations around the male provider role. For example, Talitha said the following:

437 T: ...Some women believe that a man should provide, give them all the material things
438 that they need. One's maturity levels and future aspirations have a lot to do with the of
439 kind relationship women engage in.

440 I: Are these the same expectations that you have in your relationship?

441 T: I am a firm believer in women's independence. A woman cannot rely on a man for
442 things she may need. That is why education is so important. There is nothing greater
443 than having your own car, money, house, etc. A man can pamper you but not become
444 your ATM.

[Talitha, 30y, S, PG, PO, SL2]

In the above extract, Talitha constructed other women as expecting men to provide "all the material things they need" (line 437). She constructed herself differently from these women. She constructed herself as a "firm believer in women's independence" (line 441). She rejected the male provider discourse as implied by her comment that "a woman cannot rely on a man for things she may need" (line 441 – 442). Interestingly, Talitha used 'cannot' in this statement and in this context, it seems to have been used as a way of prohibiting women from depending on men 'for things that they need'. She also constructed women's financial independence as a 'need' for all women and as what women need to strive for, so that they are free from

financially relying on men. To rationalise her point, she goes on to emphasize the value of education in relation to women independence. The words “that is why education is so important” (line 442) construct education as an important tool that can provide women with independence. Her words “nothing greater than” (line 443) positions women’s independence as freedom and a feeling of being liberated, being in control and having power.

Talitha constructed herself as an advocate for women’s independence. In the extract, she said “a man can pamper you but not become your ATM” (line 443 – 444) to position women as being allowed to accept frivolities, such as receiving gifts, being pampered or spoiling, by their male partners, despite this independent stance. She used the word “ATM” in almost a derogatory way, judging those who use men as their providers and as a source of money.

During a similar discussion with Kekeletso, she commented:

325 I: ...what would you say women expect from relationships? And what do you think
326 makes them have those expectations?

327 K: ...some women do expect monetary incentives from men, it is mostly about the
328 lifestyle you lead I suppose and the and the crowd you hang out with.

329 I: Are these the same expectations that you have from relationships?

330 K: What I expect is love, loyalty, respect, quality time, affection, and support from my
331 relationship. I do not expect monetary incentives. I got in the relationship not for that
332 I was raised to be independent

...

334 I was never the type of an individual who like fancy things

...

336 For a while my boyfriend was a bit uncomfortable that I did not ask him for money
337 but I will always explain, I am not there for that, but obviously he does spoil me with
338 gifts and I also do the same.

[Kekeletso, 29y, S, PG, TC, SL1]

In this above extract, Kekeletso constructed some women as “expecting monetary incentives from men” (line 327). She constructed the type of “lifestyle” (line 327) that some women lead as the reason for having such an expectation. Like Talitha, she constructed herself differently from these women. She constructed herself as not expecting a man to provide for her (line 331). She rationalised her response by saying “I got in the relationship not for that, I was raised to be

independent” (line 331 – 332). She positioned herself as independent of him and not in the relationship ‘for that’ referring to the financial support. She attributes her independence to her upbringing.

To further construct herself as independent she continued to say, “for a while my boyfriend was a bit uncomfortable that I did not ask him for money but I will always explain I am not there for that” (line 336 – 337). She constructed her boyfriend as being ‘uncomfortable’ with having a woman that did not ask him for money. She positioned herself as being steadfast in her independence as she finds herself ‘always’ explaining to her boyfriend that she is not in the relationship ‘for that’. Kekeletso is rejecting the male provider discourse as she refuses to be financially dependent on her boyfriend. Her independence might have challenged the boyfriend’s masculinity which made him ‘uncomfortable’ as he is unable to fulfil the commonly expected. Her stance could have been seen as casting doubt on his status as a man and this might have reflected badly on him.

Like Talitha, Kekeletso positioned herself as someone that does not mind getting gifts from her male partner, despite her independent stance. She constructed herself and her partner as being on an equal footing as either of them can spoil the other, “he does spoil me with gifts and I also do the same” (line 337 – 338). She presented herself as someone who reciprocates her partner’s gift-giving. This could imply that she wants to maintain her independence within the relationship, as well as ensure a balance of power and control within the relationship.

Pajuju said the following during a discussion about women’s expectations from relationships:

190 I: What would you say women expect from relationships?

...

192 P: Someone to grow up with and have same relationship goals but with this crazy
193 economy of our Republic it should be someone who can be able to provide [financially].

194 I: Do you have the same expectations from your relationship.

195 P: ...these are my expectations but if the partner does not give me incentives, I can stay
196 [in a relationship] as long as he shows abilities of being a family man i.e., buying
197 groceries for his family.

[Pajuju, 31y, S, UG, PO, SL1]

Pajuju draws on the male provider discourse. She expects her male partner to fulfil a ‘provider’ role. She constructed a provider masculinity that is based on the man’s ability to be “family man” (line 196). This family man is constructed as someone that shows the ability to provide food for his family (line 196 – 197). Pajuju constructed this as her condition of staying in a relationship if her male partner was unable to provide monetary incentives for her directly (line 196). Regardless of her ability to provide for herself, Pajuju draws from the male provider discourse and she uses this as a condition for staying in a relationship. The use of monetary incentives is a very interesting phrase as it suggests that she is doing something that she feels deserves an incentive.

During a discussion on the same topic, Samantha said:

58 S: ...If a man can afford then he should take you out, buy you weaves, give you money.
59 Even when a man cannot afford, he should make means to at least spoiling you once in
60 a while. Personally, I believe that a man should provide fully in a relationship. The bible
61 even says husbands love your wives. Husbands ought to love their wives as their own
62 bodies. After all, no-one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their
63 body. But, however, in my relationship I also take my husband out, buy him things and
64 even give him money.

...

66 S: I do expect my husband to buy me things, spoil me and give me money but
67 sometimes, times are tough that I have to chip in...
68 He spoils me most of the time but when he can’t I see no problem of me
69 also returning the favour.

[Samantha, 29y, M, PG, GISC, SL2]

Similar to Pajuju, Samantha draws on the ‘male provider discourse’. She constructed a male provider role based on two types of man, those that can afford to do this and those that cannot afford to provide. She said that if a man can afford it, “he should take you out, buy your weaves and give you money” (line 58). She further said even when he cannot afford it “he should make means to spoil you once in a while” (line 59). Despite the financial status of these men, in her construction, both have an obligation to provide for the women, and this is implied by the use of ‘should’ in the construction of the provider roles of both of these men. She even states clearly, “personally, I believe that a man should provide fully in a relationship” (line 60). To rationalise her stand regarding the ‘male provider role’ she used the Bible, “the bible even says

husbands love your wives. Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies...no-one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body.” (line 61 – 63). Despite this position, she counters with positioning herself as a contributor and also a provider: “I also take my husband out, buy him things and even give him money” (line 63 – 64). Lines 68 – 69 suggest that this gesture is occasional, as it only occurs ‘when he can’t’ provide for her. Interestingly, she refers to her spoiling of her husband as “returning the favours’ (line 68 – 69), constructing her actions as ones of kindness/love.

5.3.2 Have/hold discourse

During a discussion with participants about their relationships and what they mean to them, all of the participants drew on the have/hold discourse. In the extract below Talitha said:

431 T: Being in a relationship allows me to love and to be loved. To give myself to someone
432 else and to trust them with my heart and my goal is happiness, joy, peace and fulfilment.

[Talitha, 30y, S, PG, PO, SL2]

With these words, Talitha positions herself as being in her relationship because of a need for love, and her need to love someone: “being in a relationship allows me to love and to be loved” (line 431). She positioned herself as wanting to commit to someone by ‘giving’ herself to them, suggesting that she wants to get a man and hold him. The word ‘give’ contained in “to give myself to someone” (line 431) conjures up objectification. It suggests that she is being an object for someone else. She further said that she wants someone she can “trust...with my heart” (line 431 – 432). Her words “trust them with my heart” (line 432) positions her as needing commitment from a partner. She further positioned herself as aiming to get “happiness, joy, peace and fulfilment” (line 432) from her relationship.

When discussing the same issue Kekeletso said the following,

290 K: This relationship for me is about friendship because that was the foundation of it.
291 We were very close friends before becoming lovers. He is someone who has seen me
292 at my worst at school, when my career was not doing so well, when my family was
293 having problems and he has been with me through it. He supported me the best he can.
294 I also do the same.

[Kekeletso, 29y, S, PG, TC, SL1]

Kekeletso constructed the meaning of a relationship around “friendship” (line 290). She said, “this relationship for me is about friendship because that was the foundation of it” (line 290). She also constructed the meaning of a relationship around loyalty, emotional support and commitment. Further on in the interview, when she was asked about her expectations in a relationship, she said:

330 K: What I expect is love, loyalty, respect, quality time, affection, and support from my
331 relationship. I do not expect monetary incentives. I got in the relationship not for that
332 I was raised to be independent...

[Kekeletso, 29y, S, PG, TC, SL1]

In this above extract (as shown also in 5.3.1), Kekeletso constructed her expectations around the assumptions of the have and hold discourse such as “love, loyalty, respect, quality time, affection, and support from my relationship” (line 330 – 331).

In discussing the same topic Pajuju also drew on the have/hold discourse. She said,

188 P: Getting married to a partner that will grow with me and trust me with his goals and
189 yes, provides for his family. My role is to encourage him and have positive inputs and
190 solutions when required.

[Pajuju, 31y, S, UG, PO, SL1]

She constructed the meaning of being in a relationship around “getting married” (line 188). She constructed the meaning of her relationship around having commitment and being trusted by her partner. For her, having her man ‘trust’ her with “his goals” (line 188) is perhaps seen as reflecting her importance in his life, as well as commitment. This construction is based on the assumptions of the have/hold discourse that women in relationships need to hold on to their men and they also need love. She also constructed the meaning of being in her relationship around her male partner’s ability to fulfil his male provider role. This reiterates her positioning with the male provider role as discussed in section 5.3.1. She also constructed her relationship as being based on her actions, specifically fulfilling a role of providing emotional support by

“encouraging him” (line 189) and through providing “positive inputs and solutions to her male partner” (line 189 – 190).

The same constructions around the have/hold discourse were made by Samantha. She said,

52 S: Since I’m already married my goal is to have a healthy marriage with lots of love
53 and fun but most importantly trust, faithfulness and loyalty and a lot of money till
54 death do us apart [part].

[Samantha, 29y, M, PG, GISC, SL2]

She firstly mentioned that she is “already married” which shows that this means a lot to her. She further positioned herself as needing “lots of love”, “fun” in her relationship and “most importantly” she needs “trust, faithfulness and loyalty” (line 52-53). The have/hold assumptions such as trust, love, commitment and loyalty are also seen in this relationship as holding importance. Her drawing on the have/hold discourse is also evident in her expression “till death do us apart [part]” (line 54) which positions her as needing to hold on to her relationship. Additionally, money holds importance in Samantha’s relationship as she positioned herself as needing “lots of money” (line 53).

In summary, these young women differed in their expectations of the male provider role. Some expect their male partners to financially support them whilst some did not have this expectation, almost rejecting the male provider role. Talitha and Kekeletso constructed themselves as independent women who do not expect their male partners to financially support them. Despite this, they were not against their partners spoiling them with gifts. Kekeletso further constructed reciprocity in her relationship, to maintain an equal footing. Pajuju and Samantha positioned themselves and their partners within the expectations of the male provider role. The next section focuses on the vulnerability of women in their relationship.

5.4 Vulnerability

This section focuses on vulnerability in general which includes vulnerability to the risk of violence, such as, gender-based violence, intimate partner violence or emotional abuse, as well as vulnerability to the risk of HIV. In discussing vulnerability, the financial dependence of

women on their male partners, the have and hold discourse, education, financial independence, and personal experiences of abuse, were discussed.

5.4.1 Being abused

During the discussion on abuse, some participants revealed that they had personal experiences of abuse in previous relationships. Outlining these experiences is important for these findings because it provides a perspective on why these women are constructing or positioning themselves the way they are. They constructed themselves as being stuck in the relationship by drawing on the concepts of love and hope. For example, Talitha revealed that she had been in an abusive relationship previously.

450 T: I think we have all experienced abuse one way or another. The most popular form of
451 abuse is emotional abuse. Women generally have lots of love and care for people, which
452 tends to be misused by opportunistic men. I have experienced this in a relationship
453 where I felt bad and sorry for him and delayed in exiting the relationship.

[Talitha, 30y, S, PG, PO, SL2]

In her response Talitha constructed women as having “lots of love and care for people” (line 451). Her construction of women shows that she is drawing on the ‘have and hold discourse’. She presented women as being ‘normally’ “misused by opportunistic men” (line 452) because they are loving and caring. Her construction of ‘opportunistic’ men is interesting. She constructs them as taking advantage women’s loving nature. Her construction of men and of women in this way draws on women as victims and as vulnerable because of their emotional characteristics, and men as exploitative. In her construction of this relationship between men and women, she positions herself as the loving woman, who was exploited. She constructs herself as loving and caring for her male partner by saying “[I] delayed exiting the [abusive] relationship because I felt bad and sorry for him” (line 453). In positioning herself as loving and caring, she was perhaps trying to ‘hold’ onto her male partner. In this way she draws on the have/hold discourse to rationalise her actions. Taking on this positioning of the loving caring woman potentially increased her vulnerability to more abuse.

Similarly, Samantha commented on her experience of abuse in her previous relationship, physical abuse in her case. She also struggled to leave the relationship for quite a while.

78 S: I have been abused in a relationship before, my ex would physically abuse, hit me
79 for speaking to him in a disrespectful manner, he suspected that I was cheating on him,
80 for not answering my phone and so on.

81 I: How often did it happen? Why do you think the abuse occurred?

82 S: Maybe it happened four times and the fifth time he nearly killed me for breaking up
83 with him. He abused me because he was doubting himself, had low self-esteem, also
84 suspecting that I was cheating.

85 I: How did you react?...

86 S: ...I stayed with him because I believed he would change until he tried to kill
87 himself then I left for good

[Samantha, 29y, M, PG, GISC, SL2]

This extract shows that Samantha struggled to leave her previous relationship even though she was being physically abused. She said that she was abused for “speaking to him in a disrespectful manner, he suspected that I was cheating on him, for not answering my phone” (line 78 – 80) among other things. In this account she constructs a relationship of unequal power and patriarchy, where her male partner dominated over and controlled her. She positions herself as the victim and him as the more powerful partner in their relationship. He was in control of the relationship and her behaviour as he was deciding what is acceptable behaviour and what is not, for example, how to talk and whether to answer the phone. He is constructed as someone suspicious of her actions. She rationalised his action as being related to his self-esteem. Samantha positions herself as committed as suggested by her words that she stayed because she “believed that her partner would change” (line 86). She was drawing from the have and hold discourse to position herself and rationalise her behaviour. Her position was complicated because there was extreme abuse and her male partner positioned her as the ‘bad’ person.

When Kekeletso was asked if she had ever been abused in a relationship, she responded as follows.

345 K: No, not in my recent relationship. I was sexually assaulted by a friend, who was a
346 guy, who was asking me out. It was in 2006 and it happened once. He was trying to

347 rape me. It occurred because, so he said, he was trying to make me less coconut or
348 cheese and to see if I can say no to him when he was trying to have sex with me. It
349 messed most of those years thereafter, I could not concentrate much...

[Kekeletso, 29y, S, PG, TC, SL1]

In this account of an abusive interaction, Kekeletso positions herself as a victim of sexual assault. She was assaulted by a person who asked her out and whom she considered a friend. She presents the abuse as an attempted rape “he was trying to rape me”. She says that at the time he rationalised his behaviour by referring to her presentation and identity. He had argued that “he was trying to make me less coconut or cheese” (line 347). “Coconut” or “cheese” are derogatory terms used to refer to black people that are thought to have betrayed their race or culture by behaving or speaking like white people. Sexual assault, in this instance was a way to exert control and domination over her. She further said that he also rationalised his behaviour by presenting himself as ‘testing’ her. His rationalisation that he wanted to “see if I can say no to him when he is trying to have sex with me” (line 348), illustrates his dominance and his recourse to patriarchal assumptions. She is positioned as someone that has to resist him, he constructs himself as the one deciding about and acting on her sexually. Three of the four participants presented accounts of abusive interactions with men. This shows that despite education and financial resources, women are still vulnerable to abuse.

The next section continues to look at vulnerability but now focuses on how emotional needs increase women’s vulnerability in their relationships.

5.4.2 Emotional needs increase women’s vulnerability

When discussing the vulnerability of women in their relationships, the participants drew on the have and hold discourse. They presented their actions around various emotional components such as love, trust and affection, in relationships as increasing women’s vulnerability to HIV and STI’s. For example, Samantha said,

73 S: In a relationship when your partner fulfils your expectations, you get easily attached,
74 you fall in love and become very comfortable. Therefore, becoming more vulnerable to
75 HIV or even STIs, because you trust this person and he meets your expectations, so we
76 tend to let our guards down.

[Samantha, 29y, M, PG, GISC, SL2]

In this extract, she constructed “falling in love”, “becoming very comfortable”, “getting attached” and “trust” (line 75) as resulting in women “becoming more vulnerable to HIV or even STIs” (line 74 – 75) in their relationships. She constructed these women as prioritising love, trust and affection in their relationships especially when their male partners fulfil their expectations. In her use of these terms, she is drawing on the assumptions of the have/hold discourse, for example that women expect something in a relationship, that they ‘obtain’ the relationship, and then they ‘relax’ in the relationship, when they ‘have’ the relationship. She constructs the situation of risk by positioning woman as focussing on love and trust in relationships. This is what creates the ‘vulnerability’. She comments that women let “their guards down” (line 76), suggesting that women are potentially at fault. In this construction women need to be on their guard, and defensive, in relationships. The words “we tend to let our guards down” (line 76) constructs an unequal expectation of the role of men and the role of women. Women are more at risk because they love and trust. These emotions and expressions of emotions in a relationship are a risk. It constructs a situation where women have to be on guard all the time, not relaxed or trusting and a situation where they have to take responsibility to protect themselves against the risk of HIV. She seems to position herself within this construction as she uses ‘we’ in this account.

Further on in the interview, she again drew on the have and hold discourse to rationalise the behaviour of women who stay in abusive relationships. During this discussion she said,

94 S: I do not judge any women that stays in an abusive relationship or with a cheating
95 partner because they believe that their partners are still going to change, and sometimes
96 I think they stay because there are children involved or they are fully dependent on their
97 [male] partner. Societal expectations do play a role in their decisions because we are
98 taught to tolerate or hold on, *ukubekezela* (to persevere) in Zulu. And sometimes if a
99 man does everything for you, it is really difficult to leave him.

[Samantha, 29y, M, PG, GISC, SL2]

Samantha constructed some of the risks in relationships as abuse and infidelity. She positions women in abusive relationships or with unfaithful partners as holding on to the belief or hope that “their partners will change” (line 95) their behaviour and this keeps them stuck in these relationships. In this positioning, the women are in a passive position as they are dependent on

their male partners to change. This shows a constrained agency. She also positioned these women as holding on to, and keeping, their relationships “because there are children involved” (line 96). Women might be scared that their children would be affected by the breakup of a family, if they leave. Therefore, this potentially increases their vulnerability to the risk of abuse and HIV.

Further, Samantha constructed societal expectations and teachings within cultures as “playing a role” (line 97) in these women’s decision to stay in difficult relationships. She constructed culture as ‘teaching’ women submission and passivity, which are demonstrated through “holding on” and “*ukubekezela* (perseverance)” (line 98) in their relationships. In her account she constructs women as needing to adhere to these cultural expectations and practices. Teaching women to ‘*ukubekezela*’ and requiring them to ‘hold on’ (to the relationship, their male partner and also to themselves, despite the difficult conditions in the relationship), constraints their agency, and potentially increases their vulnerability. In her expression “we are taught to tolerate or hold on, *ukubekezela* (to persevere)” (line 97 – 98), she used ‘we’ which positions her with the women that hold on to relationships regardless of the abuse. This perhaps explains why she also stayed in her previous abusive relationship and also positioned herself (in line 94) as being non-judgemental towards women that stay in abusive relationships. The expression ‘hold on’ is an interesting one because it does the positioning in two ways – women are expected to ‘hold on’ to their ‘man’, as one of the assumptions of the have hold discourse. In holding on, they maintain their status and identity in society. The expression also suggests ‘holding on’ to themselves, keeping themselves together, despite what is happening to them.

Kekeletso also drew on the have and hold discourse to rationalise the behaviour of women who continue to stay in abusive relationships.

356 K: Women stay in abusive relationships for different reasons. I think some because they
357 have been so emotionally abused, they have been made to believe they are nothing
358 without their partners and no-one else will love them. Some stay because they are
359 threatened that if you leave the partner will kill you...

[Kekeletso, 29y, S, PG, TC, SL1]

In this account Kekeletso constructs abused women as being deeply “emotionally abused” (line 357). She positioned these abused women as helpless victims with very little self-esteem being

“made to believe they are nothing without their partners and [that] no-one else will love them” (line 357 – 358). Again, this construction positions woman as having emotional needs and wants in the relationship. Kekeletso constructs the ‘others’ as threatening these women with the withdrawal of this emotional resource. In using these words, she is also drawing on the assumption in the have and hold discourse that one’s status and identity is linked to having a male partner. They would therefore ‘be nothing’ without this partner, and they would not be able to secure, or ‘have’, another relationship. The extent of these women’s subjugation to the assumptions in this discourse is shown in the threat, “threatened” (line 359), by their male partners, with death, if they leave the relationship (“if you leave the partner will kill you” (line 359). Being positioned in this way constraints these women’s choice, and agency.

During a similar discussion about women who stay in abusive relationships, Talitha said,

459 T: Women stay in abusive relationships because they have hope that the person will
460 change. Women also fear being alone and being rejected. We find ourselves staying in
461 toxic relationship because we are comfortable. Some women stay because they are
462 scared of what society will say. They stay because of the monetary value, they will lose.
463 They stay for children, so they won’t be too affected. All these things I have mentioned
464 influence their decision to leave the relationship.

[Talitha, 30y, S, PG, PO, SL2]

In this account Talitha also drew on the have and hold discourse to position and rationalise these women’s behaviour. She constructed women as having the “fear of being alone and being rejected” (line 460) to rationalise why women endure abuse in their relationships. The fear of being judged contained in the words “women stay because they are scared of what society will say” (line 461 – 462) also motivates ‘some’ women to stay in abusive relationships. In these constructions, she positions women as being concerned about their identity and their position in society. They fear being identified as unable to have and hold a man. They also fear losing their status in society which is linked to being paired with a man.

She also positioned these women as having “hope that the person [male partner] will change” (line 459 – 460). By saying this, she positions women as maintaining and longing for a particular response from their male partners, which makes them to continue to hold on to those desires and expectations of men. As discussed above, Talitha had previously stayed in an abusive relationship because she believed that her male partner would change. This positions

her in a similar way to these women. Like Samantha, she also constructed having children as making women vulnerable to abuse because they stay in abusive relationships so that their children “won’t be too affected” (line 463). The have and hold discourse is at play in these constructions as women are constructed as willing to stay in abusive and toxic relationships as long as they are seen as being able to have and to keep a man. Maintaining their position and identity in the society becomes a priority, above protection of self.

Pajuju’s account reflects similar constructions regarding abused women. She said:

209 P: Women stay in abusive relationships because of the pressure. They are afraid to start
210 a new relationship, because of what their surroundings will think of them, [because
211 of] emotional blackmail from the partner like ‘who is going to provide for you’, not
212 having a support system that they can rely on and denial.

[Pajuju, 31y, S, UG, PO, SL1]

She constructed women’s vulnerability around the have and hold discourse. She constructed the fear of “starting a new relationship” (line 210) as the reason some women tolerate abuse in their relationships. This suggests that having a relationship and then another one, is something perceived as not good for how women are expected to behave within the society. This might be perceived as promiscuity. This could also imply that they cannot have and ‘hold’ on to a man. She positioned them as holding on to their abusive relationships as they fear being judged by “their surroundings” (line 210). They fear what the society or family would “think of them” (line 210) if they leave their relationships. This constructs a social context in which as a woman, being attached to a man is all important, even more than one’s own needs or desires. This positions women as being more concerned about their social status and identity. They hold on to their relationships as long as they are perceived as being able to hold on to a man.

Pajuju also constructs “not having a support system that they can rely on” (line 212) as keeping women in abusive relationships. This constructs a social context that is not supporting women’s independence, their self-sufficiency or agency. In this context, it is difficult to be single as a woman without experiencing social judgement, therefore there might be no support for you. She positioned some women as being in “denial” (line 212) and refusing to accept that their relationships are abusive. They may want to deny the abuse because they want to hold on to their men.

The next section is focused on how financial dependence on men potentially increases women's vulnerability in relationships. Some of the extracts in this section are also discussed in the next section.

5.4.3 Financial dependence increases women's vulnerability

In the extracts discussed in section 5.4.2, the participants also constructed financial dependence as another factor that increases women's vulnerability in their relationships. For example, in section 5.4.2, lines 96 – 97 and 98 - 99, Samantha constructed financial dependence on men as a factor that keeps women in abusive relationships. She said that abused women are stuck in their relationships because they are “fully dependent on their [male] partners” (line 96 – 97). She also said that “and sometimes if a man does everything for you, it is really difficult to leave him.” (line 98 – 99). This positions these women in two ways. Some stay because they see no other option because they are fully dependent on their male partners. It also positions some women as choosing to stay because their male partners do everything for them. This positions these women in situations where they are vulnerable. Her earlier construction of herself, in the above extracts in section 5.3.1, where she strongly positioned herself with the male provider discourse even using Bible verses to rationalise her stance, perhaps positions her inside this construction.

Later in the interview during a discussion about women's vulnerability, Samantha was asked if women's financial independence is significant in relationships, she said the following:

127 S: Yes, it is, as women we should be able to do things for ourselves and not fully rely
128 on your partner to do everything. I do believe that a higher economic status lowers
129 women's expectations because they can afford to provide for themselves.

[Samantha, 29y, M, PG, GISC, SL2]

In this extract, she constructed the importance of women's financial independence. She said that women should “not fully rely on their [male] partner to do everything” (line 127 – 128). She argues that women should refrain from ‘fully’ relying on their partners but they “should be able to do things” (line 127) for themselves. She uses the word ‘fully’ in ‘not fully rely’ which constructs an expectation that a man should provide financially for women even if he does not provide fully. She further said, “as women we should be able to do things for

ourselves” (line 127). She used words like ‘we’ and ‘ourselves’ which suggest that she positions herself within this construction. By using the term ‘should’ in ‘we should be’ she constructs it as an imperative that they should manage to do things for themselves. Being financially independent might ensure that women are not caught in a situation where they constantly have to try to meet their men’s needs and desires.

Further, she positions women with a “higher economic status” (line 128) as having fewer expectations of men to fulfil the provider role “because they can afford to provide for themselves” (line 129). A woman who expects a man to provide for her, might not be in a position to refuse when he demands favours from her such as sex or unprotected sex, because he might feel that he has bought those favours from her. In presenting these constructions, she is positioning women who have fewer expectations of men, and less economic dependence on men, as having reduced vulnerability in their relationships.

It is important to note the contradiction in her constructions. Earlier in the interview as shown in section 5.3.1 under the discussion about the male provider role, she positioned herself as having expectations of her male partner to financially support her, despite the fact that she can afford to support herself. It is interesting that her economic independence has not lowered her own expectations of a male provider.

In section 5.4.2, line 211, Pajuju positioned abused women as being “emotionally blackmailed” (line 211) by their partners about “who is going to provide” (line 211) for them. She constructs the male partner as firmly positioned in the ‘provider’ discourse. The fear of not having any financial support is also constructed as putting women in vulnerable positions as they continue to stay in abusive relationships. In line 212 of the same extract, she also positioned some women as lacking “a support system that they can rely on” (line 212) and therefore this keeps them in the abusive relationship. In this account she could also be referring to financial and economic support. Having no support may leave such women without any choice but to stay in their abusive relationships.

In section 5.4.2, in line 461, Talitha also constructed abused women as being “comfortable” (line 461) to the extent that they stay in “toxic relationship[s]” (line 461). It is possible that the term ‘comfort’ refers to being provided for financially by her male partner. In line 462, of the same extract, she said “they [abused women] stay because of the monetary value, they will lose”. She positions these women as being in a constrained and desperate situation where they

do not want to risk losing financial resources from these relationships. Such situations would potentially increase their vulnerability to HIV.

In an earlier discussion with the participants about the risk factors that increase women's vulnerability in their relationships, Talitha is seen again constructing women's vulnerability in relation to financial dependence:

445 T: as women we put ourselves in very compromising situations. We like things, don't
446 want to work hard, but enjoy handouts. Most women end up using their looks and body
447 get to what they want. They end up being raped, physically and emotionally abused
448 because they can't leave this relationship as it comes with monetary benefits.

[Talitha, 30y, S, PG, PO, SL2]

In this extract, she constructed women as putting themselves in “compromising situations” (line 445) just to get monetary benefits. She is blaming and disapproving of these women's behaviour. She is also judging these women as being lazy as she says they “like things [but] don't want to work hard” instead they “enjoy handouts” (line 445 – 446) from their men. ‘Like things’ is a direct translation from *isiZulu* which is ‘*uthand'izinto*’, which is usually used when referring to a person who is materialistic or who loves a fancy lifestyle. She positioned “most women” (line 446) as using their physical appearance, such as “their looks and body” (line 446- 447) to be provided with the type of lifestyles that they want. This further constructs these women as passive, expectant and demanding. She constructed their actions and expectations as putting them in ‘compromising situations’ as most women “end up being raped, [and being] physically and emotionally abused” (line 447). There is a lot of judgment and blaming in these constructions for the behaviour of these women who are criticized for putting themselves in vulnerable positions by not being good, by being lazy and by expecting men to provide for them. She positioned these women as being unable to “leave” (line 448) their abusive relationships because these relationships “come with monetary benefits” (line 448) and provide for their ideal lifestyles. She is constructing these women as making an investment by staying in these abusive relationships for financial gain.

Later in the interview, she repeated her sentiments about financial dependence increasing young women's vulnerabilities in relationships.

481 T:...young women are more prone to HIV and violence because they go for old richer

482 men, blessers in order for them to live fake lives of always having money.

[Talitha, 30y, S, PG, PO, SL2]

This extract also shows judgment and blaming of the behaviour of young women. Talitha constructed young women's vulnerability around the type of men that they choose to date. She said that they "go for old richer men, blessers" (line 481 – 482) which she constructed as increasing their vulnerability to the risk of abuse and HIV. She uses the word "blessers" which is a word that is normally used to refer to rich men (usually older) that enable a fancy lifestyle for younger women, usually in exchange for sex. Transactional sex is one of the factors that are known to increase women's vulnerability to the risk of HIV and abuse. When these men provide financial resources for these young women, they gain more control over them. This positions them in a vulnerable place as they may be unable to refuse these men's demands. She constructs a contrast between 'young' women and 'old' 'richer' men which suggests that young women are perhaps naïve and older richer men/blessers are perhaps not so attractive.

She further constructs these young women as "living fake lives of always having money" (line 482). Her words 'living fake lives' is assumed to refer to young women living under pretence, as if the whole relationship is just an 'act' for material gain. She positioned these young women as being "more prone to HIV and violence" (line 481). Her choice of the words 'more prone' constructs the image of a situation in which young women's vulnerability is increased. This positions women as always at risk of HIV and abuse, but this risk increases when an element of transaction is added. The blaming, criticism and judgment of the actions of these young women, leads to the assumption that Talitha is positioning herself outside of these constructions. She earlier, in section 5.3.1, constructed herself as an independent woman who is against men being used for financial gain and perhaps this is the reason she is criticising and disapproving of the behaviour of these women.

In a discussion of the same issue with Kekeletso, she also constructed financial dependence as increasing vulnerability of women in their relationships, as seen in the extract below.

342 K: ... If you are fully dependent on your partner, it can make you vulnerable as a woman.
[Kekeletso, 29y, S, PG, TC, SL1]

She constructed financial dependence on male partners as potentially increasing vulnerability in their relationships. She uses 'can' in describing the relationship between dependency and

vulnerability and not a word like ‘will’, for example. The use of ‘can’ positions her as someone who assumes that financial dependence on a man does not always result in an increased vulnerability for women. As Kekeletso had presented herself as someone that is an advocate for women’s independence earlier, and also positioned herself outside the ‘male provider role’, this construction makes sense, this is aligned with how she presents herself. Even though Kekeletso and Talitha have similar positioning with regard to a provider discourse, Kekeletso is not blaming or judging women that are financially dependent on men.

The next section focuses on the significance of women’s financial independence in managing their vulnerability.

5.4.4 Women’s financial independence does not help

Although the participants are financially independent women, they positioned financially independent women as vulnerable to the risk of abuse and HIV. During this discussion about whether financial independence is significant in reducing women’s vulnerability in their relationships, Kekeletso responded:

379 K: I do not think being financially stable as women makes you less vulnerable to being
380 abused or being exposed to HIV and Aids and STIs because at the end of the day
381 whether you are independent or not, in matters of the heart it can get complicated where
382 you might find it difficult to leave a partner that is abusing you, simply ’cause you love
383 them. But if you are financially stable it makes it a bit easier for you leave because you
384 have options, you can go on with your life, providing for yourself.

[Kekeletso, 29y, S, PG, TC, SL1]

Kekeletso constructed vulnerability to the risk of abuse and HIV as affecting all women regardless of their financial status. She positioned financially independent women as not “less vulnerable to being abused and HIV and STIs” (line 379 – 380) in comparison to women who are financially dependent on men. She constructed the “matters of the heart” (line 381) as complicating women’s decisions in abusive relationships whether those women are “independent or not” (line 381). She drew on the have and hold discourse, to position women as looking for love in relationships. She argues that the emotions, in the form of ‘love’ complicates women’s decisions in relationships as they “might find it difficult to leave” (line

382) an abusive partner “simply ’cause [they] love them” (line 382 – 383). As much as she constructed financially independent women as not any less vulnerable in their relationships, she also positioned them as having “options” (line 384) to leave or not to leave an abusive relationship. Since these women can afford to financially provide for themselves, she constructed their decision to leave as “easier” (line 383) when compared to women that are financially dependent on men.

Likewise, Pajuju constructed financial independence as being unable to change women’s vulnerability in their relationships.

241 P: ...your financial status does not stand for your ground, does not tell you when to
242 leave the abusive relationship, does not protect you from diseases but [it gives
243 you] only choices, being vocal and not to compromise more than what your
244 partner does. Stand your ground.

[Pajuju, 31y, S, UG, PO, SL1]

In this account Pajuju positions financially independent women as equally vulnerable to the risk of abuse, just like any other woman. She constructed “financial status” (line 241) as not being able to “stand your ground” (line 241), meaning that being financially independent does not necessarily enable women to stand their ground in terms of what they want or their decisions in their relationships. It does not provide them with agency in terms of “protecting them” (line 242) from the risk of abuse and diseases in their relationships. This shows that women’s position in society remains unchanged whether or not they have financial means. She constructed financial independence as providing “only choices” (line 243), suggesting that you have more choices when you are financially independent as woman, like “being more vocal” and being able to avoid having “to compromise” (line 243) your needs and wants “more than your partner does” (line 243 – 244). She insists that women need to “stand their ground” (line 244), to protect themselves and exercise their agency in their relationships. She is constructing insisting on these choices and positions as important in managing women’s vulnerability to the risk of abuse and HIV in their relationships. This echoes Samantha’s construction in section 5.4.1, line 79 above, in which she reflects on the difference between men and women in being worried about the relationship and risk in the relationship. Even here, Pajuju is constructing a situation where women have to take responsibility to protect themselves from the risks because

nothing else protects them. Throughout the interview, she positioned herself as an outspoken person.

Similar to Kekeletso and Pajuju, Talitha constructed financial independence as not lowering women's vulnerability to the risks in their relationships.

480 T: There is no recipe to [a] successful relationship. You could have all the money in the
481 world but be miserable...

[Talitha, 30y, S, PG, PO, SL2]

She constructed relationships as having no prescribed method or way of making them successful. She positioned "all the money in the world" (line 480 – 481) as also not helpful in making a "successful relationship" (line 480) which implies that women's financial independence does not assist women in putting them out of their misery or bringing them happiness.

5.4.5 Increased education enhances sexual agency

During a discussion about the significance of education in how women manage their relationships, participants constructed increased education as significant in reducing women's vulnerability. They positioned uneducated and educated women as having different sexual agency in their relationships. For example, Samantha said:

120 S: ...uneducated women seem to always do what their partners want, they will never
121 disagree with their partners, on the other hand educated women have a voice and tend
122 to voice out opinions a lot in relationships compared to uneducated women...
123 ...we [educated women] refuse sex, contraceptives are not negotiable, if an educated
124 woman wants to use contraceptives best believe she will use it regardless of what her
125 partner says.

[Samantha, 29y, M, PG, GISC, SL2]

Samantha, in this account is constructing women as educated and uneducated. She constructed educated women as advocates in their sexual relationships. She positions them as having agency to make their own sexual decisions regarding their sexual behaviour. She argued that an increased education enables women to "have a voice" (line 121) and with that voice,

educated women “tend to voice out opinions a lot in relationships” (line 121 – 122). A sharp contrast was made as she constructed uneducated women as passive and submissive, reflected in her words “uneducated women seem to always do what their partners want [and] never disagree with their partners” (line 120 – 121). They are submissive to whatever their partners want, whereas educated women oppose male domination with regard to their sexual decisions. She positioned educated women as having the power to “refuse sex” (line 123) whenever they do not want it. She also argued that educated women do not allow their male partners to have power over them regarding their sexual decisions as they consider such things as “contraceptives [as] not negotiable” (line 123). Samantha used the pronoun ‘we’ in “we refuse sex” (line 123) to position herself with these educated women that have agency to make their own decisions in their sexual relationships. It suggests that she does not allow her partner to influence some of her sexual decisions. This is consistent with her earlier positioning in section 5.1.1 that when she denies her partner sex she does not give in even when he is upset with her. Her statement that “she [an educated woman] will use it [contraceptive] regardless of what her partner says” (line 124 – 125) constructs educated women as brave, determined and courageous. According to this participant, educated women have agency in their relationships and they take charge of their sexual lives. They are able to decide when and how to engage in sex. This means that they have the agency to decide whether to engage in safe sex or not. In this construction, she positions these male partners as having no power to force educated women to do anything that they do not want to do.

Talitha expressed almost the same sentiments, but she does not make the sharp contrast between educated and uneducated women:

475 T: Women who are educated are more aware. They have independent mind-sets, are
476 less vulnerable and are able to speak out [about issues] than to be timid and agree to
477 everything. However, there are uneducated women who are very wise. Education has
478 an impact but individuals manage their relationship differently. Educated or not
479 educated.

[Talitha, 30y, S, PG, PO, SL2]

Talitha also constructed educated women as advocates in their sexual relationships. Like Samantha, she also constructed a contrast between educated and uneducated women but hers was not as critical. According to Talitha, increased education enables women to be “able to

speak out [about issues]" (line 476) in their sexual relationships. She constructed uneducated women as passive and submissive. She implied that they are "timid" (line 476), and she argued that they "agree to everything" (line 476 - 477) that their male partners say. She positions educated women in contrast to this. She positions them as not timid and not agreeing to everything that their male partners tell them to do. She also constructed educated women as being "more aware" (line 475). This, perhaps, means that educated women have more knowledge to make decisions that will reduce their vulnerability to the risk that may exist in their relationships. She further constructed educated women as being able to think for themselves and also make their own decisions without the influence of their male partners as they "have independent mindsets" (line 475). She argued that they are "less vulnerable" (line 475 - 476) because they are not 'timid' and agreeable to everything. Although she argued that "education has an impact" (line 477 - 478) on reducing women's vulnerability, she acknowledged that "there are uneducated women who are very wise" (line 477). So, as much as education has a potential to help women but there are other factors such as wisdom, she suggests increase women's agency and potentially reduce their vulnerability.

In a discussion on this issue Kekeletso also constructed increased education as being able to provide educated women with skills that that can help them manage their relationships.

376 K: ...with education, you learn to speak up issues. Learn how to raise issues, how to
377 discuss things. The right timing to bring up issues.

[Kekeletso, 29y, S, PG, TC, SL1]

Kekeletso constructed educated women as being able to be diplomatic. She argued that with increased education, women "learn how to raise issues [and] how to discuss things" (line 376 - 377). She also constructed educated women as strategists that know "the right timing" (line 377) to raise issues in their relationships. According to Kekeletso, increased education provides young women with negotiation skills and diplomacy which can potentially help them to know how to be tactful when negotiating with their male partners. An ability to negotiate issues, and perhaps negotiate sex, would mean that women have agency, and this could reduce their vulnerability.

In a similar discussion Pajuju differed from the other participants. She constructed education as not significant in how women manage their relationships. She said the following:

234 P: It all goes to how as a woman you were brought up. If you were taught to be vocal
235 and express your feelings, it does not mean you are rude but you just not comfortable,
236 and you want your partner to consider that whether you're educated or not. Also, if
237 the word denial was never in any woman vocabulary, either educated or non-educated,
238 such cases like partner violence, HIV/Aids or STIs will be very low...

[Pajuju, 31y, S, UG, PO, SL1]

She constructed the level of education as unable to reduce a woman's vulnerability to violence or HIV in their relationships. She argued that being "vocal and express your feelings" (line 234 – 235) is not dependent on whether a woman is "educated or not" (line 236) but rather on how she is raised: "brought up" (line 234). Pajuju is advocating for women to have a voice and she constructed it as helpful in women being able to say what they want to say and in communicating their feelings or in expressing that they "are just not comfortable" (line 235) with a particular situation. She argued that being vocal can be negatively read as being "rude" (line 235) or as being disrespectful. It seems that in using their voice or expressing themselves, women have to tread a very fine line and be strategic. She is constructing being vocal in a positive light, as a way of expressing your feelings or negotiating with a male partner so that he can "consider that [you are not comfortable]" (line 236). She further positioned women that are unable to refuse to do, or act in a certain way, as vulnerable to the risk of HIV and violence and this is contained in the above extract line 236-238. She is referring to the issue of being vocal as being important in the context of HIV and abuse, and according to her education does not help in women's vulnerability. Being educated or independent as a woman is not enough, you have to be very careful in how you manage the power dynamics in your relationship, you need skills to be strategic or diplomatic.

5.5 Summation

In summary, this section outlined common themes among the participants that related to the framing of femininity, agency and vulnerability. The participants demonstrated that they have agency to decide about their sexual lives (for example, use of contraceptives and timing of sex) and being open about their sexual needs and desires. Some participants positioned their agency as constrained at times but the majority of the time they positioned themselves as being able to exercise their agency. The findings also show that the women frame their femininity around

social, cultural and gendered norms. However, they differed in how important they considered the social norms to be, as some firmly positioned themselves within social norms, while others were torn. The findings also revealed that the participants differed in how they were positioned with regards to the provider discourse. However, they all drew on the have and hold discourse with regard to their expectations in their relationships. However, although they drew on this discourse, they also identified its assumptions as potentially increasing women's vulnerability to the risks of abuse and HIV. Further, despite the fact that financial dependence on men was identified as increasing women's vulnerability in their relationships, they also argued that women's financial independence was not helpful in reducing women's vulnerability. Instead, most of them identified increased education as empowering to women and increasing sexual agency. The next chapter focuses on discussing the significance of the findings of this study.

Chapter 6 –Discussion

This chapter focuses on interpreting the findings outlined in the previous chapter in relation to the literature reviewed and the research questions of the study. It sought to explore how young working women manage their sexual relationships. In doing so, it discusses how young working women frame their femininity and the interaction between their framing of femininity and their sexual agency in their relationships. It also discusses the findings in relation to whether financial independence of young women assists in increasing their agency and reducing their vulnerability to the risk of HIV in their sexual relationships.

6.1 The interaction between the framing of femininity and agency of young working women in sexual relationships

Particular forms of femininity have been identified as contributing to women's vulnerability in their sexual relationships, hence it is important to discuss how the young working women in the study framed 'femininity'. The findings of this study suggest that these young working women frame their femininity within what Jewkes and Morrell (2012) refer to as 'emerging femininity'. To briefly define this type of femininity, it is characterized by women who are not acquiescent to patriarchy in their relationships (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012). They want mutual respect and control between partners in their relationships. The young working women in the study constructed their relationships as being characterized by equality, mutual respect, and shared control between partners. The equality in some of these relationships was presented in how, what might be considered as gender specific roles, were shared between partners, for example, housework, and washing the dishes, which are typically expected to be performed by women. Sathiparsad et al. (2010) indicated that from a young age, men and women are categorized as unequal in terms of societal norms and their roles are different according to their gender. Although most of the men were not necessarily doing these tasks daily, but some were positioned as not expecting their female partners to always perform these gendered roles such as house chores, cooking, etc.

In constructing their femininity, these young women showed that they are aware of the social norms, gender norms and expectations for women, that are embedded in culture and enforced

through society. For example, they are aware that the society expects them to perform duties such as *ukukotiza*, being submissive, being dutiful in the house, as well as being respectful and humble towards their male partners. Although they are aware of these expectations, some of the young women positioned themselves outside of the societal and cultural norms, considering them as unimportant for their relationships. As already mentioned, some of the young women even positioned themselves and their partners as being equals in their relationships.

At least one of the young women positioned herself within the expected social norms. She framed her femininity around humility and respecting her male partner, raising children, etc. Interestingly, she also presented herself as being vocal, more so than the other participants. This contradiction could potentially be explained by Jewkes and Morrell's (2012) argument that 'emerging femininity' developed out of 'traditional femininity'. Women who seem to draw on emerging femininity therefore do not necessarily oppose 'traditional femininity' but oppose violence and male domination, to which women adopting traditional femininity are prone. Since the social norms related to being a woman are maintained in the society, it is likely that most women are compelled to adhere to these social norms at times. For example, one young woman and her partner shared house chores when they were in their own space but performed their socially defined gendered roles when at their in-laws' house, because of the social expectations, and the fear of being judged by the in-laws. Interestingly, this is one of the young women in the study who presented social norms as unimportant in her relationship, but this might not be the case. Some of the young women also positioned themselves as nurturers, home caretakers, and being involved in raising children, which are all activities linked to women's gender specific roles. This shows that social norms are deep-rooted and maintained in society and families (Connell, 1987; Wingood & DiClemente, 2000; Mbonu et al., 2010). Moreover, there are social rewards and potential judgements that can be used to force women to adopt dominant forms of femininity (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012). For example, if a woman is unable to fulfil socially gender specific roles, she is negatively judged by the society, which might be why these women are positioning themselves in this way.

According to Jewkes et al. (2011), Wood and Jewkes (1997) and Zembe et al. (2015), social norms and gender inequalities increase young women's vulnerability to the risk of HIV because their ability to negotiate the conditions of sex and safety in their relationships, is usually undermined. Connell (1987) also argues that women who act within the dominant social norms

are more vulnerable to HIV risks. However, this does not seem to be true for the participants of this study since they presented themselves as having agency, in their relationships. This was specifically in the sense that they positioned themselves as resisting male domination in their relationships. They positioned themselves as being able to negotiate the conditions of sex and make decisions regarding their sexual activity in their relationships. They also presented themselves as being able to decide whether to have sex or not, being able to speak freely about sex, their sexual needs and desires as well as being able to decide about contraceptive use. Stern et al. (2016) argued that being open and confident about one's sexual needs and desires demonstrate increased sexual agency. These young women also positioned themselves as being able to refuse to have sex with their male partners when they wanted to and without any fear, despite the male sexual drive discourse that exists in society which assumes that men's sexual desires are uncontrollable (Sathiparsad et al., 2010; Stern & Buikema, 2013). This discourse is drawn on to justify men's high-risk sexual behaviours, such as having multiple partners (Fleming et al., 2015; Hollway, 1984). Their ability to refuse suggests that they have agency and that they draw on a different discourse (perhaps related to prioritising women's desires and needs) to rationalise their behaviour. Their lack of fear also suggests that there is a different kind of interaction between men and women. In their case, the construction of their relationships suggest that they are based on mutual respect and control especially with regard to the power of making decisions that have to do with their sexual lives.

In addition to this personal agency, it seems that the behaviour of their male partners is also different from the socially expected behaviour of the men, as described by Stern et al. (2016) and Fleming et al. (2015). They argued that men believe they are sexually entitled to women and therefore become violent towards them when they refuse to consent to sex. The type of men that were described by Stern et al. (2016) and Fleming et al. (2015) see women merely as sex objects and therefore having sex with women becomes a conquest for them (Fleming et al., 2015; Mindry et al., 2015). This reproduces male dominance and control over women. In this study, the young women's ability to exercise their agency, demonstrated by how they make decisions about their sexual lives, suggests that the dynamics in their relationships were not extremely unequal between partners, with the male partner having most of the power and control in the relationship.

In addition to being able to refuse to have sex, these young women positioned themselves as being able to talk openly about sex. For example, they could openly talk about their sexual 'satisfaction' and 'dissatisfaction'. In presenting themselves in this way they are positioning themselves as not mere sex objects in their relationships, and it suggests that the power dynamics in their relationships are not extremely unequal, which allows these young women to have control over their sexual lives. It is important to note that one of the young women seemed at times to be constrained in her agency, but still seemed to have agency most of the time. For instance, she provided accounts of being pressured at times to have sex with her male partner and drew on the male sexual drive discourse to rationalise her positioning. Her justification was that her partner could commit infidelity if she did not have sex with him, therefore she gives in to his pressure. However, in other parts of her accounts, she positioned herself as being able to stand her ground most of the time even when her partner reacted negatively to her.

These findings show that 'emerging' femininity is the main form of femininity for these young women. This is implied by how these women position themselves as resisting male domination, and extreme gender inequity as well how they position themselves to have agency and mutual respect with regard to their sexual lives. However, from their constructions it was clear that negotiating and being vocal had to be done carefully, in a very strategic and diplomatic way, so that they are not judged negatively.

The findings also revealed that these young working women are aware of their expected positions within the society and the framework of culture and traditions. They are also aware of the dominant form of emphasised femininity, and the related expectations of women's behaviour, in this form of femininity. Social and cultural norms compelled them to sometimes also position themselves within the expectations of the emphasised femininity. This is demonstrated by how they constructed their femininity around the social and cultural norms. Although they may have to give in to patriarchy at times, because of the social and cultural norms and fear of being judged, perhaps mainly positioning themselves within emerging femininity helps these young working women not to have extreme unequal power dynamics in their relationships.

6.2. The impact of financial independence on young women's vulnerability

The findings showed that young working women are alert to the social norm that the men are expected to be financial providers in their relationships. However, some of the young working women in the study highly value their financial independence. Some strongly criticised women who are dependent on men. They positioned themselves as proud of being able to provide for themselves, and not depend on men. They, however, do expect their male partners to spoil them with gifts or money. In research related to financial resources and relationships, financial dependence and transactional relations provide men with greater power and control in their relationships (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012; Jewkes et al., 2015; Stern et al., 2016; Wamoyi et al., 2019). However, the young working women in this study seemed to emphasize reciprocity, instead of positioning men as being the provider, in their relationships. They presented their relationships as ones with gender equity and equal power. Reciprocity in this context meant that both sexual partners in a relationship provided each other with financial support and gave each other gifts. However, one of the participants' independent stance in relation to financial status, seemed to have challenged her partner's masculinity. The norms of hegemonic masculinity position men need men to perform particular duties that give them power/control over women (Fleming et al., 2015; Stern et al., 2016). In the case of this participant, her male partner was 'uncomfortable', as he was unable to fulfil the male provider role.

The findings also found that there are young working women who still expect their male partners to fulfil the male provider role. This shows that the young working women in this study position themselves differently from each other despite their financial independence. They constructed men's identity according to societal norms that dictate that men should financially provide for women (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012; Jewkes et al., 2015; Stern et al., 2016; Wamoyi et al., 2019). In this study, some of the young working women constructed and positioned men as providers for their families. This was evident when two participants expressed their expectations of being financially provided for by their male partners. According to Fielding-Miller and Dunkle, (2017), Jewkes et al. (2015), and Watt et al. (2012) many male providers perpetuate violence and abuse against their partners, feel entitled to have sex with their partners, and are unlikely to support gender equity. This is partly due to the fact that an economic imbalance creates a power imbalance in the decision-making in relationships. Although they expect their male partners to fulfil the provider role and one of them is definitely being provided for, they did not provide reports of violence in their current relationships. They

also positioned themselves as having agency to negotiate and decide on their sexual activity. This suggests that even though some young working women can be provided for by their male partners, they could still have agency and power to decide or negotiate their safety. Formson and Hillhorst, (2016) and Ranganathan et al. (2018) argued that if young women are dependent on men, their agency is usually constrained as they may be unable to negotiate safe sexual conditions. For these young, employed women, in this study the absence of a transactional aspect in their relationships may contribute significantly to their agency. One of these young women constructed her relationship as one of reciprocity sometimes, where she gives money and gifts to her partner. This could be helping in ensuring that she has agency in her relationship.

Although, these young working women are financially independent and some really value this, most of them do not regard financial independence as helpful in changing women's vulnerability to the risk of abuse and HIV. If this is true, then this suggests that it is hard for women to fight a gendered social organisation which refers to a social hierarchy that is predominant and endorses inequality between men and women (Harrison, 2008). It can also suggest that young women's position in society remains extremely subordinate to that of men, and they are vulnerable despite their financial independence. This finding contradicts Sofika and van der Riet (2016) and Wamoyi et al. (2019) who argue that a gendered social organisation is maintained through economic inequalities. It also contradicts Jewkes and Morrell (2012) and Wood and Jewkes (1997) who argue that such economic inequalities maintain gender inequity, reproduce male domination and young women's vulnerability to the risk of HIV as well as intimate partner violence, because in the gendered social organisation women remain dependent on men and therefore their agency is constrained.

These findings and the contradictions raise a lot of questions around the issue of 'othering' which implies that the women in the study regard financial independence as not making a difference for others, but it does work for them. It is significant to raise this point because the women in the study had positioned themselves as less vulnerable, as having agency and as being able to oppose male domination especially with regard to their sexual lives. They had also presented financial dependence on men as a vulnerability factor for women as it increases their risk to HIV and abuse. This seems to 'fit' with the research related to this issue, for example Jewkes and Morrell (2012) argued that economic inequalities reproduce young women's vulnerability to HIV risk and intimate partner violence in their sexual relationships,

as their agency become constrained. So, the question remains about whether they are ‘othering’ or whether they tried to position themselves and their relationships in a better or positive way to me as the researcher.

In addition, the findings show that financial independence was regarded as only providing options for young women to leave abusive relationships. The findings showed that most of these young working women constructed increased education as having a more significant effect than financial independence on women’s vulnerability. Increased education was constructed as empowering young women with agency and ‘a voice’ in their relationships. Increased education was also constructed as providing tools enabling women to be strategic and diplomatic when exercising their agency or using their voice. This is consistent with the argument in Connell’s (1987) theory that the level of education has an impact on women’s HIV risk (as cited in Wingood & DiClemente, 2000). A sharp contrast between educated and uneducated women was made by some of the young women. They positioned educated women as more aware, as less vulnerable and as able to oppose patriarchy. For instance, one of the participants had positioned men as having no power whatsoever to force their educated female partners to do anything that they do not want to do. Such constructions position educated women favourably, as better and cleverer women than uneducated women. Although these women are educated there were instances when they positioned themselves as having constrained agency. However, not all of the women in the study had similar constructions about increased education and women’s vulnerability. Some constructed being wise, being vocal and being raised in a certain way, as more helpful in the issue of vulnerability.

6.3 Emotional complexity

Young women’s vulnerability to the risk of HIV in their relationships is complicated. Although these young women are financially independent and educated, the emotional issues of love and trust seem to pose a threat to their vulnerability. All of these young women constructed their expectations of the relationship by drawing on the have/hold discourse (Hollway, 1984). One of the assumptions in this discourse is based on a woman’s ability to have and keep a man and it is a determinant of feminine ‘success’ (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012; van der Riet & Nicholson, 2014). These young women expressed their need to love and be loved, to trust their partners, to have commitment from their male partners, and their desire to get married or to ensure that they keep their marriage/relationships. By positioning themselves as having these desires,

needs and expectations of relationships, they draw firmly on the assumptions of the have/hold discourse.

This position, taken up by educated and financially secure young women, seems surprising. However, there is some research which assists in understanding this dynamic. Fleming et al. (2015) and van der Riet et al. (2019), argue that young women make investments to ensure that they preserve their sexual relationships, and this investment is related to their position, power and status in society. This means that at times women abdicated self-care and sexual safety by engaging in risky sexual behaviours, in order to hold on to relationships, through which they accrue their position in society. In this study this was evident in how some of the young women prioritised love and trust over their personal sexual health. For instance, some women ‘let their guard down’ because they trusted their partners and argued that they had fallen in ‘love’. Letting your guard meant that they had to a certain degree abdicated self-care and sexual safety. These participants construct this position as being related to emotional needs, however, the investment in the relationship and their related status in the broader social context, is not necessarily a conscious act.

Irrespective of these young women’s financial status and level of education, it seems that some young women abdicate self-care because of the love they have for, and the trust that they have in, their male sexual partners. Trust was cited by some as the reason that they think their male partners would not have multiple relationships. These findings are consistent with Reddy and Dunne’s (2007) study which found that young women participated in unsafe sex to demonstrate their love for and trust in their sexual partners. These authors further argued that “the need to love and be loved is a powerful determinant of the extent to which females are prepared to assert or compromise their agency in a relationship” (Reddy & Dunne, 2007, p.164). In pursuit of love, women might not insist on sexual safety despite knowing the risks (Reddy & Dunne, 2007). The concepts of ‘love’ and ‘trust’ seem to complicate the issue of young women’s vulnerability to the risk of HIV. It was love and trust that kept some of these women in their previous relationships, despite the abuse or infidelity of their partners.

It seems from the findings of this study, that drawing on the have/hold discourse, and the consequent positions it allows, potentially creates risks for all young women, including working women, increasing their vulnerability to HIV. This was the case for one of the participants, with constrained agency, coupled with her fear of losing her partner to infidelity. Young women’s investment complicates their ability to negotiate sexual conditions in their

sexual relationships and therefore put them in vulnerable positions (Sofika & van der Riet, 2016). In pursuit of love, some young working women may become active investors to hold on to their men and thus achieve feminine success, despite their relative economic independence.

6.4 Summation

In summary, it can be said that the issue of HIV risk for young women is complex. Although financial independence and increased education empower young working women, they do not solve the issue of their vulnerability to the risk of HIV in their relationships. The young women in the study demonstrated that they have agency, which can help them to negotiate and decide on their sexual activity and safety (in terms of, for example condom use) but it does not necessarily decrease their vulnerability to the risk of HIV. Young women's need for love, and their need to have and hold on to a man, makes them vulnerable.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion

In the context of HIV, this study aimed to explore how young working women manage their sexual relationships. In doing so, young women's framing of femininity, their agency within their relationships and their vulnerability to HIV was studied. It also explored whether there is any link between the framing of femininity and women's sexual agency in their relationships. It was also able to explore whether financial independence had an impact on women's vulnerability in their relationships. As discussed earlier, in the context of HIV there have not been many studies that focused on young women who are financially independent from their male partners. Therefore, this study attempted to contribute to this issue. Four young women who were employed, educated and based in Pietermaritzburg, were interviewed.

7.1. Findings

This study was able to address the research questions. The study revealed that young working women positioned themselves within emerging femininity. They also constructed their relationships in terms of equality between partners, mutual control and respect between partners. Due to social and cultural norms, there were times that they positioned themselves with expectations of dominant forms of femininity. They framed their femininity around social norms and gendered identity stereotypes. In doing so, they did not fiercely reject or oppose traditional femininity, but they had strong opinions about their agency and power to make decisions.

The young working women demonstrated agency with regard to making their own decisions about their sexual behaviours and safety. They demonstrated that they are able to decide on whether or not to practice sexual safety. These young women linked having agency to being educated. Some made sharp contrasts between educated and uneducated women with regard to their agency. They presented educated women favourably, for example, as cleverer, and better. They positioned increased education as significant for young women in relation to the issue of their vulnerability. They constructed it as empowering and providing skills that enable women to manage their sexual relationships. According to them, it provided them with strategic skills to know about how, and when, to raise and discuss issues in their relationships. Prioritising the provision of education for young women could therefore be important in the context of HIV.

They positioned financial independence as not significant in young women's vulnerability to the risk of HIV in their relationships. Financial independence was constructed as only providing options to young women, especially those in abusive relationships. This was despite the fact that some of them really valued their financial independence. With regard to this, the women seemed to be engaging in 'othering', as they regarded financial independence to be working for them, but not for others. There were some contradictions between this construction of financial independence, and other related literature. In addition, the study found that the issue of HIV is complicated for both financially independent women, and financially dependent women. Emotional components such as love and trust complicate women's vulnerability to the risk of HIV in their relationships. Young women may abdicate self-care and sexual safety because of love or/and trust.

7.2 Strengths and limitations of the study

One of the main strengths of this study is its focus on a slightly different youth population, young working women. This is an under-researched group in society, particularly in relation to relationship management and possible HIV risks. It is hoped that this study brings a different perspective that can help in understanding issues relating women's sexual health, their agency and vulnerability to the risk of HIV. The credibility, dependability and transferability of the study will also be discussed.

Credibility ensures trustworthiness of a study (Shenton, 2004). It ensures congruency between the findings of the study and reality. The credibility of the study is partly dependent on the researcher's ability (Golafshani, 2003). In this study, credibility was ensured through an iterative thematic analysis conducted by employing the constant comparative method (Silverman, 2000). The researcher immersed herself in the data collected through transcribing it verbatim and reading it repeatedly. Themes were compared constantly to each other to ensure that there were no repetitions or overlaps and they also represented data collected. The researcher was able to also identify and eliminate her preconceived ideas or predetermined findings through repeated reading to ensure that the findings were grounded in the data that was collected. Detailed extracts were included to provide the reader with an opportunity to make their own judgement. Deviant cases were also included to show variance of data (Silverman, 2000).

Dependability is the “degree to which the reader can be convinced that the findings did indeed occur as the researchers say they did” (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p.93). Dependability of this study was enhanced by thoroughly describing the aims and rationale of the study, research problem, research questions as well as the context of the study and the sampling method. It was ensured by providing a detailed outline of the methodology used to collect and analyse data to enable the reader to thoroughly understand the effectiveness and limitations of the study. The research findings are reported in detail using extracts from the transcribed data (Stark & Trinidad, 2007).

There were some limitations to the study, for example the small study sample. The study had initially planned to involve six to eight female participants but only managed to obtain four participants, as some withdrew. Having fewer participants threatened the transferability of the findings of the study. Transferability refers to findings being able to be transferred to similar contexts with similar participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). However, transferability can also be enhanced through other aspects of the design, for example by conducting in-depth interviews and using open-ended questions which provided thick and detailed descriptions of the lived experiences and the meanings of the participants. This allows the reader to understand findings in the context in which they occurred and assess whether they would be transferable to similar people in similar contexts (Shenton, 2004). Another limitation was my limited research experience which meant that in interviews not all issues were explored as they could be, and more probing of the participant’s responses might have been useful.

7.3 Further recommended research

This study found that young working women manage their HIV risk in their sexual relationships through how they frame their femininity which enhances their agency. Increased education was regarded as significant in how they manage their vulnerability in their relationships. Further research using both qualitative and quantitative methods could expand the scope of this work. A quantitative design for example, could survey a wider group of young working women, and look at how their education contributes to their agency, and what types of decision-making they engage in, in their relationships. It would also be useful to conduct a similar study with young working men, perhaps to explore their constructions of masculinity in relation to their economic independence, and their relationship management. These kinds of

studies could potentially address issues relating to gender-based violence and intimate partner violence.

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Appendix 1: Recruitment advert

Dear Madam

I am Nompumelelo Sibusisiwe Tshabalala, a Master of Social Science: Clinical Psychology student from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am conducting a research study on *women's sexual health: Framing the femininity, agency and vulnerability of young working women in relation to HIV/AIDS*. I am looking for women that meet the criteria below and are interested in participating in my study. If you are interested in participating, kindly contact me via email on: 202519564@stu.ukzn.ac.za.

Recruitment criteria:

Are you an African young working woman between the ages of 24 – 35?

Are you currently or have recently been in a sexual heterosexual relationship?

Are you earning a gross salary of at least R20,000.00 or are you in a profession that is generally known as high paying?

Your response in this regard will be highly valued.

Yours faithfully,

N.S. Tshabalala

Isikhangiso socwaningo

Madam othandekayo,

Igama lami uNompumelelo Sibusisiwe Tshabalala, ngenza iziqu ze-Master's kwi-Social Science: Clinical Psychology eNyuvesi ya-KwaZulu-Natal. Ngenza ucwaningo osihloko salo sithi - *women's sexual health: Framing the femininity, agency and vulnerability of young working women in relation to HIV/AIDS*. Ngisacela abesifazane abangathanda ukubamba iqhaza kulolucwaningo bangithinte kwi-email yami ethi 202519564@stu.ukzn.ac.za.

Kumele kube abesifazane abamnyama, abaneminyaka ephakathi kwengu 24 kuyaku 35. Kumele kube abesifazane abasebenzayo futhi abahola okungenani uR20,000 ngaphambi kwentela noma abasebenza imisebenzi yobuchwepheshe. Okokugcina, kumele kube abesifazane abakebaba nobudlelwane noma abasebudlelwani nabantu besilisa.

Ngiyoyijabulela kakhulu impendulo yakho.

Ozithobayo yimina,

uNksz. N.S. Tshabalala

Appendix 2: Interview schedule

Interview Schedule

1. Personal information:

Pseudonym (not a real name) _____

- a. How old are you?
- b. What is your current job position?
- c. What is your gross salary bracket?
 - R 20,000 – R 25,000
 - R 25,000 – R 30,000
 - R 30,000 – R 35,000
 - R 35,000 – above
- d. Please tell me about your education background. What is your highest qualification?
- e. Please tell me about your career history
- f. Please tell me about your family background

2. Relationship history:

- a. Are you in a relationship currently? (If no, when was your last relationship? Duration of a relationship?)
- b. How would you define your current/recent relationship/s? Was/Is it a committed relationship?
- c. In general, what do you think is expected from women in relationships?
- d. Are/were these the same expectations in your relationship?
- e. What does being in a relationship mean to you?

- f. In general, what would you say women expect from their relationships? What would you say make women have such expectations?
- g. Are these the same expectations that you have from your relationships? Please elaborate
- h. Would you say women's expectations make them vulnerable in their relationships? If no, what do you think exposes women into vulnerability in their relationships? If yes, please elaborate
- i. Have you ever been abused in a relationship? (even if it happened only once)
- j. Have you been cheated on in your current/ recent relationship?
- k. What do you think about women that stay in abusive relationships or with cheating partners?

3. Sexual history

- a. How do you engage in sexual discussions in your relationship? do you talk about condom use/contraception use, timing of sex, readiness for sex, etc.; Have you ever felt forced/pressured to engage in sex in your relationship/s?
- b. Have you ever rejected your partner's sexual advances? If you have rejected your partner's sexual advances, what is his normal reaction?
- c. Do you think sex plays a significant role in your relationship/s? if yes, what role does it play in relationship? If no, please elaborate.
- d. Do you ever fear that he might leave you if you reject his sexual advances? Do you ever think that he might have sex with someone else if you reject his sexual advances?

4. Impact of education and financial status

- a. Do you feel women's level of education play a significant role in how they manage their relationships? Elaborate on your response.
- b. Do you feel a woman's financial status is significant in relationships? What role does your socioeconomic status play in your relationship? Are financially stable women less vulnerable?

Appendix 3: Information sheet

A study on women's sexual health: Framing the femininity, agency and vulnerability of young working women in relation to HIV/AIDS

Who I am?

I am Nompumelelo Sibusisiwe Tshabalala, a Master's (Clinical Psychology) student from the University of KwaZulu Natal.

What I am doing

I am conducting a research study on women's sexual health: framing of femininity, agency and vulnerability to sexual illnesses. The study aims to find out about how young working women manage their sexual relationships.

Your participation

I am asking whether you will agree to participate in my research study. If you agree, please be informed that the study will solicit information from an individual interview. An individual interview will be a face-to-face discussion that a researcher will hold with each participant focusing on women's sexual health. I will ask you to participate in this individual interview of approximately 90 minutes. The interview will focus on questions or topics that relate to your heterosexual relationships and your sexuality within your heterosexual relationships. Every effort will be made by the researcher to protect the confidentiality of your information.

This interview will take place at University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus: Psychology department. In case the participant wants a change of venue, this will be negotiated with the researcher.

Please understand that **your participation is voluntary**, and you are not being forced to take part in this study. The choice of whether to participate or not, is yours alone. If you choose not to take part, you will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If you agree to participate, you may stop participating in the research at any time and inform me that you do not want to continue. If you do this, there will be no penalties and you will not be prejudiced in any way.

Confidentiality

All identifying information will be kept in my research supervisor's office in a locked filing cabinet and will not be available to others and will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including members of the ethics committee (all of these people are required to keep your identity confidential). Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

Your answers will be stored electronically in a secure environment and used for research or academic purposes now or at a later date in ways that will not reveal who you are. All future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Committee review and approval.

I will not record your name anywhere and no-one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be linked to a pseudonym (another name) and I will refer to you in this way in the data, any publication, academic report (thesis) or other research output.

Risks/discomforts

At the present time, I do not see any risk of harm resulting from your participation. The risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life. However, arrangements have been made with the University of KwaZulu-Natal: Child and Family Centre (CFC) in the event that a distressing issue arises, and should you wish to discuss it with a professional please contact Zamani Zwane at UKZN CFC on 033 260 5166 or zwanez@ukzn.ac.za.

Benefits

There are no immediate benefits to you from participating in this study, other than an opportunity to do reflection on your life and relationships. However, this study will potentially have broader indirect benefits in understanding issues relating women's sexual health.

If you would like to receive feedback on this study, I will record your phone number on a separate sheet of paper and I can send you a summarised version of the results of the study two months after the study is complete. Should you need clarity on the report, we can arrange a session to discuss it.

Who to contact if you have been harmed or have any concerns?

This research has been ethically reviewed and approved by the University of KwaZulu Natal's Humanities and Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC). If you have any questions or ethical aspects of the research please call Ms. Phumelele Ximba (HSSREC) on 031 260 3587/4557/4609 or send an email to HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za

If you have concerns or questions about the research, you may call the project supervisor Dr. Mary van der Riet on 033 260 6163, or send an email to vanderriet@ukzn.ac.za or contact the researcher: Ms. Sibusisiwe Tshabalala by sending an email to 202519564@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Zulu version

Appendix 3: Ishidi lokwaziswa ngocwaningo

Ucwaningo olumayelana ne- women's sexual health: Framing the femininity, agency and vulnerability of young working women in relation to HIV/AIDS

Ngingubani?

Igama lami uNompumelelo Sibusisiwe Tshabalala, ngenza iziqu ze-Master's kwi-Social Science: Clinical Psychology eNyuvesi ya-KwaZulu-Natal.

Ngenanzi?

Ngenza ucwaningo osihloko salo sithi - *women's sexual health: Framing the femininity, agency and vulnerability of young working women in relation to HIV/AIDS*. Inhloso yalolucwaningo ukuthola ukuthi abesifazane abesebancane futhi abasebenzayo babulawula kanjani ubudlelwane babo nabesilisa abazwana nabo.

Ukubamba kwakho iqhaza kulolucwaningo

Ngicela imvume yakho yokuba ingxenye yayolucwaningo. Uma uvuma ukuba yingxenye, ngisacela ukuba wazi ukuthi kulolucwaningo uzoba nengxoxo ezoba ubuso nobuso phakathi kwakho nami. Kulengxoxo sizobe sixoxa nokuqondane nesihloko salolucwaningo. Lengxoxo izoba isikhathi esingangemizuzu engu-90. Imininingwane yakho izoba imfihlo.

Ingxoxo izokwenziwa ohlakeni lwezifundo zePsychology oluseNyuvesi yaKwaZulu-Natal ePietermaritzburg. Uma ufisa ukushintsha indawo la iyokwenzelwa khona lengxoxo, lokhu ungakukhuluma nami.

Ngicela ukuba uqonde ukuthi awuphoqiwe ukuthi ubambe iqhaza kulolucwaningo. Isinqumo sokuba yingxenye ngesakho kuphela. Unelungelo lokuhoxa noma inini ekubeni yingxenye yalolucwaningo futhi lokho ngeke kube namthelela omubi kuwe.

Okuyimfihlo

Yonke imininingwane eqondene nawe izogcinwa ekhabethezi elikhiywayo elisehhovisini loMphathi wami futhi ngeke ize inikezwe abanye abantu. Izogcinwa isikhathi esivunyelwa umthetho. Amarekhodi okubamba iqhaza kulolucwaningo azobonwa kuphela yilabo abaqinisekisa ukuthi ucwaningo lwenziwe ngokulandela imigomo efanele, okufaka nabantu abayingxenye yekomidi le-Ethics (lababantu bayayiqonda imigomo emayelana nokugcina imininingwane yakho iyimfihlo). Ngaphandle kwalaba, imininingwane yakho izobonwa kuphela yilabo abasebenza kulolucwaningo, ngaphandle uma unikeza imvume yokuthi imininingwane yakho ibonwe nangabanye abantu.

Izimpendulo zakho zizogcinwa ngokuphephile kwi-khompyutha. Lezizimpendulo zizosetshenziswa njengengxenye yocwaningo noma zisosetshenziswa ekufundiseni manje noma esikhathini esizayo. Ekwenzeni kanjalo imininingwane yakho iyofihlwa. Ikomidi le-Ethics yilona eliyobhekisa isicelo sokusebenzisa izimpendulo zakho kolunye ucwaningo futhi liphinde linike imvume yokusetshenziswa kwezimpendulo zakho esikhathini esizayo.

Lolucwaningo ngeke luze lusebenzise noma luqophe phansi igama lakho langempela kumarekhodi ezimpendulo zakho. Wonke amarekhodi ezimpendulo zakho azosebenzisa igama mbumbulu (pseudonym) futhi leli gama mbumbulu yilona eliyovela kwi-thesis yami noma kolunye ucwaningo olusebenzisa izimpendulo zakho.

Ubungozi

Okwamanje, ayikho ingozi okusolakala sengathi ingabangelwa ukuzibandakanya kwakho kulolucwaningo. Ubungozi obungalindeleka bulinganiselwa nalobo ongahlangabezana nabo emihleni yonke. Noma kunjalo, amalungiselelo enziwe neNyuvesi yaKwaZulu-Natal: Child and Family Centre (CFC) uma kwenzeka uzwa sengathi ukuzibandakanya kulolucwaningo kukubangela incindezi. Uma uyofisa ukukhuluma ngaleyoncindezi ungathintana no Zamani Zwane e-UKZN CFC enambeni yocingo ethi 033 260 5166 noma ungathumelela i-email ku zwanez@ukzn.ac.za.

Inzuzo

Ayikho inzuzo ongayilindela njengamanje ngokuzibandakanya kulolucwaningo. Lolucwaningo lingakunika ithuba lokuthi ubhekisise impilo yakho kanye nobudlelwane bakho futhi lingakwenza uqonde kangcono ngezindaba eziqondene ne-sexual health yabesifazane.

Uma unesifiso sokwaziswa ngemiphumela yalolucwaningo, ngizocela ukuthatha inamba yakho yocingo, khona ngizokwazi ukukuthumelela imiphumela efinqiwe emva kwezinyanga okungenani ezimbili luphothuliwe lolucwaningo. Uma uzodinga ukucaciseleka mayelana ngalemiphumela efinqiwe, kuyokwenziwa amalungiselelo okuthi ubengxoxo ebanzi ngalemiphumela.

Ungazifaka kubani izikhalazo mayelana nocwaningo noma ukungaphatheki kahle?

Lolucwaningo lubuyezekiwe ukubona ukuthi luyayilandela imigomo, futhi lavunyelwa i-Nyuvesi yaKwaZulu Natal Humanities and Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) ukuba liqhubeke. Uma unemibuzo mayelana nalokhu ungathintana no-Nksz. Phumelele Ximba (HSSREC) enambeni yocingo ethi 031 260 3587/4557/4609 noma ngokuthumela i-email ku HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za

Uma unezikhalazo noma imibuzo mayelana nalolucwaningo, ungathintana no mphathi walolucwaningo u-Dkt. Mary van der Riet enambeni yocingo ethi 033 260 6163 noma ungathumela i-email ku - vanderriet@ukzn.ac.za. Ungaphinde uthintane no-Nksz. Sibusisiwe Tshabalala uthumele i-email ku- 202519564@stu.ukzn.ac.za.

Appendix 4: Consent form

I hereby agree to participate in the research on women's sexual health.

- I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so.
- I understand that I can stop participating at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively.
- I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally in the immediate or short term.
- I understand that my participation will remain confidential.

.....
Signature of participant

.....
Date

Ifomu lemvume

Mina ngiyavuma ukubamba iqhaza kulolucwaningo olumayelana ne-sexual health yabesifazane.

- Ngiyaqonda ukuthi angiphoqiwe ukubamba iqhaza kulolucwaningo.
- Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ngingahoxa noma inini ekubeni yingxenywe yalolucwaningo futhi lokho ngeke kube namthelela omubi kimina.
- Ngiyaqonda ukuthi lena yiphrojekthi yocwaningo okunhloso yalo akukona ukuzuzisa mina uqobo manje noma esikhathini esizayo.
- Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ukubamba kwami iqhaza kulolucwaningo kuzoba yimfihlo.

.....
Isiginesha

.....
Usuku

Appendix 5: Consent for audio recording

Ihereby *agree / disagree* to the audio recording of my participation in the study.

- I understand that this will be in addition to taking of notes so that the interview can be accurately captured.
- I understand that the information that I provide will be stored electronically and will be used for research purposes now or at a later stage.

.....

Signature of participant

.....

Date

Imvume yokuqoshwa ngerekhoda

Minangiyavuma / angivumi ukuba kuqoshwe inkulumo yami ngerekhoda njengoba ngibambe iqhaza kulolucwaningo.

- Ngiyaqonda ukuthi ukuqoshwa kwenkulumo yami ngerekhoda kwenziwa ngenhloso yokunezezela emibhalweni ezoqoshwa phansi ngesikhathi ngikhuluma ukuze inkulumo yami ibhalwe ngokunembile.
- Ngiyaqonda ukuthi inkulumo yami emayelana nalolucwaningo izogcinwa kwikhompyutha futhi ingasetshenziswa kolunye ucwaningo manje noma esikhathini esizayo.

.....

Isiginesha

.....

Usuku

Appendix 6: Child and Family Centre Services



14 June 2017

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to provide the assurance that should any participant interviewed by Ms Nompumelelo Tshabalala (Psychology Masters student) require psychological assistance as a result of any distress arising from the research project titled “*Socio-economic status and women’s sexual health: Framing the femininity, agency and vulnerability of young employed women in relation to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs)*”, the service will be provided by Masters one Psychology students and intern psychologists at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus Child and Family Centre – phone 033-2605166.

Yours sincerely,

Y. Chilimani
Director: Child and Family Centre
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Child and Family Centre School of Applied Human Sciences

Postal Address: Private Bag X01, Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg, 3209, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)33 260 5166 Facsimile: +27 (0)33 260 5809 Email: Naidoon2@ukzn.ac.za Website: psychology.ukzn.ac.za

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville ³

Appendix 7: Ethical clearance



22 November 2018

Ms Nompumelelo Sibusishwe Tshabalala (202519564)
School of Applied Human Sciences – Psychology
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Ms Tshabalala,

Protocol reference number : HSS/1243/017M

Project title: Socio-economic status and women's sexual health : Framing the femininity, agency and vulnerability of young employed women in relation to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

Approval Notification – Full Committee Reviewed Protocol

With regards to your response received on 20 August 2018 to our letter of 06 September 2018, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. **PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

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

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

Yours faithfully

Dr Shamilla Naidoo (Deputy Chair)

/ms

cc:Supervisor: Dr Mary van der Riet
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Maud Mthembu
cc School Administrator: Ms Priya Konan

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Professor Shamsula Singh (Chair)

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