

An ethical assessment of the structural agency of the blessee in the ‘Blesser-Blessee’ phenomenon

by

Zikhona Singata

Submitted in fulfilment of the academic requirements of

Master of Arts

in the

School of Religion, Philosophy, and Classics

College of Humanities

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Pietermaritzburg

South Africa

10 August 2020

Declaration

I, Nomazulu Zikhona Singata, have understood the guidelines of the University of KwaZulu-Natal on plagiarism.

I state that:

- The research written, excluding where it is declared, is my own work.
- The research written will be submitted for the first time at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- The dissertation has specifically indicated the sources of any pictures and graphs included.
- The dissertation has not taken other people's written work unless indicated through direct quotes or paraphrasing and indicated the original author of the thought through Harvard referencing.

Signed (Student):  _____

Date: 17 March 21

Supervisor: Dr Beatrice Manu-Okyere



18 March 21

Signed (Supervisor): _____

Date: _____

Abstract

This study concerned the ‘Blesser-Blessee’ Phenomenon (BBP) in South Africa. The BBP is a social construct based on a transactional relationship. A social construct is based on what society sees and experiences around it (Gablin, 2014). Thus, multiple people have to experience the phenomenon for it to develop into a social construct (Boghossian, 2001). A transactional relationship is best known in terms of a monetary exchange for sexual benefits. The relationship usually occurs between a young adult (blessee) and an older man (blesser). In some cases, a bleaser can also be female. A bleaser is a modern-day ‘sugar daddy’ who is known for giving extravagant gifts to the blessee, and the blessee is usually a young woman with material needs or wants (Thobejane *et al.*, 2017). The blessee dates a bleaser to fulfil her different needs or wants and to meet specific goals (Garsd and Crossan, 2017). In most cases, this relationship is pursued in order to provide her with a livelihood. The structures of the blessee provide the reasons why they pursue this type of transactional relationship. The structures are highlighted as peer pressure, unemployment, gender inequality and poverty. The structures help us understand the agency of the blessee and how it, the agency, is underpinned by them, hence the theory of ‘Structure and Agency’. The Structure and Agency theory advocates the idea that to understand an agent, one must know the structures or systems that surround the individual and how they affect the decisions they make. The reasons yield multiple outcomes that could be positive and/or negative. These reasons are considered as the structures within the Structure and Agency theory, and which indicate whether the agency is limited or unlimited. The decision to consider both the structures and the agency of an individual yield the structural agency.

This research focused on female blessees and highlighted the idea of women and agency. Thus, the ethical implications of individual agency of the blessee are premised on her freedom and rationality. In order to obtain information for this research, a desktop study was conducted. It entailed the use of secondary resources using an exploratory approach. This was done through assessing the blessee in the BBP using the Structure and Agency theory to understand whether she has agency that is not limited.

Keywords: Blessor, Blessee, 'Blessor-Blessee' Phenomenon, BBP, Social construct, Transactional relationship, Structure and Agency theory

Acknowledgements

Prayer has been my continuous source of strength for the multiple sleepless nights that I have endured throughout this dissertation. Thus, I would like to thank my Lord Jesus Christ for being my father and a constant source of strength.

To my lecturer and supervisor, Dr Beatrice Manu-Okyere, thank you for your tireless assistance and mentoring throughout this year. Thank you for your motivations and the constant belief in my capabilities, you are truly a role model to me.

I would like to further thank my parents for providing me with the privilege of being a master's student through their financial and emotional support that went above and beyond what was expected. To my father, Zoyisile Singata, for his wisdom, and for teaching me about patience and resilience. To my mother, Lorraine Nomvuyo Singata, for her constant and unconditional love and support and for teaching me to be an independent woman. To my brothers for their unwavering support and belief in me. Siyanda Singata for letting me know that I can do it. A special thank you to Thethinene Singata for being my constant cheerleader and reminding me that hard work pays off.

I would further like to thank my extended family, which was made possible by academia and friendship, namely, Tatenda Chareka and Mangiphile Shezi.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my daughter, Buhle Elihle Singata “Alunge” – know that you are my joy and the reason I keep pushing myself to excel.

Contents

Declaration	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Dedication	vi
List of abbreviations	xi
List of figures	xii
List of tables	xiii
Definitions and slang within the ‘Blessed-Blessed’ phenomenon	xiv
Chapter one: Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background	2
1.3 Motivation for the study	3
1.4 Significance of the study	4
1.5 Research problem	5
1.6 Key research question	5
1.6.1 Research sub-questions	5
1.7 Key objective of the research	6
1.7.1 Research sub-objectives	6
1.8 Language use	6
1.9 Key focus	6
1.10 Research methodology	7
1.11 Theoretical framework	8
1.12 Limitations	9
1.13 The gap	10
1.14 Structure of the dissertation	10
1.15 Conclusion	12
Chapter two: Literature review	13
2.1 Introduction	13

2.2 Conceptualising the term ‘blesser’ (male).....	14
2.3 Blesser levels.....	15
2.3.1 The blesser levels clarified.....	17
2.4 Defining the concepts of bless, blessing and blessed.....	18
2.5 Conceptualising the term ‘blessee’ (female).....	20
2.6 Female blesser and male blessee	22
2.7 Nature of having a blesser	23
2.7.1 Defining transactional sex within the BBP	23
2.7.2 Prostitution in contrast to the BBP	23
2.7.3 Conventional or equal relationships in contrast to the BBP.....	24
2.8 Reasons for choosing to have a blesser	25
2.8.1 Gender inequality as a push factor	25
2.8.2 Poverty as a measure to find an alternative livelihood.....	27
2.8.3 Unemployment forces alternatives for a livelihood	28
2.8.4 Peer pressure can be a toxic or healthy ideology	30
2.9 Outcomes of the BBP	31
2.9.1 Negative outcomes of the BBP	31
2.9.2 Positives outcomes of the BBP	35
2.10 Conclusion.....	37
Chapter three: Theoretical framework of ‘Structure and Agency’	38
3.1 Introduction	38
3.2 Brief background history on the development of the Structure and Agency theory.	39
3.2.1 Functionalism	40
3.2.2 Marxism.....	40
3.2.3 Interactionism.....	41
3.2.4 Ethnomethodology	41
3.2.5 Structuralism	42
3.2.6 The sociology of knowledge	42
3.2.7 The importance of including the theorists and theories	43
3.2.8 Structuration	44
3.3 Defining social structure in the Structure and Agency theory	44

3.3.1 Arguments against structure without agency	46
3.4 Defining the human agency in the Structure and Agency theory	46
3.4.1 Arguments against human agency in the Structure and Agency theory.....	48
3.5 Defining the Structure and Agency theory.....	48
3.6 Arguments against the Structure and Agency theory	50
3.7 Power relations in the Structure and Agency theory.....	52
3.8 Relevance of structure and agency to the current research	53
3.9 Conclusion.....	55
Chapter four: Analysing how structure affects the blessee's agency	57
4.1 Introduction	57
4.2 The structural agency of the blessee within the BBP	58
4.3 Structures that influence the agency of the blessee.....	61
4.3.1 Gender inequality as a structure and limitation of the blessee's agency.....	62
4.3.2 Poverty as a structure and limitation of the blessee's agency	63
4.3.3 Unemployment as a structure and limitation of the blessee's agency.....	64
4.3.4 Peer pressure as a structure and limitation of the blessee's agency	66
4.4. The outcomes of the BBP creating structures that either limit or free the blessee ..	67
4.4.1 Agency influencing unintended negative outcomes.....	68
4.4.2 Agency influencing intended positive outcomes.....	71
4.5 Conclusion.....	72
Chapter five: Conclusion	74
5.1 Introduction	74
5.2 Chapter summaries.....	75
5.3 Limitations of the study.....	78
5.4 Identified structures and recommendations.....	79
5.4.1 Gender equality	79
5.4.2 Unemployment and poverty	80
5.4.3 Issues of formal education.....	80
5.4.4 Health risks.....	81
5.4.5 Peer pressure.....	81

5.5 Suggestions for further research.....	82
5.6 Conclusion.....	82
References.....	84

List of abbreviations

BBP	-	Blessed-Blessee Phenomenon
MDGs	-	Millennium Development Goals
GBV	-	Gender-based Violence
SA	-	South Africa
HIV	-	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
AIDS	-	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ARVs	-	Antiretrovirals
SD	-	Sustainable Development
NDP	-	National Development Plan
STIs	-	Sexually Transmitted Infections
STDs	-	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
SSS	-	Student Support Services
LGBTI	-	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
PEP	-	Post Exposure Prophylaxis
PREP	-	Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis

List of figures

Figure 2.1: Diagram 1 of the blesser levels.	16
Figure 2.2: Diagram 2 of the blesser levels.	16
Figure 2.3: Diagram 3 of the blesser levels.	17
Figure 3.1: Structure and agency producing structural agency.....	55
Figure 4.1: Structural agency of the blessee in the BBP and the outcomes it produces.....	60
Figure 4.2: Structural agency outcomes in the BBP	67

List of tables

Table 2.1: Sugar daddies are likely to be infected with HIV/AIDS	32
Table 4.1: Sugar daddies give you HIV	69

Definitions and slang within the ‘Blesser-Blessee’ phenomenon

Black Diamonds: “A term coined to describe South Africa’s black middle class, a newly emerged and rapidly growing market in the economy. They are well-educated, aspirational, confident in the future, credit-worthy with above-average income, in white-collar occupations, and they own or are acquiring homes, cars and household goods. After apartheid ended, they finally gained better job opportunities, greater income, constitutional freedom, improved access to education and knowledge, enhanced mobility, and more spending power. Their tourism, sport and leisure behaviour and consumption patterns have changed; they go to the gym, dine out, attend festivals and music shows, and visit beaches, national parks and urban shopping malls. They participate in a variety of sports such as cricket, rugby, athletics, hockey, swimming and canoeing. Their musical tastes have shifted from traditional, folk and jazz music to more Western and mainstream music” (Phamotse, 2016: 7).

Blessee: “a blessee is someone who is blessed through receiving a blessing from a blesser” (Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2019: 257).

Blesser/Sugar Daddy: “a blesser is someone, usually an older man with a lot of money, who provides money, expensive gifts and luxurious trips to young women in exchange for their company or sexual favours. Blessers are similar to a Sugar Daddies but richer” (Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2019: 257).

Influencer: “An influencer is someone in your niche or industry with sway over your target audience. Influencers have specialized knowledge, authority or insight into a specific subject. Their pre-existing presence in a niche makes them a useful launching pad for brands in search of credibility. Eighty-five percent of marketers engaged in influencer marketing in 2017 and ninety-two said their campaigns were effective. An influencer assists companies in influencer marketing, a form of advertising that builds brand authority on the back of another person’s reputation.

Influencers have a long history in marketing. Initially, companies used compelling figures like celebrities and athletes to help sell their products through television and radio ads. The rise of social media has made other types of influencer more popular. Today, influencers fit into the following categories:

- Celebrities: Artists, athletes, and pop culture stars.
- Industry experts and thought leaders
- Micro-influencers: Individuals with an impact on social media
- Bloggers and content creators.

The bulk of influencers marketing today occurs in social media. Micro-influencers and bloggers are a more cost-effective way to access instant credibility for growing brands” (Chen, 2020).

Slay Queen: “Girls who do not have a wealthy background but appear as if they do. They use malicious acts to attain cash, drink expensive alcohol, procure expensive cellphones” (Urban Dictionary, 2020).

Structural Agency: “An indication of how the combination of structure and agency yields the conceptualization of structural agency. Structure, as defined in this chapter, is considered to be institutions, systems, organizations, procedures and society. And Agency is considered as freedom, free will, choice and capability. Thus, by considering the structure one exists in and how they make those decisions that can be considered ‘Structural Agency’” (Diagram in Chapter three, page: 64).

Chapter one: Introduction

“Within psychology and philosophy, autonomy relates to being a causal agent over one’s life. Specifically, a person is autonomous when his or her behaviour is experienced as willingly enacted and when he or she fully endorses the actions in which he or she is engaged and/or the values expressed by them. Along these lines, an autonomous individual is able to act on one’s values and goals” (Donald, Koolwal, Annan, Falb and Goldstein, 2016: 5)

.

1.1 Introduction

The above quotation describes an autonomy that is directed at one’s goals and values, which is the overarching argument of this dissertation. It also stipulates how the psychology and the philosophy of a being directly relate to rationality (which are part of the objectives of this research) and where one’s psychology and philosophy are built on structures of institutions and organisations that already exist. These structures determine one’s capability of agency within a society and, ultimately, condition the individual to a specific society which yields a certain type of social construction. This chapter summarises the key points of this research, which ultimately concerned the structural agency of an individual.

This research conducts a detailed overview of what the ‘Blesser-Blessee’ Phenomenon (BBP) entails and the chapter starts by giving the background where the motivation for the research stems from. This chapter includes the significance of the study* coupled with the research questions and objectives which drove the research. The methodology used for the research is discussed and an overview of the theoretical framework is provided to help answer the main research question, namely, understanding the structural agency of the blessee within the BBP. This chapter also provides a summary of Chapters one to five detailing what each chapter comprises.

The BBP is constantly popularised by social media through the young adults that are constantly praising the phenomenon. Social media is an overarching umbrella term for social

* The term ‘study’ is used interchangeably with the term ‘research’ in the dissertation.

networks, which consists of platforms such as ‘Facebook’, ‘Instagram’, ‘Twitter’, ‘Snapchat’ and ‘WhatsApp’ and which are identified as being part of the main catalysts of this phenomenon (Thobejane, Mulaudzi and Zitha, 2017). Although multiple awareness campaigns have been put in place to curb the rate at which the BBP is spreading, they fail to address issues of why the phenomenon exists. Furthermore, they fail to address the reasons why the blessee pursues this relationship by considering the structure in which she exists. The main idea behind this research project was to highlight the ‘structure’ of the blessee and their ‘agency’ in choosing the BBP path by assessing the blessee. This means that the blessee is influenced by concepts such as gender inequality, poverty, unemployment and peer pressure. Choosing survival over morals is common today as the means of living on a daily basis requires a monetary figure (Thobejane, Mulaudzi and Zitha, 2017). While in most cases the reasons for pursuing such a relationship are valid ones, the decision to do so can yield both negative and positive outcomes, which can either impede or yield the agency of the blessee. The Structure and Agency theory assists in analysing the reasons for and the outcomes that are obtained from the BBP and in understanding the ethical effects of the phenomenon.

1.2 Background

In describing the concept of the BBP, it is important to highlight that there is barely any difference between it and the ‘sugar daddy’ concept. Azwihangwisi Helen Mavhandu-Mudzusi (2019: 257) argued that the difference between the blesser and the sugar daddy concept is that one is rich and the other is classified as middle class. The only way to understand the concept is that the ‘blesser’ is a glorified sugar daddy. Terry-Ann Selikow and Tola Mbulaheni (2013: 88) wrote that one of the most common assumptions is that the BBP reveals indirect prostitution that transpires between the blessee and the blesser. They argued that the blessees are usually women of no ambition and usually referred to as ‘gold-diggers’ or ‘slay queens’ who want to live a luxurious life by dating wealthy men. Furthermore, Tsoaledi Daniel Thobejane, Tshilidzi Patrecia Mulaudzi and Rally Zitha (2017: 8720) asserted that the social construction behind the BBP reveals an economic side of sexual and romantic relationships that has been disregarded in public discourse. Jabulile Solontsi (2016) suggested that the blessees and their families have survived through this trend by

building themselves as brands and in doing so, have had their education paid for and gained houses, cars and businesses to sustain their lives.

Solontsi (2017) also believed that the phenomenon reflects a trend of upward mobility, that is, the ability to move from a lower to higher economic status. The concept of upward mobility clearly affects most young adults as they are struggling due to economic issues such as poverty and lack of employment (Camila *et al.*, 2015: 17). In the case of the BBP, it is also important to highlight that social media is the tool that augments this phenomenon, in the sense that a majority of young adults learn about the trend from social media. Social media can thus be viewed as a social structure on its own. A social structure is an arrangement of institutions in which humans live and interact together (Gablin, 2014). Our social structure is there to influence the way we think and behave. It is, therefore, important to explore the structure and agency of the blessee hence, the concept of ‘structural agency’. Structural agency is the cultivation of an individual by society through its norms, needs and responsibilities (Karp and Masolo, 2000: 137). This will be further discussed in Chapter four.

1.3 Motivation for the study

The motivation for this study was ignited by the television show ‘One Day Leader’ in 2018. In the show, a discussion was held on the South African social, economic, and political issues concerning the leadership skills of youth leaders. The concept of the BBP was discussed with an ex-blessee, Jackie Phamotse, who was present as a guest in the show. During the discussion, the different levels of the BBP were mentioned. Level one was described as dealing with issues of poverty, level two with the middle-class income blessers and level three with the rich who buy the extravagant gifts. The discussion revealed that BBP was not a new trend but rather a new concept stemming from the sugar daddy idea. The BBP is described as the transactional relationship between the young adult and an older woman or man, where the relationship provides for the livelihood of the blessee (Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2019: 257).

Jackie Phamotse (2017) and Angela Makholwa (2017) created narratives of the life of the blessee through their fictional literature. Through their literature and their research on the phenomenon, they provide an understanding of what the BBP entails. These authors, in their books, give a clear

understanding of what the social structure of the blessee entails and how the social structure plays a role in the agency of the blessee. Jackie Phamotse is a South African author who wrote the book “*Bare*” (2017). She is also a very vocal ex-blessee who started writing the book as a memoir but later changed it into a fictional work to avoid lawsuits. The blessers are mostly powerful men who have economic and political power which allows them to control and also instil fear in the blessee. Phamotse describes the blessers as ‘black diamonds’ – well-educated, credit-worthy men with above-average income and in white-collar jobs. The book identifies these men as a product of the post-apartheid regime due to their constitutional freedom and the success they have accumulated for themselves. Makholwa (2017) identifies these men as blessers but her definitions are in line with Phamotse’s definition of the black diamond.

Angela Makholwa, the author of the book “*The Blessed Girl*” (2017), portrays one character called Bontle as an up-and-coming businesswoman who is highly motivated and uses relationships with married men to get ahead in business. As the BBP is described as one with both positive and negative outcomes, Bontle also contracts HIV and has to deal with the wives of these men (blessers). The structures represented in the book come from social aspects of her life and these include health issues, peer pressure, and the cultural background she came from all of which played a role in her becoming a blessee.

The above information has provided some of the reasons why there was a need to conduct further investigations into the BBP. While different disciplines have investigated varying aspects of this phenomenon, this study explored both its positive and negative effects while concentrating on the structural agency of the blessee. In doing so, the research fell within the ethics discipline.

1.4 Significance of the study

The significance of the study is based on the structures that the blessee exists in and these include poverty, unemployment, and gender inequality, all of which influence the agency of the blessee. Another structure involves peer pressure which includes the influence of people that surround a blessee and how they have an impact on her. Peer pressure is not just a result of the physical availability of individuals around the blessee but also includes the community the blessee connects with on social media. We live in a world where our influences are derived from societal norms

(Karp and Masolo, 2000: 137). The societal influences have now evolved through technological advancement and have come to include social media platforms. Social media on its own has built constructions that have manifested through the practices, rules, values, and principles followed by society (Bliaut and Dlwati, 2017: 4). The authors further explain that social networks are the specific components of social media that are used to connect people through the internet. Social networks are a tool that spreads the BBP to many young women around South Africa. Thus, social media, and to be more specific in this case, social networks are a social structure on their own. The blesser-blessee relationship is all about maintaining the livelihood of the blessee, meeting all her needs and sometimes wants. Thus, this research aimed at assessing the BBP by looking at the agency of the blessee and how the structures influence the decisions concerning having a blesser. These structures can also mean that the background of the blesser has an influence.

1.5 Research problem

The problem that this research addressed concerned examining the BBP through the lens of the Structure and Agency theory. The main concepts that were investigated were the effects of the BBP on the blessee through understanding their freedom and rationality. This required an understanding of what the BBP entails and distinguishing the phenomenon from a conventional relationship. It also required assessing the influences that lead to BBP in the South African context.

Victim blaming is one of the major issues yielded by the outcomes of the BBP such as gender-based violence (GBV) which is currently one of the biggest social problems in South Africa. The GBV concept has an economic side that pushes the blessee to make the decision to be part of the BBP. Her doing so is usually mistakenly confused with the concept of prostitution and there is thus a need to differentiate.

1.6 Key research question

What is the structural agency of the blessee in the BBP?

1.6.1 Research sub-questions

- What is the BBP in South Africa?
- How is the BBP different from the idea of a conventional relationship?

- What are the factors that lead to the BBP in South Africa?
- How does the phenomenon ethically impact on the blessee?

1.7 Key objective of the research

To understand the structural agency of the blessee within the BBP.

1.7.1 Research sub-objectives

- To define the BBP in South Africa.
- To elucidate and differentiate between the BBP and the idea of a conventional relationship.
- To investigate the factors that lead to the BBP in South Africa.
- To explore the ethical impact of the phenomenon on the blessee.

1.8 Language use

The BBP is socially constructed through social networks by using a hashtag that consists of the word 'Blessed' hence, the concepts blesser and blessee. The blesser here refers to an older man who dates a younger woman in exchange for emotional, physical and sexual favours while the blessee is the young woman that receives extravagant gifts for offering these favours. The BBP can be referred to as a transactional relationship that is sometimes misconceived as prostitution. The BBP is associated with terms such as 'gold digger', 'influencer', 'slay queen' and 'black diamond'. These terms are associated with both negative and positive attitudes towards individuals. The terms associated with the BBP are based on the perspective of the social structure that an individual blessee exists in and, as such, will have either negative or positive connotations.

1.9 Key focus

The key focus of this research was to understand the social structure that influences a blessee to decide to engage in a blesser-blessee relationship. This will help in understanding why a blessee chooses to be part of a blesser-blessee arrangement and how the structure affects their agency. In other words, the research focused on the factors that lead to the BBP and the outcomes yielded by the decisions taken. This was done to understand the value of the blessee's agency by exploring

the rationality and freedom they have within the BBP. The intention was to understand whether the blessee exhibits an autonomous agency.

1.10 Research methodology

It is important to understand that research is a step-by-step process that requires identifying a particular problem and translating the problem into a research endeavour (Fouche, 2002: 7). This study used a secondary data analysis approach by relying on literature from different scholars who have done both empirical and non-empirical research on the BBP. These scholars have arrived at different conclusions and have written from different disciplines including sociology, people management, health sciences, and psychology. Some of the findings of this research have been incorporated into this study. This study was thus done through ‘desktop research’ in which it explored the secondary data available. Zainal (2007: 2) stated that desktop research refers to secondary data that does not require fieldwork. It entails library-related research to identify, among other resources, newspaper articles, journal articles and books. Such research also incorporates the internet. The information was collected, analysed and synthesised to produce an informative literature review. This assisted in analysing and answering the main research question and attaining the objectives of the study.

Since one of the keys aims of this study was to explore the positive and negative effects of the BBP on the blessee, an exploratory approach was used. According to Swanson (2015: 79), an exploratory approach focuses on an aspect that is not clearly defined. According to Thobenjane *et al.* (2017: 8723), an explorative approach tries to put ideas together in order to conceptualise the causes and effects. The research design of this study comprised an overview of how and what the research entailed in terms of collecting data (Heale and Twycross, 2017: 7). The research design is there to provide a layout of the information or data that needs to be obtained and to use the collected data during the analysis stages of the research. This helps in meeting the objectives which in this study were put forward to respond to, and answer the research problem. Thus, an appropriate research design is important to execute an appropriate research methodology. It provides a planned outline of how the researcher will carry out the research (Monette, Sullivan and Dejong, 2008: 9).

The research methodology goes into precise detail as to how the research problem can be framed and investigated using specific designs and procedures (Zainal, 2007:1). In introducing the topic, this study will provide background on where the concept of the BBP originates and what it entails. The key concepts such as blesser and blessee will be defined and a detailed discussion of the nature of and reasons for having a blesser will be provided. The BBP is associated with concepts such as prostitution and the differences between it and conventional relationships will be highlighted. The relevant negative and positive outcomes of the phenomenon will be specified. The research will then explore the agency the blessee has in choosing to have a blesser and how the structure influences the choice made by the blessee.

The structure of the blessee can be looked at through poverty, unemployment, peer pressure or gender inequality, which are the leading influences of the phenomenon. This structure highlights the concept of freedom which is specified in the concept of individual agency within the Structure and Agency theory. According to Kant, the foundation of morality is freedom which proves the concept of the agency of the blessee. Freedom of action is important because it is what allows individual moral agents to be held morally responsible for their actions. This research aimed at highlighting how the reasons or structure are not always favourable to the blessee and as a result their agency can be questioned. This will help provide an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and social interactions as well as the rationale for such interactions in terms of the BBP.

1.11 Theoretical framework

The Structure and Agency theory will be used to assist in answering the key research question, which is understanding the structural agency of the blessee within the BBP. Structure and agency focus on societal norms that are continuously shifting and these changes have forced people to find different forms of livelihood. In the social structure, a livelihood is an everyday way of surviving. Thus, evolution is consistently forcing society towards finding different means of survival. The need to do so is due to the high levels of unemployment, peer pressure and societal issues that the government is struggling to solve. This requires one to improvise or find a way to survive the existential reality of the society we live in. This in turn leads to the idea of structural agency (through the Structure and Agency theory). The idea behind the concept of the BBP is that it is socially constructed and is evidence of a changing society.

This study focused on structure and agency which highlight how society has an impact on individual agency. Before we understand structure and agency fully, it is important to define individual agency and understand what it entails. According to Hyman and Steward (2004), individual agency can be defined as the ability of humans to act in terms of their free will by making their own free choices. Agency is a term that has been part of the philosophical and sociological discourse for many years, especially during the Enlightenment era (Giddens, 2000: 665). During this period, scholars such as Immanuel Kant presented an ethical view of human agency, where human action was premised on freedom and rationality (as mentioned by Irwin in Hyman and Steward, 2004:139). Agency in this research was considered in the manner of Anthony Giddens and Karl Marx, as their notion of agency is coupled with structure. Karp and Masolo (2000) are also among the main proponents of structure and agency in the African context.

Karp and Masolo (2000: 138) stated that human agency can be claimed to be autonomous due to the freedom and rationality that humans adopt. They further stipulated that a person is motivated by their social history and that different societies cope according to their unique social environments (Karp and Masolo, 2000: 21). This enables humans to act according to what they desire or to act based on the motivations and intentions that they have (Luck and D’Inerno, 1995). When using the Structure and Agency theory, it is important to look at some of the critiques it has received. Wafa Kort and Jamel Gharbi (2013: 95), for example, highlighted one of the main critiques as the debate between who holds the freedom or power – the structure or the agent. Furthermore, they argued that there is no standard rule for all social structures (Kort and Gharbi, 2013: 99). Thus, it is important to emphasise that blessees resort to the BBP for different reasons.

1.12 Limitations

The main limitation of the study is that it was conducted as desktop research. This meant that the information used in the study was predominantly from secondary data sources. Interviewing blessees about their blessers would have added much depth to the study. Nonetheless, conducting an empirical study would not have been feasible due to time constraints since the research was scheduled to be completed in one year. Also, there was the issue of the lack of funding for an empirical study. Furthermore, an empirical study of this nature would have been “tricky” given

that ethical approval would have been difficult to obtain due to blessees' lives being affected. However, relevant information on the topic was sourced from a variety of literature (as noted above) and was considered sufficient for study.

1.13 The gap

The BBP was popularised by many young people in the year 2016, making it a phenomenon that has not been extensively written about. Writing on the BBP phenomenon has been from multiple perspectives which include youth-led research that was based on the gender and behaviour of students coupled with their contribution to the phenomenon (Thobejane *et al.*, 2017). Varjandi (2017: 87) focused on transactional sex and GBV from a sociological perspective using the feminist approach. Other authors have focused on gender and socio-economic inequities which are, in part, influences of the BBP. These authors include Mavhandu-Mudzusi (2019) and Thobejane *et al.* (2017). Mampane (2017) highlighted the health hazards of the phenomenon, which have become one of the focal points of most writers on the phenomenon. Thus, multiple perspectives on the phenomenon have been explored and these come from different disciplines such as psychology, health sciences, sociology, people management, and socioeconomics. This research examined the agency of the blessee through understanding whether freedom and rationality were utilised or not. The research adopted an explorative approach in highlighting the positive and negative effects of the BBP on the blessee. Furthermore, this research analysed how the reasons of the blessee had an impact on their agency to be part of the BBP. Finally, the research incorporated the Structure and Agency theory from the perspective of Kant to explore the extent of the freedom within which a blessee makes a decision pertaining to the BBP and bearing in mind her structural background.

1.14 Structure of the dissertation

Chapter one: Introduction

This chapter introduced the BBP including its origin. It provided an overview of what the research was about and what it entailed. It highlighted that the motivation for the study came from the television show 'One Day Leader' and two books written by authors Angela Makholwa (2017) and Jackie Phamotse (2017). The chapter stated the research questions and objectives of the research. It further described and discussed the methodology used to accomplish the study. The

chapter also outlined the theoretical framework that was used to analyse the data from the literature. The gap addressed by this research was outlined as were the limitations of the study. Finally, an overview of each of the five chapters comprising the dissertation was provided.

Chapter two: Literature review

This chapter analyses some of the academic texts that have been written on the BBP. The phenomenon is broken down into understanding the concepts blesser and blessee while also highlighting how each concept originated. It identifies terms and concepts that are related to the BBP. The factors contributing to the phenomenon and the effects of the phenomenon are discussed. The contributing factors are labelled as the reasons or structures that influence the decision of whether to be part of the BBP or not. These factors are gender inequality, poverty, unemployment and peer pressure. The effects of the phenomenon are identified in terms of both positive and negative outcomes. The positive outcomes are formal education, financial gain, and the desire to become an influencer. The negative outcomes are health risks and GBV. The chapter then underlines the gap in the research on BBP by using the Structure and Agency theory to illustrate how the blessee's free will is impeded using the ethical theory of individual agency.

Chapter three: Theoretical framework of 'Structure and Agency'

This chapter provides an overview of the Structure and Agency theory by understanding, among other aspects, its origin. The background of the theory is provided which highlights the relevant literature for understanding the gist of the theory. Theories that have an influence on the construction of structure and agency are thus relevant for this research. The background, therefore, provides an overview of the theorists and theories involved in the construction of the Structure and Agency theory. To better understand the concepts of structure and agency they are reduced to human agency and social structure. Each of the concepts comes with its own criticisms. The Structure and Agency theory is then analysed and included in the analysis is the concept of 'power' which helps provide a better understanding of the theory and its relevance to the research. Finally, the chapter explains how it will use the Structure and Agency theory to assess the BBP in order to explore the structural agency and the impacts it has on the blessee.

Chapter four: Analysing how structure affects the blessee's agency

This chapter is based on a critical analysis of the information obtained on the BBP. It attempts to understand the structures or reasons for the blessee opting for the relationship. The analysis focuses on the concept of structural agency and its impact on the blessee in the BBP. The chapter analyses the reasons for the blessee being part of the BBP by understanding whether these reasons are limiting or increasing their agency. The Structure and Agency theory is used as the theoretical framework or the lens through which issues such as gender inequality, poverty, unemployment, and peer pressure are analysed, while at the same time highlighting how these concepts influence an individual's autonomy. The chapter further analyses and highlights both the positive and negative outcomes for the blessee within the BBP, and how these outcomes affect their freedom and rationality. Thus, the research aimed to look at the structure of the blessee and how it influences their agency within the BBP.

Chapter five: Conclusion

Chapter five is the concluding section of the dissertation. It comprises a summary of the chapters of the study. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the limitations of the study which include it being a desktop study. The chapter also includes the study themes and recommendations and ends with a conclusion.

1.15 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of what this study entailed. It presented the study's limitations and the research methodology used. It also highlighted the lens or theoretical framework that guided the study. Finally, it presented a summary of what each chapter of the dissertation dealt with.

The next chapter is the literature review where relevant works on the BBP are assessed.

Chapter two: Literature review

“In the current discussions around the phenomenon of blessers and sugar daddies in South Africa, it becomes apparent that the broader socio-political and economic experiences of the girls are often neglected or even ignored. The campaign by the Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, to ‘wean girls of sugar daddies’” (Department of Health, Budget Speech, South Africa, 2016) aims to target girls but is neither based on a clear understanding of the lived experience of girls nor does it include them in the development of such interventions.” (Juliane Hoss and Linda Eskell, 2018: 309)

2.1 Introduction

The above quotation underscores the overall point of this chapter, that is, it highlights an understanding of the reasons for becoming a lessee. The reasons are important since they include the understanding from the lessee’s perspective. Thus, they will help “wean girls of sugar daddies” as Dr Motsoaledi expressed above. It is, therefore, important to look at the BBP from multiple perspectives through understanding existing information that is sometimes misconstrued and wrongly aligned with conventional relationships and acts such as prostitution.

The previous chapter was an introduction to the study whereby its objectives and the various chapters were outlined. It also included the motivation for the study and an outline of the theoretical framework that the study utilised to achieve the main objective. Chapter two defines the BBP as a transactional relationship. A transactional relationship is a concept that has been around for decades and has been persistent across multiple cultures in the world. Thus, it is important to note that the concept of the BBP is not a new trend but rooted in the sugar daddy trend. It is a concept that has been popularised through social media and given its name through social construction. This chapter will focus on what the BBP entails through its definitions. It will provide an understanding of where the phenomenon originates and will further explain the nature of, and the reasons for having a blesser from the lessee’s point of view. This will be done through the information that already exists. Thus, a comprehensive overview of the BBP will be provided

through authors that have written on the social construct – a construct that is underlined by the concept of a blessing.

2.2 Conceptualising the term ‘blesser’ (male)

The term bleaser was coined when several young women posted pictures of themselves shopping overseas, driving expensive cars and wearing expensive clothes. A bleaser is a modern-day sugar daddy, an individual who is known for offering extravagant gifts to the blessee. The blessee is usually a young adult with material needs (Phamotse, 2017: 13). With that in mind, when defining the concept of the bleaser, it is important to mention what a sugar daddy entails since they are similar concepts. In general terms, a sugar daddy is a rich older man who extravagantly spends money on a young woman in return for sexual favours and her company (Mazvarirwofa, 2014: 2). Harling *et al.* (2014: 445) on the other hand, believed that a sugar daddy is usually an older, married or single man who is usually well-known by all the people that matter. Camilla *et al.* (2015) described a sugar daddy as someone who has a busy schedule and as a result, is not expected to be available at all times. Meanwhile, the ‘sugar-babe’ (the young lady dating the sugar daddy) is expected to be available whenever needed. The expectation of the sugar babe is that the sugar daddy spoils her with gifts, and offers her financial support for all her needs and wants in exchange for sex and companionship (Camila *et al.*, 2015: 17).

According to Geldenhuys (2016: 15), a bleaser is typically an extremely rich man who sets up the woman of his interest with clothing accounts, overseas holidays, and sometimes a vehicle. Thus, when a woman dates a bleaser, her life seems to be blessed financially. This study disagrees with the view that the sugar daddy concept is the same as the bleaser concept. The difference is that sugar daddies can be twice the age of blessees and they are mainly looking for sex, while blessees do not necessarily only want sex but also want companionship. Thobejane *et al.* (2017) agree to a certain extent with Geldenhuys (2016) by stating that while blessees come from different age groups they are mostly made up of older married men (see also Makholwa, 2017). A bleaser is a new term for a sugar daddy except that a bleaser spends more and is placed on a much higher pedestal thereby giving him a god-like status – a status that is not achieved by a sugar daddy. It is widely held that dating a bleaser will automatically secure your life financially (ENCA, 2016).

According to Phamotse's book '*Bare*' (2016), the term 'black diamond' is usually associated with being a blesser. This individual has a circle of friends that are also tagged as being blessers. "In most cases, these men are married and are just looking for something that will make them feel young again and have fun" (Phamotse, 2016: 6). The concept of a blesser is not different to that of a sugar daddy as it entails someone who gives money and gifts to someone else as part of a relationship agreement similar to what traditional sugar daddies do (Verass, 2016: 1). A blesser can, basically speaking, be a male or female of any age. Furthermore, when a woman dates a blesser, her life seems to be blessed financially hence, the term blesser.

2.3 Blesser levels

There are various levels at which the blessee can be 'blessed' and these are ranged according to what the blesser can afford. Verass (2016) stated that the blesser levels are based on their income and generosity and range from level one to four, and sometimes to level five. A level one blesser provides airtime, data and transport money while a level two blesser provides clothing, make-up and hair treatments. The level three blesser provides iPhones, personal computers and vehicles while the level four blesser provides expensive holidays abroad and the blessee can even have an apartment deal. Figures 2.1 to 2.3 below reflect various authors' depictions of what is provided at the different blesser levels.

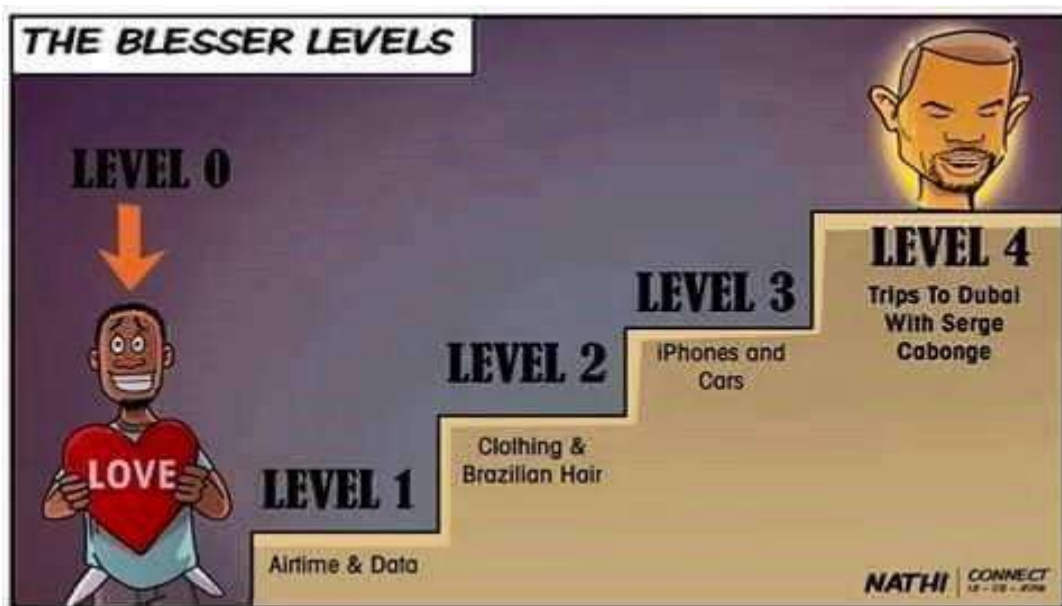


Figure 0.1: Diagram 1 of the blesser levels.

Source: Connect (2016)



Figure 0.2: Diagram 2 of the blesser levels.

Source: Mulaudzi (2017)

How the Blesser system works

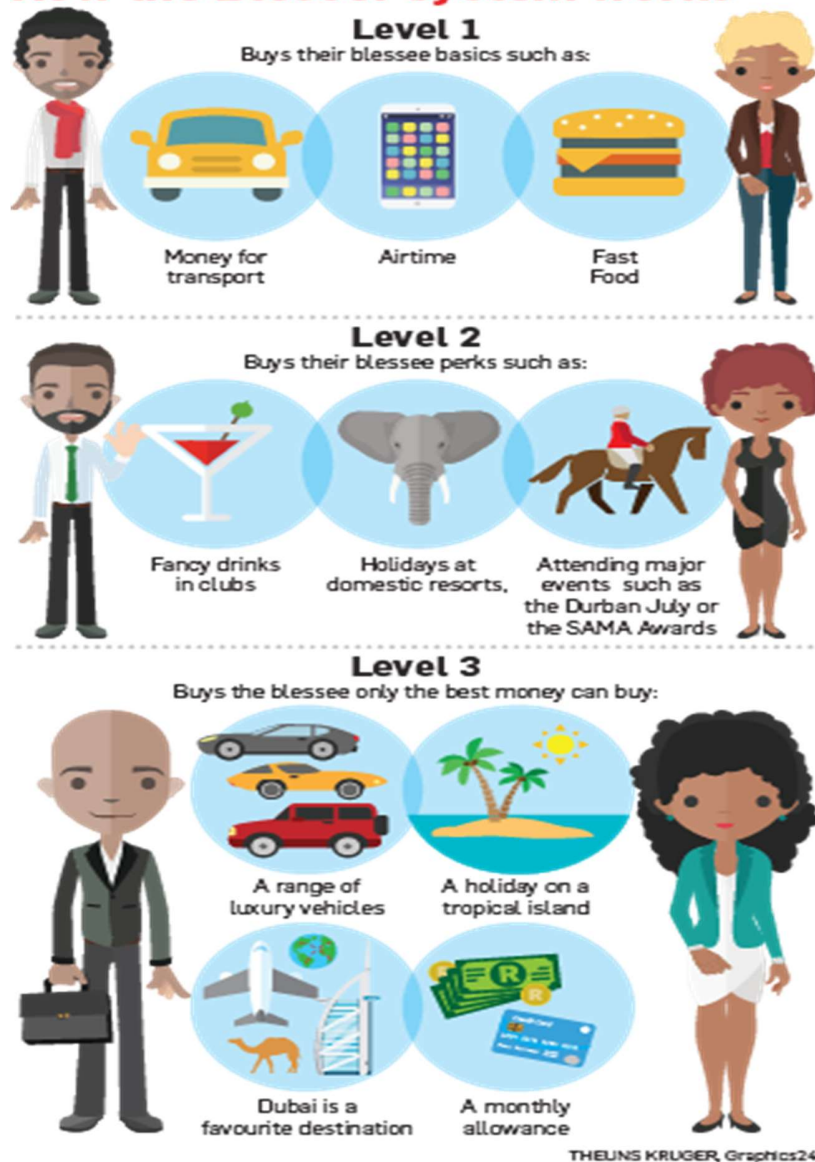


Figure 0.3: Diagram 3 of the blesser levels.

Source: Theuns Kruger (2016)

2.3.1 The blesser levels clarified

Numerous diagrams have been published to explain the BBP but the most common ones have three levels. The chosen illustrations range from level zero to level five and all consist of different levels. This study has chosen to use the three figures depicted above to explain the levels. These figures are not always in agreement in terms of what each level comprises and how they progress.

Figure 2.1 is a comic diagram consisting of four blesser levels. It was taken from the article ‘Connect’ and drawn by Nathi in the year 2016. Figure 0.2 has five levels and was drawn by Dr Muhangwi Ben Mulaudzi (MBChB) at the South African Clinician Society in February 2017. The diagram was part of a PowerPoint presentation on how blessers play a role in the spread of HIV/AIDS. Figure 0.3 is a diagram that appeared in *Graphic24* and was drawn by Theuns Kruger in 2016 to portray how the blesser system works.

Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2 are both consistent with each other in terms of the inclusion of the level zero blesser. Level zero is considered a conventional relationship because it is not regarded as a transactional relationship. The relationship at this level does not give monetary benefits (and will be discussed later in the chapter). The level that follows is the level one blesser, which is considered to be the entry-level of this phenomenon. Level one blessers can buy their blessees airtime and internet data as illustrated in both figures. Figure 2.3 illustrates that a level one blesser can also provide money for transport and fast foods at franchises. At level two, according to Figures 2.1 and 2.2, the blesser can afford to buy expensive clothes and Brazilian hair for the blessee. In Figure 2.3, the perks are expanded to include going to fancy clubs, holidays at local resorts, and getting invites to major events such as the ‘SAMA awards’ and the ‘Durban July’. At level three, all three figures are consistent. The blesser at this level can afford to buy expensive gadgets like high-end brands of phones. Figures 2.1 and 2.3 indicate that the level three blesser can afford the gift of luxury vehicles. Figure 2.3 further adds a monthly allowance and a holiday trip to tropical islands as part of blesser level three. In Figure 2.1, the last level is level four, where it describes the blesser as one that takes a blessee on extravagant trips to Dubai. Figure 2.2 rather describes level four as one where the blesser provides cars and apartments as gifts. Figure 2.2 is the only diagram that has a level five, which equates to level four in Figure 2.1 and level three in Figure 2.3 and comprises overseas trips.

2.4 Defining the concepts of bless, blessing and blessed

The word blesser is derived from the Christian religion and is associated with the concepts bless, blessed and blessing (Laurie, 2010:1). To bless entails invoking divine favour upon someone (Sylvia, 2017: 4). From a religious point of view, a blessing is a ritualised act (Ash, 2018: 33). When defining this concept, one has to define what it means to be blessed and what a blessing

entails (Mielnik, 2017:2). In the Christian religion understanding grace and favour is the greatest achievement (Laurie, 2010: 1). A blessing is also most commonly known as a prayer imploring happiness upon another, which promotes prosperity and welfare (Sylvia, 2017: 4). On the other hand, a blessing is calling forth the future and bringing it into the present. The blesser does this to the blessees by giving them, in the present, things they anticipate in the future. Sylvia (2017: 4) described how receiving a blessing can be a sense of fulfilment for a person and can result in a changed and improved life. While a blessing from a religious perspective is a spiritual gift, the blessing in the BBP, on the contrary, comes in the form of a material gift. Thus, the life of the blessee is improved in a materialistic manner by the blesser. Vaneetha Rendall Risner (2016: 1) asserted that a blessing does not require something in return but is usually defined as a gift that requires no compensation whether physical or emotional. This gives support to the idea that the modern-day blesser is not, strictly speaking, providing a blessing although what he (or she) does has the characteristics of a blessing. As noted, a blessing requires nothing in return but in the case of the BBP, the young women or blessees give sexual benefits and entertainment as compensation to their blessers (Blignout and Dlwati, 2017: 8).

Thobejane *et al.* (2017: 8720) believe that the terms blesser and blessee are social constructs founded by the public and based on social norms and experiences. A social construct is an idea that is created and perpetuated by cultural practices and experiences of a society or community (Boghossian, 2001: 82). An idea gets its recognition through society. The type of interests we have generate the type of experiences we partake in thus promoting a certain type of social construct. Given this, the BBP is best described as a social construct because it has been experienced by many people and is known by society (Galbin, 2014: 85).

Authors such as Thobejane *et al.* (2017: 8720) and Galbin (2014: 86) also believe that the BBP is a social construct founded on societal experiences. When one is dealing with society one has to understand that there is an objective reality, meaning that the society is concerned with knowledge that is constructed and understood by it. This means that the BBP is popularised by people through social media. Social media is a platform that reaches a large community. Thus, it is important to note that the BBP is from an epistemological and not an ontological perspective. An epistemological perspective is the theory of knowledge relating to belief and opinion. The social

construct idea focuses more on everyday interactions between people and their use of language to construct their reality (Andrews, 2012: 36). Highlighting the social practices such as transactional relationships that people engage in as the focus, the BBP falls within these practices. Relativism connotes that there are multiple realities. Thobejane *et al.* (2017: 8729) argued that the BBP was encouraged through social media where young women would post pictures of themselves on extravagant holidays and with expensive gifts on Instagram using the hashtag ‘#blessed’. It is thus important to understand the concept of blesser, as it is the instigator of the phenomenon.

2.5 Conceptualising the term ‘blessee’ (female)

A blessee is usually a young adult, for example, a university student which means that blessees come from all kinds of family backgrounds both rich and poor, and they do not see themselves as victims (Masenya, 2017: 122). Blessees can also be employed or unemployed young adults who are not satisfied with their current economic status. Christopher Moagi (2017: 8) suggested that blessees may use the money received to supplement their pocket money or salaries and to buy things for themselves. In a more desperate scenario, they could be paying for accommodation, transport, school fees or food (Chabalala, 2016: 1). This is why authors such as Chabalala (2016) and Moagi (2017) described blessees as young and naive girls who exclusively date rich older men. They are also described as women who spend most of their time on social media, posting and showing off things they do not even own (Moagi, 2017: 1). Blessees are also described as women who do not come from wealthy backgrounds but give the impression that they do (Urban Dictionary, 2017). Furthermore, according to the Urban Dictionary, these blessees use their attractive appearance to get what they want and are eventually online celebrities. These blessees also believe in the stereotype that older men know how to treat and entertain women better (Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2019). The stereotype includes the idea that older men are safer partners and appear more responsible, which is a view that is shared by many younger women according to Mavhandu-Mudzusi (2019) and Thobejane *et al.* (2017). Thus, as pointed out by Thobejane *et al.* (2017: 8716), attracting the attention of a wealthy experienced man is an achievement for some young women as well as a necessity for their survival. Mark Hunter (2004: 125) believed that young adults are less likely to use a condom or are forced not to use one especially if the exchange value is very high in transactional relationships.

From the perspective of people outside the relationship, the blessee is seen as passive in that she receives and is seen as a conduit for a blesser to display how generous they are (Garsd and Crossan, 2017). On the contrary and from the blessee's point of view, the blesser is perceived as an agent who acts to make things happen. However, in the case of the blessee, being perceived as passive means they do not act but instead are the objects of the actions (they have a lack of agency in this case) (Garsd and Crossan, 2017). The perception of the blessee as passive comes from the idea that the BBP is mostly described as an exploitative relationship. When one describes a passive activity, the description includes being a spectator by watching and listening to things rather than doing things (Anson *et al.*, 2000: 5). In other words, it is getting financial security and the finer things in life or a higher level of social mobility without having to work hard for them. Getting these things is, however, at the expense of one's freedom.

In South Africa, the blessee is also referred to as a 'slay queen' – a slang term. Contrary to how they are perceived, blessees do not, as mentioned above, see themselves as victims in the BBP. They disagree with the notion of being passive, which makes it hard to define the BBP as a simple exploitative relationship. According to Masango (2016) (who studies the blesser culture), many young women blessees are educated and working and thus see themselves as ambitious and consider their time valuable. What they have in common is that they do not willingly date men who do not offer financial security although they do say that they can take care of their own bills. They see their position as blessees as a form of women empowerment and describe themselves as a "new wave of sex-positive agents" who are disrupting the old norms and re-imagining power dynamics in what has historically been read as predatory relationships (Masango, 2016: 1). Blessees do not consider themselves as being helpless but rather as women who participate and do not wait to be rescued (Geldenhuys, 2016). This is contrary to the notion of being passive. Instead, blessees go online and clearly state their terms and conditions for the specific kind of relationship they want.

The term *slay queen* according to Verass (2016: 1) was inspired by the slang unique to the 'Dragworld' and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or transsexual, intersex and queer/questioning (LGBTIQ) community, and was intended to positively affirm those around them (The Citizen, 22/03/2019). The term was originally used as a compliment given to a good-looking

person who was well-dressed with impeccable makeup and hair that looked good (Kekana, 2017). However, Kekana (2017) stated that the term *slay queen* is now being used as an insult for women who one assumes are wealthy based solely on their outward appearances. Women who care for their appearance and love makeup, wigs, extensions, long nails, and the trendiest clothes are usually grouped into this category (Moagi, 2017:1) and this is similar to the *blessee*. The most common assumption is that *slay queens* are not intelligent or hardworking and use their appearance (often shared on their social media pages) to earn a living by increasing their social mobility (Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2019). The term *slay queen* is also often associated with engaging in transactional sex and often judged negatively by conflating the term with being a sex worker (Vivian Falae, 2018: 1) which is also similar to the *blessee*. It is important to note that this type of behaviour is not unique to women. ‘*Slay kings*’ also exist and behave much in the same way as *slay queens* do. For the purpose of the main research question, this research focused on female *blessees* but it is important to note the presence of the female *blesser* and the male *blessee*. Thus, although this research focused on the female *blessee* and the male *blesser*, it does not deny the existence of the female *blesser* and male *blessee* and this is briefly discussed below.

2.6 Female *blesser* and male *blessee*

Although Masenya (2017) was against the concept of using patriarchy within the BBP, Thobejane *et al.* (2017) believed otherwise. Thobejane *et al.* (2017) believed that while there are female *blessees* they are not as dominant as male *blessees* and this dominance still reflects a patriarchal system stemming from a society of poverty. Masenya (2017) elaborated on what it means to be a female *blesser*, that is, older women dating younger males and showering them with gifts and money in exchange for sexual favours. Young male *blessees* or ‘*Ben 10s*’ (as they are sometimes called) also date older women and sometimes older men in exchange for money and sexual favours (Phamotse, 2017; Masenya, 2017). The female *blesser* and young male *blessee* are also surrounded by a social construct of already existing names such as ‘*sugar mama*’ and ‘*Ben 10s*’. The female *blesser* and male *blessee* is not a new concept and their existence highlights Masenya’s (2017) point that *blessees* are not only male but can also be female. While Masenya (2017) emphasised male *blessees* this research, as mentioned, focused mainly on female *blessees* for purposes of the main research question.

2.7 Nature of having a blesser

It is important to understand that the study has introduced the concepts that make up the BBP such as the blesser and the blessee. The next section is a review of the concepts that surround the BBP in order to understand the difference between transactional sex and conventional relationships. This section will thus define and discuss transactional sex (including prostitution) and conventional relationships in relation to the BBP and deduce the difference between them.

2.7.1 Defining transactional sex within the BBP

The BBP is a form of transactional relationship. Thus, defining the term transactional sex is vital in understanding the BBP (Varjavandi, 2017: 89). Transactional sex, in simple term, can be explained as the provision of resources in exchange for sex. The blesser has a transactional sexual relationship with a younger woman, where the woman provides sex in exchange for money, gifts or favours (Thobejane *et al.*, 2017: 8721; Varjavandi, 2017: 88; Phamotse, 2017: 14). As discussed earlier in the chapter, society has placed blessers on different levels according to what they can afford to do for the blessee. This usually occurs between young women and casual male sexual partners who are older and wealthier (Solontsi, 2016: 1). This is not limiting the positions in transactional sex to being specifically female or male. When expanding the concept of transactional sex, women are often positioned as victims of exploitation due to such contributing factors as economic difficulties. Furthermore, transactional sex can be described as sex for a higher social mobility status that can position women as sexual agents who engage in transactional relationships for an improved lifestyle. The oldest form of transaction sex noted in the literature is prostitution (Moagi, 2017:1).

2.7.2 Prostitution in contrast to the BBP

The BBP is a new concept stemming from the sugar daddy phenomenon. There has been a constant struggle for sex workers to define the realities of who and what they are outside society's influence (Dyanty, 2018: 1). While some people define all transactional sex participants as sex workers, it is not accurate to do so. For many women, men and gender non-conforming persons in South Africa, working in commercial sex exists in activities inside and outside the legal framework which means that sex work is not considered a professional job (Geldenhuys, 2016: 12). This is due to the public stigma attached to the work sex workers do and also the harsh reality of sex workers

having no legal protection and minimal support from the public (Dyanty, 2018: 1). Thus, calling blessees sex workers fails to take into account the many different ways in which these activities are framed legally and socially.

While prostitution is illegal and punishable by fines and in some cases imprisonment, blessees operate in a grey area between what is an intimate sexual partnership and an equal partnership. There is a thin line between the two types of relationships: transactional relationships can be framed as part-time survival strategies on the frayed margins of heteronormative monogamy, whereas prostitution is in contrast with this framing. This means that the blessees exist within the idea that conventional relationships are in accordance with having one partner and heterosexuality which is not true as a conventional relationship can have multiple individuals involved and can also be homosexual. A conventional relationship according to this study is considered as one that is not transactional. The sugar daddy concept is also a form of transactional sex as explained in section 2.2 of this chapter. It is not so different from the BBP and thus deserves no further explanation for the purpose of this research. Prostitution is, therefore, a commercial commodity that is defined as a job and a form of income and the BBP is a relationship with benefits. This raises the question of what an equal or conventional relationship is compared to the BBP.

2.7.3 Conventional or equal relationships in contrast to the BBP

The biggest difference or the distinguishing factor of the BBP and prostitution is that with the BBP the relationship that occurs between the blessee and blesser involves emotional attachment. This emotional attachment, however, does not exist in prostitution. A conventional relationship involves the existence of emotional attachment but does not require transactional or financial gain as conditions for the relationship to exist (Jamieson, 1999: 480). Giddens (1992: 58) referred to a conventional relationship as one that is considered to be a pure relationship. Jamieson (1999: 481) considered a pure relationship as one in which there is a mutual disclosure of trust which is mobilised by whatever the relationship can deliver. To this Giddens (1992: 58) wrote:

“...a pure relationship refers to a situation where a social relation is entered into for its own sake, for what can be derived by each person from a sustained association with another; and which is continued only in so far

as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfaction for each individual to stay within it.”

According to the above quotation, Giddens’ perspective of a pure relationship is based on the idea the relationship is an end in itself. It is the mutual satisfaction of both parties involved in the relationship because their desires are intertwined. According to Giddens (2001), a conventional relationship is not solely based on the external appearance of an individual but for the mutual benefit of each other. The trust that is shared in this type of relationship is mutual, and the relationship is sustained by the satisfaction of both parties within it. Thus, basing a conventional relationship on the emotions of love and attraction is not enough for the blessee. The blessee has reasons for wanting to be in a ‘blesser-blessee’ relationship, and these can range from poverty to peer pressure. As a result, the BBP does not qualify as a conventional relationship.

2.8 Reasons for choosing to have a blesser

Findings in research by Selikow and Mbulaheni (2013: 93) suggested that young women prefer to date men who will be able to take care of them financially and offer them expensive gifts. Doing so sometimes has good outcomes as these impact on the livelihood of the blessees such that some get to improve their social and economic statuses (Chabalala, 2016: 1). Thus, the BBP is not always a patriarchal issue. Butler (2017: 75) defined patriarchy as the unequal distribution of power between men and women in certain aspects of our societies. Authors such as Masenya (2017) argued that the BBP is not a patriarchal issue but a concept that stems from the economic and socio-cultural struggles of the African community. There are thus various reasons why young people get involved in the phenomenon. These reasons include gender inequality, poverty, unemployment and peer pressure. For this research, these factors or reasons are referred to as structures.

2.8.1 Gender inequality as a push factor

The view that young people are victims and helpless casualties is a misleading form of victim-blaming that defines the problems they face (Dyantyi, 2018: 1). The changing characteristics behind gender inequality and the negative ways in which it is manifested are complex and encompass factors such as the normalisation of violence, hostile masculinity, socio-cultural

practices, and the adverse effects of poverty (Varjavandi, 2017: 88). South Africa is ranked among the most unequal societies in the world (Telzak, 2016: 1). This is the result of the previous apartheid government which caused an unparalleled degree of inequality. These inequalities have risen considerably over the years. The democratisation and the empowerment of South Africa's poor, black majority, and black women are working to redress the economic legacies of apartheid (Seekings, 2011: 342).

Equality is measured by gender equality ratios but also critically by the quality of life of women. South Africa's first democratically elected government sought to systematically overcome inequities in access to opportunities and the quality of life of historically marginalised groups of people, including women and others discriminated against due to their gender. The government has driven its transformation agenda by embedding the gender-equality imperative in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and national plans, including the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030. The Constitution commits the government to achieve equality between women and men by providing for the prohibition of racial, gender, and all other forms of discrimination. The rights to fair employment, basic education, and civic participation were made constitutional rights, with further opportunities for employment, education, and training required to be made progressively available. To this, Sachs *et al.* (2004) wrote: "Since 1994 the government has implemented major policy reforms, legislations, and development frameworks aiming to sustain democracy and root out all forms of discrimination, including gender inequity."

Social mobility in South Africa is described as the movement from one social class to another. It is further described as the study of upward socio-economic change which transpired in the post-apartheid period where native South Africans are able to get high paying jobs and raise themselves out of poverty. Although racial lines between the rich whites and poor blacks became less clear after the shift to democracy, inequality still exists on a major scale and has shifted to the differences within the black community. This brought about what Telzek (2016: 1) described as the idea of "intergenerational social mobility" which refers to the relationship between the socio-economic status of parents and the status their children will attain as adults.

The main aim in post-apartheid South Africa was to reform the previously fragmented and segregated in terms of marginalisation. Thus, Akala (2018: 1) pointed out that black women had to face triple marginalisation which comprised race, social class and sexism. It is important to highlight that policies that include terms such as equal access and equal opportunities may fail to redress female marginalisation due to the one size fits all umbrella (Mngomezulu, 2016: 1). These policies do not necessarily guarantee gender equality nor do they necessarily suffice in addressing relevant gender injustices. Gender inequality depicts that men and women are not equal and that gender affects an individual's lived experience (Dyantyi, 2018: 1). These distinctions of gender inequality arise from biology, psychology and cultural norms, which can also be empirically grounded, while others appear to be socially constructed (Wonci, 2019). South Africa has a long history of gender discrimination and this is evident in the prevailing societal hierarchy where women are relegated to traditional subordinated roles (Ghanotakis, 2012). In addition, women also remain the victims of the gender pay gap that continues to rise – a pay gap that leads women to receive less pay than their male counterparts (Wonci, 2019). This causes some young women to resort to the BBP to supplement their livelihood or to feel that they have no other choice but to resort to the phenomenon regardless. Due to the gender inequalities that exist, women continue to struggle financially, psychologically, culturally and, most importantly, from a socially constructed perception. The struggle against poverty is embedded within the concept of gender inequality, thus the need to include it in this study.

2.8.2 Poverty as a measure to find an alternative livelihood

The concept of poverty in South Africa is mainly experienced by women who are marginalised in terms of access to education, bursaries and jobs (Wonci, 2019). This is the reason why there are many women from diverse social backgrounds struggling to make ends meet and, unsurprisingly, needing to find alternative sources of income. It is the beneficiaries of economic and political freedom who are the very same persons leading in the blessers category in the country (Rupiah, 2018: 4). The poverty concept is one of the main contributing factors to the BBP. Cornelissen (2017:14) stated that poverty is a condition where people's basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter are not being met. Poverty can further be described as a product of human social relationships. It is, thus, important to note that it is one of the main reasons why students resort to the BBP (in some cases this happens in student and marginalised settings) (Thobejane *et al.*, 2017:

8720). Poverty is, therefore, much more than a lack of access to resources to meet basic needs but also a symptom of power inequalities as mentioned under the concept of gender inequality.

Poverty is not only about the lack of access to basic services but about being excluded from the interaction and decision-making processes and, most of all, the exchange of goods in economic activities (Shepherd, 2007). Poverty can also be defined as the lack of resources, especially those goods needed by human beings for survival and to keep on living. Poverty also concerns not having the ability to function as a full and active member of society and not having individual dignity. Furthermore, poverty is a major factor in girls exchanging sex for money at an early age. Doing so is a survival strategy for these young girls – providing sexual favour in exchange for money enables them to meet their basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, protection, and affection. It also provides for job, and livelihood opportunities. While the BBP might appear to be assisting in achieving some of the development goals such as the eradication of extreme poverty, it causes more damage than assistance. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are there to reduce hunger and ensure the development of a country's people (Millennium Development Goals, 2015: 15-24). While the BBP offers a momentary solution, this disappears after the blesser or blessee decides to end the relationship. The MDGs emphasise the eradication of poverty in a country. The development of a country is of vital importance in today's society with South Africa re-affirming its commitment to doing so through the MDGs.

While employment would be a solution to poverty in South Africa, unemployment continues to be a significant problem. It is important to understand that there is a link between unemployment and poverty. The link is described by Fourie as 'bi-directional causality'. Bi-directional causality is when two things are the cause of each other. Thus, according to Fourie, since unemployment causes poverty then poverty contributes to unemployment. He described this causal connection as persistence (Cloete, 2015: 516).

2.8.3 Unemployment forces alternatives for a livelihood

South Africa's unemployment problem is one of the threats to achieving universal poverty reduction (Fehling *et al.*, 2013: 1110-1112). The poverty situation has not improved sufficiently between 1990 and 2015 to meet the MDG targets and provide a foundation for sound national

social and economic development (Millennium Development Goals, 2015: 56). This enhances the chances of the BBP being a dominant factor or problem for society because, for survival reasons, it produces an immediate solution for the blessee.

The unemployment problem and how it fits into the structural agency of the blessee will be discussed further in Chapter four of this dissertation. It is, however, important for this review to mention that unemployment is one of the reasons that young people resort to the BBP. Young people, even those who are college-educated, are continuously trying to find alternative ways of earning an income due to the challenge of not finding jobs. Unemployment here refers to those who are available for work and are looking for work but cannot find a job that pays them (Wonci, 2019: 1).

There are various reasons for youth unemployment and these include population growth, the lack of experience, and inappropriate ways of searching for a job. These reasons make it harder for first-time job-seekers in South Africa (Cloete, 2015: 514). According to authors such as Wonci (2019) and Terreblanche (2005), young people are beginning to feel a sense of alienation from the larger society and a sense of betrayal by the government because they realise that their lives have not changed for the better since the demise of the apartheid government. Universities, with their constant increase in fees, are making it increasingly difficult for students to access and complete higher education. Education also has a recognised role in unemployment since having a poor education makes finding employment difficult if not impossible. Unemployment is also much higher amongst the poor and is, therefore, mentioned as one of the four poverty traps inherent in the socio-economic situation since the apartheid era (Terreblanche, 2005: 374). Furthermore, unemployment is exceedingly higher among women compared to men and this is extremely relevant in this study because of its focus on the female blessee.

According to the official definition of unemployment, 29.5 percent of women in South Africa were unemployed in the second quarter of 2018 compared to 25.3 percent among men (Wonci, 2019: 1). Unemployment thus reflects other social challenges in this country such as racial and sexual inequalities and, as discussed, it is also linked to poverty. This brings us to the social media tools which play an important role in peer pressure.

2.8.4 Peer pressure can be a toxic or healthy ideology

Peer pressure is described as how the people around you influence the way you think and what you want in life. The influencers of these young women being part of the BBP are usually their parents as it is a form of support to the family (Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2019). The BBP began on social media where young women post their lifestyle to intrigue their peers about the so-called blessed lifestyle. This puts pressure on them to undergo a certain change and adopt a different identity. The young women who are most susceptible are those not under parental supervision at university. This puts them in the vulnerable position of having to either focus on their schoolwork or have fun in clubs where, in most cases, they meet the blessers. Peer pressure is an all-powerful force that keeps individuals from learning from the mistakes of their peers and can be tough to deal with especially during one's years at university (Bhana, 2015: 5). Peer pressure can also be considered as the desire to fit in and feel that one is part of a group. Georganas (2015: 227) asserted that peer pressure is the direct influence on people by peers. He described it as an individual who is encouraged to follow their peers by changing their attitudes, values and behaviours to conform to those of the influencing group or individual. Thus, it is important to note that while peer pressure can sometimes be positive, it can also be a negative influence on the lives of individuals (Vanden *et al.*, 2014: 7). Achieving popularity status is mostly driven by the need to be recognised amongst peers (Vanden *et al.*, 2014: 11).

Peer pressure is a powerful tool that can also be instigated by social media. Social media is influenced by Western ideals of material and financial achievements (Georganas *et al.*, 2015: 225). Social media further highlight being beautiful and young as assets to make money with. Hence, older men in many cases date younger beautiful women to make themselves feel younger. People always want more than they have and not everyone can afford an extravagant lifestyle or even one that gives them access to sufficient basic needs (Laurie, 2010). Thus, economic actions are based on the idea that people are motivated by costs and rewards of actions and consideration of the profit they make (Connor, 2009: 15). Peer pressure is motivated by the constant need to be better than everyone else and social media is the biggest influencer of peer pressure. According to Kaijanto (2018: 4), over half of the population of young adults spend around five hours on the phone and this time is mostly spent on social networks. Social media can be defined as the social

interaction of individuals on a computer-based network or virtual communities (Kieslinger, 2015: 7). Thus, social media (and to be more specific in this case, social networks) are a social structure on their own. This social structure influences the blessees, especially when they see their peers living a lavish lifestyle.

The blesser-blessee relationship is all about maintaining the livelihood of the blessee for all her needs and sometimes wants but it is also important to note these wants have outcomes. These outcomes are discussed in the next section.

2.9 Outcomes of the BBP

The main idea behind this research project was to highlight the structural agency of the blessee for choosing the BBP pathway. The social, political and economic structures that surround the South African community are of relevance in this research. This section divides the BBP into the positive and negatives outcomes that stem from the phenomenon.

2.9.1 Negative outcomes of the BBP

The BBP can have negative effects or outcomes on society and these include health risks, GBV and even death. The phenomenon itself, as discussed above, is a result of conditions such as poverty, unemployment, gender inequality and peer pressure. These are the main reasons why young people indulge in this phenomenon and do so in the hope of attaining a livelihood.

2.9.1.1 Health Risks as a derivative of the BBP

Sugar daddies are likely are likely to be infected with HIV/AIDS

	Frequency	Percent
Not sure	166	36.9
Strongly Disagree	12	02.7
Disagree	25	05.6
Agree	157	34.9
Strongly Agree	90	20.0
Total	450	100.0

Table 0.1: Sugar daddies are likely to be infected with HIV/AIDS

Source: Gobind and Du Plessis (2015: 6724)

Table 0.1 above is from a study undertaken by etaGobind and Du Plessis that focused on the perceptions of students towards sugar daddies. More than 50 percent of the participating students either agreed or strongly agreed that sugar daddies were likely to be infected with HIV/AIDS. To support this perception is the literature on the BBP or transactional relationships which shows that these relationships are associated with an alarming rate of increase in the spread of HIV/AIDS (Thobejane *et al.*, 2017; Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2019). The BBP is one of the causes of the spread of HIV/AIDS and is thus one of the main negative effects of the phenomenon. The blessers are mostly involved with multiple partners, which makes them more prone to contracting and spreading the virus (Thobejane *et al.*, 2017: 8717). The MDG number 6 is there to help in combating the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (Department of Basic Education, 2013). The goal consists of three targets and decreasing the spread of HIV and AIDS is the first of these. Due to transactional relationships, this target becomes difficult to attain and this is also a result of issues such as poverty. According to scholars such as Gobind and Du Plessis (2015: 6722) and Harling *et al.* (2014: 451), students are not alarmed by the possibility of the transmission of what is a serious and imminent threat to their health. Mazvarirwofa (2014) highlighted how students are concerned with money and an extravagant lifestyle but ignore the effects of the intergenerational relationship. This connects with Beauclairl and Delva's (2013:6) investigation of the use of condoms in intergenerational relationships and the lack of power young women have in such relationships.

The power dynamics within the BBP make it difficult for the blessee to demand safe sex. HIV prevention research argues that transactional sex may put young women and young men in sub-Saharan Africa at increased risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV (Gobind and Du Plessis, 2015; Harling *et al.*, 2014). The benefits of transactional sex for both parties are, however, seen to outweigh the risk of contracting HIV by the young adults involved in the phenomenon. The studies show that when young women have their own resources, they depend less on men and this reduces their sexual practices. They also have an increased opportunity to make choices as to who they have sex with and how they practice the sexual act (Bhana and Pattman, 2011; Luke *et al.*, 2011; Stoebenau *et al.*, 2011). However, the power dynamics can also result in the blesser having so much power that the blessees end up yielding to an abusive relationship.

The concentration on HIV/AIDS sometimes neglects other consequences of the spread of the disease among African communities such as mental health. Oram *et al.* (2017: 159) noted that:

“Violence against women is a prominent public health problem and a violation of human rights, which impairs, in particular, women’s rights to life, to freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatments or punishments, and to the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health.”

Mental health is the basis of a human’s psychology and emotion and is fundamental to their stability (Hoss and Blokland, 2018). Thus, abusive relationships such as physical domestic violence can destabilise a person’s mental health. Mental health issues can yield symptoms of depression, psychological distress and PTSD (Oram, Khalifeh and Howard, 2017: 161).

2.9.1.2 Gender-based violence as an effect of the BBP

The BBP contributes to the problem of GBV. This is relevant for this research as the focus was on the female blessee. GBV can be used interchangeably with violence against women. It is the general term used to describe the violence that occurs as a result of the normative role expectations associated with each gender as well as the unequal power relationships between the genders in the context of a specific society (Bloom, 2008: 14). The minimal economic independence that women

have is a key driver of GBV. This, therefore, can be relevant for the BBP as it (the phenomenon) is a financial relationship.

The MDG number three emphasises gender equality and the empowerment of women (Fehling *et al.*, 2013: 1119). It states that equality is measured by gender equality ratios but also, critically, by the quality of life of women. The Constitution commits the government to achieving equality between women and men by forbidding racial, gender and all other forms of discrimination (Millennium Development Goals, 2015: 8). The blessee realises after a while that she has lost her power in the relationship and remains in the relationship due to her dependence on the blesser. This relates to the phenomenon of GBV which is a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women (Jewkes *et al.*, 2015: 1580). It usually results in physical, sexual, psychological or even economic harm to women. Although it was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that not all blessees are females, they are in the majority when it comes to being affected by GBV. This section is divided into two subheadings that fall under GBV, namely, abuse and death within GBV.

Abuse within GBV

The blessees do not see themselves as being in the midst of abuse when they are in a relationship with the blesser. Rather, they see it as living the best version of their life through their experience of extravagant lifestyles that they would never have been able to otherwise afford (Mngomezulu, 2019: 1). At the same time, for the young woman that comes from a poor background, this means survival for herself and her family. This does not only mean receiving fancy gifts and clothing but also having her basic needs provided for. These basic needs may involve shelter, education and healthcare for herself and her family. Abuse for the blessee, in this case, is a small price to pay to live the lifestyle the blesser is offering. This can also be seen as a form of slavery as leaving the lifestyle is not an easy thing to do because the blessee is obliged to stay due to the power the blesser has over her. This is not the only reason the blessee endures the abuse – a further reason is a fear of leaving the extravagant lifestyle she is enjoying behind. The blessee is concerned about the shame she will endure if she is no longer able to post the extravagant gifts and trips she has been receiving on social media. This is because the blessee is mostly about posting her flashy lifestyle on these media. However, the more expensive the gifts the more expensive the price of paying

back the favours. These can develop from small favours such as kissing and going to public events with the blesser to emotional abuse which later evolves into physical abuse. The abuse can be so bad that it could, in some circumstances, lead to the blessee being killed.

Death within GBV

Karabo Mokoena was a young lady that had a blesser but decided to leave him for the reason that she was being consistently abused in the relationship. She was subsequently killed by the blesser. It was evident by the articles written by multiple news agencies in South Africa that this story sparked an uproar against the BBP (Solontsi, 2016; Kekana, 2017). The *Daily Sun* article described the memorial service of Karabo Mokoena in which many public figures expressed their intention to fight against the phenomenon. Although her death as a blessee was the first case to spark an uproar, she was not the first blessee to be killed by a blesser – this is said to be Sophie Thapi Ledwaba. Karabo Mokoena's death resulted in an increase in awareness campaigns against passion killings which are associated with GBV. The killing of young women seems to be a critical issue when it comes to GBV, and the BBP appears to be contributing to it.

2.9.2 Positives outcomes of the BBP

While there are negatives consequences to the BBP there are also positive outcomes of the phenomenon. This is why it is so attractive to so many young people. This section will discuss the material and education gains that the blessee accrues by being part of the phenomenon as well as the popularity achieved.

2.9.2.1 Formal education as an achievement

As explained at the beginning of the chapter, blessees are mostly young university students. It is important to understand that these young women come to university from different backgrounds which means that they are exposed to the BBP for different reasons. Some of them struggle to pay their fees, to put food on the table and to even purchase a prescribed textbook. Formal education is classroom-based learning that is provided by trained professionals in schools and universities (DeCapua, 2016: 230) and, in the case of universities, students are equipped with skills to enable them to find professional jobs (DeCapua, 2016: 230). Thus, education is the key to employment or higher social mobility and better living standards. In the show 'One Day Leader' Jackie

Phamotse explained how her blesser helped in paying her education fees when she did not have anyone else to turn to. It is also important to note that blessers find educated women attractive and thus one finds some of these women involved in the BBP (Moagi, 2019: 1).

2.9.2.2 Financial gain as an incentive

When defining the concept of the BBP Thobejane *et al.* (2017), Varjandi (2017) and Moagi (2017) referred to it as a transactional relationship where the blessee has expectations of financial gain. As Figure 0.21 to 2.3 above illustrate, the financial gain accrued is according to the different levels of the blesser. Each level on the diagrams represents a certain financial gain with level one reflecting the least and levels four and five reflecting the most in terms of financial gain. Thus, the higher one goes on the blesser levels the more financial gain is received which is often in the form of extravagant gifts. These extravagant gifts range from travelling locally and internationally to luxurious cars and apartments in suburban areas. In some cases, the blessee will ask for start-up capital to open a business. According to Mngomezulu (2016), some families encourage these types of relationships as this helps the blessee fund their financial endeavours. These endeavours can increase the blessee's popularity status as they can lead to better social and/or economic mobility.

2.9.2.3 Popularity and influencer status

Most blessees want a high popularity status. This goes back to the slay queen definition by Kekana (2017) who described it as a compliment given to a good-looking person who is well-dressed with impeccable makeup and hair that looks good. According to Gashi (2015: 18), this person can also be considered a social media influencer because of their popularity on social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, blogs and many others that are used for social interaction. These people are usually approached by companies to advertise their specific brands due to the outreach or followers they have on social networks. Consumers, through the power of social media platforms, interact with friends and family and share opinions and information about brands and products (Gashi, 2017: 19). The extravagant lifestyles that blessees live have a large influence on their peers some of whom aspire to the same lifestyles. The above are some of the reasons why blessees have a huge social media presence which they use to grow their brands. In doing so they attract more brands who hire them (the blessees) for their advertisements.

2.10 Conclusion

Varjandi (2017: 87) examined youth-led research that is gender-specific and focused on transactional sex and GBV using a sociological and feminist approach. Mavhandu-Mudzusi (2019: 258) and Thobejane *et al.* (2017) focused on the gender inequities and the socio-economic influences of the BBP. Mampane (2018) focused on the health hazards of the phenomenon. The above authors explored the BBP in disciplines such as psychology, human resources management, sociology, socio-economics and the health sciences. Hence this study took an ethical approach to explore the phenomenon.

This chapter reviewed the literature on and relating to the BBP which has been popularised in South Africa over the last four years. The chapter began by describing where the term *blesser* originated and then defined the concept and its different levels. It gave an overview of who a *blessee* is and defined the BBP. The BBP was described as an example of a transactional relationship and it was shown how it differs from prostitution and a conventional relationship. The motive for looking at these phenomena together was because they are all caused by issues such as gender inequality, unemployment, poverty, and peer pressure. The outcomes of the BBP can be both positive and negative. Thus, both the positive and negative ethical effects of the phenomenon on the part of the *blessee* were explored.

The study incorporated the Structural Agency theory to explore the freedom that the *blessee* has within the BBP and this theory is discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter three: Theoretical framework of ‘Structure and Agency’

“Structure is dynamic, not static; it is the continually evolving outcome and matrix of a process of social interaction. Even the more or less perfect reproduction of structures is a profoundly temporal process that requires resourceful and innovative human conduct. But the same resourceful agency that sustains the reproduction of structures also makes possible their transformation by means of transportations of schemas and remobilization of resources that make the new structures recognizable as transformations of the old” (Sewell, 1992: 27).

3.1 Introduction

The above quotation is relevant to explain that structure and agency are continuous and have evolved from multiple theorists who have analysed social interactions and realities which explain why are described as dynamic and not static. Theories such as Marxism, Functionalism, Interactionism, Ethnomethodology, Structuralist, The Sociology of Knowledge, and Structuration have been reproduced to define the Structure and Agency theory. The approach to these structures requires different methods because the availability of resources means that how people are providing livelihoods for themselves are changing. Transactional relationships thus become a dominant theme among the youth, where sugar daddies are further reproduced as the BBP. This highlights how agency, in the case of the blessee, is important and needs to be assessed from a structural agency position.

It is important to understand that social reality can be simplified to the agent and structure. In the previous chapter, the focus was the literature written on and related to the BBP. Emphasis was on the motives for and the outcomes of being a blessee in the BBP. This study fills the gap in terms of understanding the structural agency of the blessee to deduce whether they have freedom and rationality. It used the Structure and Agency theory to assist in obtaining this objective. The theory was utilised in answering the key research question, which entailed understanding how structure influences the blessees’ decisions by highlighting their agency. Structure and agency highlight how societal norms are continuously changing, which pushes people to conform to different ideas

of a livelihood (Sugarman, 2005: 799). The social structure is important as it focuses on how people sustain their everyday lives, and agency provides the autonomy to make these everyday decisions or even the free will to sustain livelihoods (Van Gamberg, 2001: 11). This is the ultimate social reality which is prescribed by the two terms 'structure' and 'agency' (Van Breda, 2016: 39). Therefore, this chapter provides a brief background on the construction of the theory highlighting how the theory is continuous and constantly changing. The chapter will define the concepts of structure and agency as separate terms. It will then provide an outline of how the concept of structural agency is conceptualised. This will be followed by an explanation of how the theory helped the study assess the structural agency of the blessee.

To understand the relationship between structure and agency as one that is logical, one points to social structures shaping individuals and vice versa (Naidoo, 1989: 88). Elbasha and Wright (2017: 110) asserted that the Structure and Agency theory is about the conditions in which behaviours occur and targets the change among individuals. To get a broad understanding of the theory, it is important to provide a brief background of the construction and breakdown of the two concepts involved. An outline of the theories that influence agency and structure is also vital in understanding the theory. Agency and structure combined can be articulated as the link between human activity and its social contexts. Authors such as Van Gamberg (2001: 4) asserted that social structures exist before the social actions which transform and reproduce them.

3.2 Brief background history on the development of the Structure and Agency theory

The debate between structure and agency is long-standing and is interpreted as an idea of socialisation against autonomy in determining whether a person is a free agent or is influenced by structure. This section of the dissertation will provide a brief background on the conceptualisation and evolution of the Structure and Agency theory. The historical development of this theory involves multiple theories which have influenced its meaning. In outlining this development, a clear picture of the theory's build-up, from what it was to what it has become in the modern world, will be given. Mentioning the theorists involved and how they have pushed the theory in different directions and why the study found it relevant will help yield a well-rounded understanding of the theory. Theorists such as Anthony Giddens, Karl Marx, Luis Althusser, Friedrich Engels, Emile Durkheim, Karp and Masolo are among the proponents of the theory that are mentioned.

3.2.1 Functionalism

Emile Durkheim was a structural-functionalist who saw structure and hierarchy as essential in establishing the existence of society (Naidoo, 1989: 84). He is mostly recognised for the development of sociological functionalism – the argument that social institutions exist solely to enhance specific social needs. The basis of the argument is that when individuals interact together, they create a certain level of reality that is contrary to them as individuals (Marx, 2010: 2). This means that the reality created is external to them and has a certain power over them which controls their future actions. According to the functionalist, structure is idealised as something that is both material and cultural which means that it includes economics, norms, customs, traditions and ideologies, aspects which are also emphasised by Karl Marx (Sandholts and Sweet, 2012). Hence, functionalism has attributes of a social construction that highlights the structure in the Structure and Agency theory. Karl Marx further emphasised that the social structure, due to the economic and political perspective, can be both an advantage and disadvantage for most individuals in society.

3.2.2 Marxism

Under the concept of Marxism, we find theorists such as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels who formed the basis of communism through their political and economic theories (Van Rooyen, 2013: 503). According to Mahar, Harker and Wilkes (1990: 16), the concept of Marxism is considered a socioeconomic analysis that highlights the social conflict and class relations using a materialist approach. The Marxist approach relates to structure and agency through the development of two principal orientations, namely, Marxism and critical theory. Structural Marxism was proposed by Luis Althusser; it highlighted the complex idea of the superstructure and its connections to the theory of ideology consequently affecting the economics of that structure (Mahar *et al.*, 1990).

This approach focuses on social conditions to expose structures that can easily be seen. It is premised on the idea that to gain power, knowledge is of vital importance (Mahar *et al.*, 1990: 19). In general, Marxism consists of three characteristics that highlight the structure in the Structure and Agency theory. Critical theory focuses on consciousness and intentional activity that play an important part in society. According to Depelteau (2008: 55), critical theory aims to understand

the relationship between the intentional activities of individuals and unintended consequences of the behaviour of groups and classes. Furthermore, it advocates that change in the social world is dependent on the legitimacy and interpretations given to the consciousness of individuals in a specific place in the world (Depelteau, 2008: 55). Highlighting the historical process and progress that are derived from reasons that recognise and seize opportunities for freedom, is seen as a social life (Depelteau, 2008: 56). Marxism and critical theory are both concerned with the general nature of society, its scientific ideology and how it is related to philosophy. This is how Marxism influenced the Structure and Agency theory. Social life means the relations and communications between people which highlight the concept of interactionism.

3.2.3 Interactionism

Interactionism is concerned with how individuals mould society through meaning that arises through interactions (Arab, 2016: 13). According to Mead, the mind and self are the social inventors of everyday lives (Athens, 2007: 139). Mead further argued that the main priority of interactionism is to analyse the patterns of interaction in society, which he saw as the foundation of human society. Thus, the interaction between two or more people was defined as social acts. The individual only became valid through cooperation with others in the community (Depelteau, 2008: 56). Hence, the self could be both the object and subject. What this means is that both the act and self are co-dependent based on the social structure. They are also both creative and this illustrates how individuals can influence each other (Arab, 2016: 13). Thus, interactionism creates a foundation for ethnomethodology, a term explained in the next section.

3.2.4 Ethnomethodology

Ethnomethodology is closely related to interactionism – it examines people's use of their everyday dialogues to construct an understandable view of the world. Thus, it is the study of the ways people understand and produce the social order in which they live (Stryker, 2008: 17). Stryker further stated that ethnomethodology focuses on the methods individuals use to develop concepts and principles that can help explain how people's sense of reality is constructed, sustained and transformed (2008: 18). In simple terms, it is understanding the everyday existence of people through their experiences made utilising their rationality and accountability. Ethnomethodology

advocates more for the concept of agency, while structuralism advocates for a cognitive structure and how agency is dependent on it.

3.2.5 Structuralism

Structuralism is associated with proponents such as Levi-Strauss, Althusser, Poulantzas, Godelier, Foucault and Lacan all of whom have influenced the concept (Depelteau, 2008: 56). Although these theorists disagree about the specific nature of structuralism, there is common ground between them based on how human society is interlinked with change and the idea of self-regulation (Sewell, 1992: 2). Interactionism and sociological phenomenology are based on the idea of a creative human subject which rejects the objectivism of positivism and functionalism. Positivism is a philosophical system that is based on scientific proof that is verified logically or mathematically (Lee and Jones, 2015: 339). These theories, which include functionalism, positivism and Marxism, emphasise the idea that social structure is independent. Thus, it is important to note that societies are not straightforward, instead, they consist of elements that have independent meaning although related to each other as a whole (Johnston, 2016: 1). Structuralism aims to understand the characteristics of human society and their relation to the universal structures of the human mind itself (Hay and Wincott, 1998: 955). Structuralism, therefore, emphasises the agency of an individual and the Structure and Agency theory in terms of the social institutional knowledge that is created.

3.2.6 The sociology of knowledge

The sociology of knowledge is a theory based on social institutions, which are structured as schools, and how social interests are concerned with different kinds of knowledge (Naidoo, 1989: 88). Thus, this school of thought is an effort to understand the social location of different forms of knowledge, their history and how they relate to specific social structural elements. According to Tholen (2015: 769), Mannheim was one of its main proponents. He saw how history and social context were consistently changing, making it a major problem for sociological knowledge. Furthermore, Tholen stated that this school of thought emphasised two distinct areas: Firstly, the idea that the theory of knowledge was related to social groups and social locations (Tholen, 2015: 770) and secondly, that the knowledge theory emphasised history as the basis of truth and validity in relation to appropriateness and needs (Tholen, 2015: 770). Giddens (2001: 666) later argued

that Berger and Luckman claimed that they had attempted to redefine the issue of the sociology of knowledge which they referred to as 'habitualization'. They stated that: "... proper object of society, which is, society as part of a human world, made by men, and in turn, making men in an ongoing historical process" (Giddens, 2001: 668). They claimed that the repetition of an action becomes a pattern and then becomes a societal norm. Therefore, we create our society and accept what is already created because there are people before us who have done so. The authors concluded that society can thus be described as a habit.

3.2.7 The importance of including the theorists and theories

This historical background is meant to give a broad understanding of the development of the Structure and Agency theory. The theories outlined above are all based on human action which refers to the individual's intentions and their capability to achieve them, the concept behind formulating their intentions and the ideal action for that capability. Each school of thought works with or is connected to the idea of social structure as a system built up out of the actions and their interaction with individuals. Structuralism is one of the main theories which influenced the Structure and Agency theory as it portrays our knowledge as being dependent on social structures. It also emphasises the view that our ideas are based on our underlying structures which influence the way we think and which form the basis of the Structure and Agency theory.

This next section highlights how Giddens' theory of structuration came about. This is the overarching theory relating to structure and agency and it has been influenced by these background theories and theorists. The basis of Giddens' theory is to understand that social reality could not be perceived as an underlying structure that needed to be found. Instead, it should be perceived as a continuous understanding of intentionality and reason, which are part of our consciousness. This is underpinned in habitualization which was defined under 3.2.6 above. This is the basic idea promulgated by the theories above and put together analytically by Giddens. According to Naidoo, Giddens argued that "The fact that human beings have interests of which they are not conscious means that social life is not just a dialogue over the meaning of events and objects but is a practical affair in which actors pursue lines of action that others will resist" (Naidoo, 1989: 88). In simple terms, the actions which people pursue in life are not automatically accepted by society and these actions must rather be familiar with what they know will be accepted.

3.2.8 Structuration

Anthony Giddens is the proponent of structuration, which is at the centre of structure and agency. The main aim of structuration is to reconcile the concepts of structure and agency that are bound by a dualistic system (Crombie, 1996: 197). Crombie (1996: 197) stated that dualism is the concept that is used throughout structuration where action is said to be dependent on structure and structure is dependent on action or interaction. Thus, agency and structure are said to be co-dependent highlighting the same ontological value. The theory of structuration factors in the concepts of space and time in the construction of social relations (Giddens, 2001). This, in simple terms, is the acknowledgement that history influences our subjectivity and social objectives, and emphasises how interdependent individuals are with their history and social system as defined by the sociology of knowledge.

The next sections are important for understanding the subjectivity which is confirmed in the agency and the social object and that can be defined as the social structure. There is always a struggle between pinpointing which comes first, the social structure or agency, as the concepts influence one other. The reason is that an individual is born into a society and does not choose the society into which he or she is born but later comes the ability to make decisions. The sections below start by defining what social structure entails and later what agency entails.

3.3 Defining social structure in the Structure and Agency theory

This section is mainly based on understanding the structural approach to understanding society. The term social structure is largely associated with the concept of agency that signifies the relationship between the individual and society at large (Connor, 2009: 7). However, for this section, the focus will be on the social structure, to understand what it entails and eventually understand how agency factors in. When concentrating on the concept of social structure, one needs to understand that it can be subdivided into four concepts, namely, social, economic, physical and ideological (Frohlich and Potvin, 2010: 378). These concepts can be further broken down into institutions, organisations, roles, natural land structures, policies, committees, positional levels, and anything that can be confined within a certain space. These entities instigate the conditions that push an agent to act, making structure a starting point for this research. Culture is

part of the main structures which influence the way a certain group chooses to live their lives. It is structured around behaviour, beliefs, values, customs, relationships and special symbols, and is also confined within a certain ideology that influences an individual to behave in a certain way (Shava and Heystek, 2019: 52).

Elbasha and Wright (2017: 107-128) argued that structure can have multiple abstract meanings associating it with determinism. The idea of structure is closely related to the theory of structuralism in which, according to Althusser, people are supporters or inhabitants of a self-sufficient structure which already exists (Connor, 2009: 15). The social structure is described as a combination of elements that make the structuralist significant. The agents inside the social relations in the structure are highlighted to explain the attributes and behaviour that people possess. The relationships between the elements and places that exist can be interpreted as a structuralist combinatory, which is also significant for structure (Arab, 2016). Therefore, individuals from a structuralist perspective are defined as supporting elements of social relations in a structure that already exists. In simple terms, structure is the main component or starting point for an analysis of society but not denying that humans exist. What makes society complex is that there are a variety of different relationships and arrangements in these structures which change under different circumstances in society (Connor, 2009: 15). Therefore, to understand structure fully, one needs to understand the different platforms of structure at places and times.

The properties of structure allow for the binding of time and space, meaning that history and the present are different for the rules and resources that exist in a social structure (Giddens, 2001). Thus, traditionally, one would expect face-to-face interaction where agents are present at the same time and place but in social structures these two variables, meaning agents, are not always present (Ritzer, 2012: 525). The rules of social actions allow us to continue in a system that is already constructed and sometimes these routines are mostly unintentional. This means that rules and resources are a continuous production and reproduction of social action which is translated as a system of reproduction (Giddens, 1984: 19). According to authors such as Makunda (2012: 112) and Van Rooyen (2013: 498), Giddens' understanding of structure is in contrast to that of Durkheim who translated structures as existing externally to agents. The understanding is that structure and agency co-exist and depend on each other to translate into society. The ideology that

Giddens did not believe in is one that was investigated in this research, that is, the idea of structure is given as something visible, and agency is perceived as an attribute that is within an individual, which means that structure could exist on its own (Ritzer, 2012: 524). This is in contrast with structure and agency being interdependent of each other, which is what Giddens believed in. Agency on its own can be a criticism of structure.

3.3.1 Arguments against structure without agency

According to Van Rooyen (2013: 499), to neglect agency means limiting the extent to which the nature of society can be comprehended. This, in the process, denies the actors and society to potentially shape their own narrative. Neglecting agency can also result in a society that is consistently the same and does not change, which translates into a form of individualism that is narrow and has one correct way (Shava and Heystek, 2019: 52). This means that individuals should have no individuality (which can be questioned) but be confined to a certain structure that has already been created thereby limiting their complexity. This confinement comes in the form of policies, social welfare and communal practices that limit the individual's objectivity (Connor, 2009: 7). In response, the deterministic nature of structural accounts is criticised due to the subsequent denial and neglect of the potential for agents to not only make choices but shape their circumstances.

The next section will dwell on the aspect of agency and its importance in the Structure and Agency theory.

3.4 Defining the human agency in the Structure and Agency theory

As emphasised by Connor (2009: 4), agency can be seen as the starting point and the most important part of society, implying that the actions of individuals build a social life. According to Giddens (2001: 668), the idea of agency is synonymous with action which consists of two components of human conduct. These components according to Giddens are capability and knowledgeability. Agency can thus be referred to as the psychological and personal make-up of people and their relationship to social roles relating to the capacity to act (Boughey, 2013). This means that agency is the capacity to translate actions freely with no obstruction and the ability to act independently of one's own will. The concept of agency is not new but has been around for

centuries. Agency is judged by influential wisdom which can be translated into norms and morality in a particular time and space (Kratz, 2000: 136-138). According to Van Gramberg (2001: 7), Locke described agency as an act based on the willingness of self-interest. Rousseau then framed the concept of agency as the capacity of a human being to develop their own freedom using moral autonomy. Ritzer (2012) argued that whilst Immanuel Kant advocated for the normative idea that freedom is yielded by the categorical imperative which is defined as one with universal laws and no ulterior motives.

The concept of agency provides us with the preconceived idea that a being has the capability to exercise autonomy. This comes with the idea of conducting intentional actions and in some instances, these actions could be unintentional (Macintyre, 1999: 312). This is referred to as the standard conception of agency, that is, the idea that actions produce relations which are states and events. Human agency is thus the instigation of autonomy by the agent him or herself. In contrast to this, understanding the standard conception of agency implies that agency cannot be limited to capacity and intentionality (Hay and Wincott, 1998). The agent's actions may be entirely autonomous in such a way that there would be no reasons behind them and can be spontaneous.

This why it is important to understand the motives behind an action because they may have decisive and strong power over how the agent acts. However, according to Connor (2009), some people argue for intended and unintended actions that agents carry out in their position of agency. MacIntyre (1999:314) described human beings as having a specific nature by which they have the capability which is embodied in evaluative and normative standards. This simply means that the agency of individuals can be external to the limitations that humans have created themselves, that is, the social and cultural order. In McIntyre's understanding, a moral agent must be self-aware to understand or practice agency and be held responsible for their autonomy. There are also good reasons for individuals to be understood through their social and cultural order because the space they inhabit influences the way they think and carry out actions. This is part of the reason why it is argued by some that agency is not influential on structure.

3.4.1 Arguments against human agency in the Structure and Agency theory

It is almost impossible to define agency without considering the structure of an agent. The structure of an agent is both visible and invisible and influences the nature of that human being. The idea of narrowly zooming into agency ignores the constantly changing world, producing social and economic inequalities that limit the agency of an individual (Connor, 2009: 7). Schlosser (2019: 2) stated that actions are not the reasons for actions because causes can be a result of the social structures such as social and economic impediments. Thus, Schlosser (2019: 2) argued that the reasons for an action are the focal point of the individual in pursuing agency. To understand the concept of agency, self-interest and motivation are vital as they are bound by the motives of an individual and are both influenced by the social structure. Individualised forms of agency are criticised by exponents of a structural position for identifying single actors as the immediate causes of events. This is not only considered to be an erroneous starting point for understanding society but a premise from which individuals are to be held responsible and accountable for their circumstances.

The concept of separating structure and agency has proven to be inadequate. Hence the need for duality between the two concepts, where one has a deterministic nature and the other revolves around the concept of autonomy and both are thus dependent on each other.

3.5 Defining the Structure and Agency theory

According to Van Breda (2016: 39), social reality can be simplified as having both structure and agency but cannot be considered comprising the individual concepts separately. As a result, Giddens understands and uses the concept of dualism for the Structure and Agency theory where it is the depiction acknowledged through a gradual process that helps to understand our current society. As mentioned under the concept of structuration, dualism refers to agency having as much influence on structure as structure has on agency. The criticism of the Structure and Agency theory is evidence of how a society and agent need to be analysed from both perspectives and not separately. Hence, this section will clarify the Structure and Agency theory and it will specify how this theory will assist in answering the main research question.

Various authors have been part of the construction of the Structure and Agency theory and this chapter has provided a brief background on the emergence of the theory including the proponents involved. The background provided a summary of the various theories and how they influenced the construction of the Structure and Agency theory. It is, therefore, important to note that these theorists are a justifiable part of the proponents of the theory. The main proponent of this theory is Anthony Giddens who developed the structuration theory. The structuration theory has many attributes, but its inclusion of dualism made it unique. It is also important to include proponents that are relevant to the African context since this study is based in South Africa, namely, Ivan Karp and Dismas Masolo. These authors are recognised for their contribution to the Structure and Agency theory and other related theories such as personhood. Karp leans towards the concept of agency while Masolo more towards the concept of identity. Together, the two advocated for the general idea of the Structure and Agency theory, which is that individual identity is based on the society or structure that the individual exists in (Karp and Masolo, 2000).

The Structure and Agency theory advocates for a system in which individuals create their own knowledge although they do not make the circumstances they find themselves in but are rather a product of history (Lamsal, 2012: 113). It also highlights how the consciousness of agents is not the determinant of their being but it is their social being that controls their agency. According to Kratz (2000: 136), active and influential agents play a part in social relations but are not usually the ones that make the decisions. He further advocated for the continuous shift in the identities and social relations that continuously create new knowledge (or transactional relationships in the case of this study). This emphasises the argument of Karp and Masolo (2000: 137) that people sometimes make the mistake that agency is autonomous but one cannot refer to agency without involving structure. The authors further pointed out how individuals are different and each person is described according to their rights, abilities and responsibilities. Attached to these attributes may be the accountability to be responsible for the outcomes yielded (Kratz, 2000: 136). Macintyre (1999: 311) substantiated this by arguing that occupying a role in society comes with the responsibility not to disappoint, and that disappointment comes with significant disapproval. In the case of women in the African context, women were not allowed to stand up to men and doing so would be considered a failure to occupy the role of submitting to the man. This meant that the hierarchies in society are of the utmost importance because moving astray from those roles meant

you were irresponsible and deviant. The relation of the Structure and Agency theory to social hierarchies is important in understanding society and the individuals who inhabit it. Furthermore, this relation helped in obtaining the main objective for this research through the understanding of power relative to the Structure and Agency theory. Hierarchies in society highlight some of the criticisms of structure and agency.

3.6 Arguments against the Structure and Agency theory

Agency, from an individual perspective, is criticised for not considering structure because it sees individuals as directly responsible for their actions and events caused by them. The response to this criticism is that social structure can also be criticised for its deterministic nature by which agents are undermined of their ability or potentiality to make choices that consequently shape their circumstances (Boughey, 2013: 17). This implies that the exclusion of autonomy in human agency means that morality or ethical discourse are not included. Furthermore, for morality to exist, an individual action must be premised on both freedom and rationality, which in most cases can be compromised by the structures that are given priority over humans' 'voluntary' actions.

These shortcomings can be considered as part of the agency/structure discourse with its main critic being Margaret Archer. Archer (2000: 18) highlighted the 'fallacy of central conflation' which is the combination of structure and agency that deprives the concepts being studied separately and which is in contrast with the criticism mentioned above. The fallacy of central conflation renders the concept of dualism invalid. This is substantiated by the fact that agency on its own has powers and properties which further implies the same for structure. This is partly the reason this chapter included the concepts of structure and agency separately before combining them. This led to a theory that would be too simplistic due to the combination of structure and agency. Archer's main aim was to highlight the agents as the root of social-cultural structures rather than subjugating them to social structural forces (Boughey, 2013: 17). Dornan (2002) substantiated Archer's view by indicating that dualism does not incorporate the complex issues related to the individual which the Structure and Agency theory may not include. Dornan (2002: 315) further detailed these issues as the daily experiences of agents from different backgrounds, which in most cases still focused and encapsulated on the perspective of the West. This highlights how the Structure and Agency theory is deterministic and is driven by generalisation. The theory fails to answer questions such

as why certain humans behave differently under the same conditions and puts into perspective why humans from different structures act the same.

Archer (2000: 21) also conceived the ‘downward conflation’ where the aim was to resurrect the agency of humans by highlighting the importance of agency within and against social structures. This was emphasised by Naidoo (1989) through the explanation of the pre-existence of social structures as social actions that transform and reproduce them. This provides an overview of how social interactions are limited by structures. It also emphasises the criticism that the distribution of assets is not one that is equal due to institutionalised positions and practices which consequently reproduce and transform social ideas. According to Archer (2000), this institutionalisation was the ‘upward conflation’ that emphasise how dominant groups universalised their ideologies for material interest. This correlates with the deterministic idea that groups that are not dominant can easily be submerged into the dominant groups (Connor, 2009). It is thus important to note that dominant groups do not always promote ethical conceptions. This made Archer question the concept of dualism by asking at what point the agency gains precedence over structures and vice versa (Dornan, 2002: 317) and this is not clearly explained in the structuration theory of Giddens.

Charalambous Vrasidas stressed that the world pre-exists and is separate from the mind of an individual (Johnston, 2016). This is termed the ‘binary fallacy’ which states that social action is based on social construction thereby demonstrating the duality of agency (Archer, 1982: 466). This argument is faulty as it insists that humans have no free will and rationality, implying that they are agents with no morality and lack practical relations with the real world. In contrast to this, Dornan (2002: 314) advocated that it is impossible to use social constructions to explain human behaviour. Dornan further insisted that individuals have the agency to manipulate these constructions and make them work in their favour. Thus, arguing that social construction helps in understanding community behaviour disregards human free will and rationality including the morality of individuals and, therefore, insinuates that human and animal acts are no different (Boughey, 2013: 17). Consequently, premising social action on social construction can be immoral and faulty because the aim of agency is to stress that humans can resist structures. Organisations need to be understood through structures that are maintained and transformed by the social interaction of individuals highlighting the power relations that exist in structures (Connor, 2011: 103). Connor

(2011) further implied that this can be used to explain the social hierarchy by addressing its norms, socio-economy and individual belief systems. The social hierarchy highlights how there is a connection between the structure and agency.

3.7 Power relations in the Structure and Agency theory

According to Connor (2009: 9), the system by which individuals live is recognised in terms of the rules and resources that Anthony Giddens in his theory of structuration stipulates. In simple terms, the rules are how things should be done and resources are things that can help get things done. Alternatively, rules are what you are allowed and not allowed to do while resources are a source of supply that aid and are used for the maintenance of an individual (Cohen, 1989: 146). Rules can be created from signification, legitimation and domination (Jones and Karsten, 2008: 131). This means that rules are created on how an event should be interpreted, what should happen in each situation, and what means should be used to accomplish set goals. On the other hand, resources are seen in relation to an individual's knowledgeability and capability (Jones and Karsten, 2008: 131). Knowledgeability is an agent's awareness of their own behaviour and their response to others, while capability is their ability to abdicate, influence and intervene in a choice. Capability in this sense means that individuals are characterised by thought because they reflect on their own behaviour and other people and make their decisions based on that.

The capability of an agent is thus, dependent on their knowledgeability which is further broken down into discursive, practical and unconscious knowledgeability (Jones and Karsten, 2008: 131). First, is discursive knowledgeability, which is the ability to consciously discuss why an individual acts in a certain manner. Second, practical knowledgeability is understood as choices that are integrated into everyday life that are required but are hardly noticed unless asked about. Third, is unconscious knowledgeability which is when an individual responds to the current social environment and is not able to explain his or her actions. This discussion is to mainly highlight how resources are the core influence in the social hierarchy, which consequently influence the structure and agency of the individual.

The influence on structure and agency underscores the importance of understanding the social relations that exist within a community. Consequently, the power that exists within the social

relations needs to be seen in the light of social relations rarely ever being equal and the power that exists among individuals influences the individuals. Thus, when an individual can benefit from being part of a relationship, they are then most likely to pursue the relationship. In doing so, the individual with less power in the relationship has minimal influence on the 'price' to be paid for the benefits received within the relationship. In this regard, Reza Arab stated that "the deepest problems of modern life flow from the attempt of the individual to maintain the independence and individuality of existence against the sovereign powers of society, against the weight of the historical heritage and the external culture and technique of life" (Arab, 2016: 38). In simple terms, this means that everything around us influences our decisions. It is thus not incorrect to stipulate that power exists everywhere in social relations as failing to agree with this statement would not justify why power and capital continually progress and remain in the hands of a few. In the perspective of Marx and Engels, the social environment is predominantly influenced by the ruling class and such a perspective is justified through the existing state of affairs (Van Rooyen, 2013: 498). Within the social environment, the ruling class employs religious, political and legal systems to regulate resources required by every individual. The social hierarchy influences the structure and agency of an individual according to the social environment in which he or she exists. Thus, for this research, to understand the relevance of power, it needs to be explained in relation to the Structure and Agency theory.

3.8 Relevance of structure and agency to the current research

Authors such as Wafa Kort and Jamel Gharbi emphasised the contention that structure and agency possess power over individuals' actions (Kort and Gharbi, 2013: 95). Hence, the continuous debate on the dependence of the terms highlights the notion that there is no standard rule for all social structures (Kort and Gharbi, 2013: 99). This brings out the point that while blessees may be part of the BBP they have resorted to the phenomenon for different reasons or structures. Karp and Masolo (2000: 138) further stipulated that the motivation of an individual is as a result of the social history and the social environment they inhabit and which forces them to conform to unique techniques of survival. This means that motivations and intentions are unique to the individual's societal background (Luck and D'Inerno, 1995). The conceptualisation of the BBP entails that it is a social construct and advocates for a society that is consistently changing. Although critics argue that there is a difference between structure and agency, it does not mean that structure and

agency are not dependent on each other, especially when looked at over a period (Connor, 2009: 11).

Altering the social structure causes a constant need to find alternative ways of maintaining a livelihood for everyday survival. Hence, there is a constant need to change methods of survival which is caused by societal struggles such as unemployment, peer pressure, poverty, and gender inequality. Improvising becomes a solution to overcome the existential reality in which one exists. Thus, the responsibility of moral agents is to hold and understand accountability for the reasoning from which their actions flow, keeping in mind why they stray from the standard norms (Johnston, 2016: 1). In simple terms, it is not easy to understand the morality of an action and one cannot simply judge it based on the notion that it has strayed from what is perceived as normal. According to Connor (2009: 11), individuals have the capacity to judge whether normative standards in accordance with their social and cultural order can limit their needs with good reason. This is also substantiated by Immanuel Kant where he stated that human actions based on freedom and rationality are an ethical view of human agency (Hyman and Steward, 2004: 139).

The individual agency of the blessee was thus of relevance for this research. The understanding of why blessees do what they do or the intentions behind their action is vital in understanding the action itself. Acts, therefore, can be defined as premediated and deliberative before they are acted out (Elbasha and Wright, 2017: 110). In most cases, blessees already know the probability of the outcomes of the actions taken. This means that these actions are taken with no coercion and prior to doing so they have already considered the outcomes of the actions. This highlights that there are agency and reasoning in the actions taken and they are a form of moral action hence theorising the Structure and Agency theory.



Figure 0.1: Structure and agency producing structural agency
(Source: Researcher's representation of the Structure and Agency theory)

The above figure indicates how the combination of structure and agency yields the concept of structural agency. Structure, as defined in this chapter, is considered to be institutions, systems, organisations, procedures and society. Agency is considered to be freedom, free will, choice and capability. Thus, considering the structure one exists in and how one makes decisions can be considered the structural agency. This research aimed at assessing the BBP by examining the agency of the blessee and how the structure influences the decisions made. It needs to be emphasised that although there is no sense of coercion in these decisions this does not mean that there is autonomy. According to the morality perspective, agency is a force behind an act, the intention or rather the will behind an action that drives the actor to behave in a certain way (Elbasha and Wright, 2017: 55). Thus, by the quality of being human, the blessee could be perceived as having both free will and reason when carrying out an act, knowing the repercussions and circumstances of an act when performing it.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter looked at the concept of agency from the perspective of Anthony Giddens and Karl Marx, as their conceptualisation of agency is linked with structure. Further insights were taken from Karp and Masolo, who are among the main proponents of the Structure and Agency theory in the African context. The chapter provided a brief background on the construction of the Structure and Agency theory. It then gave an overview of structure in the theory by defining and highlighting its relevance. An analysis of human agency and its relevance to the Structure and Agency theory was provided. The chapter outlined and exposed the shortfalls of the theory if structure is left out and provided an analysis of the ideology of structure and agency as co-

dependent. It later dwelled on the power and relevance of structure which provided an understanding of the social hierarchy and its norms as well as the importance of conceptualising the effects of the agent's belief structure. The chapter concluded by highlighting individual agency as an important factor in judging ethical actions as moral or immoral.

The following chapter analyses the structural agency of the blessee. This is done by looking at the structure and agency of the blessee before, within, and after the blesser-blessee relationship, and how this affects the blessee's agency, not forgetting how agency is connected to the autonomy of the blessee.

Chapter four: Analysing how structure affects the blessee's agency

“One did not suggest what people ought to be what they ought to do, what they ought to think and believe. It was a matter of showing how social mechanism up to now have been able to work and then, starting from there, one left to the people themselves, knowing all the above, the possibility of self-determination and the choice of their own existence” (Arab, 2016: 41).

4.1 Introduction

The above quotation speaks to the core claims of this chapter, namely, how a person is born into the structures that surround them and from there it is up to them to conceptualise their understanding of the world. The quotation highlights the importance of rationality and freedom as the premises upon which every individual who is to be considered a moral and autonomous being must be placed.

The previous chapter provided a detailed description of the Structure and Agency theory. This was done by providing a brief background to the theory in which some of its theorisations and theorists who have helped to conceptualise it were mentioned. The chapter defined the concepts of structure and agency including their critiques. It highlighted how the Structure and Agency theory cannot be separated because of the interdependence of the two concepts. The chapter also briefly looked at how the theory guided the study.

The current chapter is an analysis of BBP through the lens of the Structure and Agency theory. The analysis includes the structures or systems that influence the agency of the blessee taking part in the BBP. These systems are gender inequality, poverty, unemployment, and peer pressure and their roles in influencing the agency of the blessee are discussed. The outcomes of being part of the BBP also influence the structure of the blessee and, consequently, their individual agency. The blessee can either be a female or male but as noted, for the purpose of this research, the focus was on the female blessee. This chapter, therefore, prioritises understanding whether the agency of the blessee is one that consists of autonomy.

How people carry out their actions is characterised by the structures of the group in which they exist (Musolf, 2003: 14). According to Bloom (2008: 15), the freedom of women has been overlooked for centuries due to their triple marginalisation which comprises race, sexism and poverty and it is only recently that women are regaining their agency. This issue was mentioned in Chapter two. This recent gain of agency by women has been largely due to gender equality initiatives and feminist activism which are gradually transforming the agency of women. The gain is also indicative of how structures can be transformed by the agents that exist in them. Structures cannot be easily changed because of the time frame involved for women to change them and this is largely due to patriarchy (Connor, 2009: 11). These structures can be economic, social, political and ideological and all have an impact on women's agency.

This constant change in women's agency has enabled women to speak out about marginalisation. This development will possibly yield absolute freedom for future generations which has been fought for by women in the past and present (Williams, 2017: 527). Makonde Lamsal stated that: "Our placement in history and native language is not of our choosing but in the same sense the agency has a vital part to play in changing the structure when it comes to such things as policy changes" (Lamsal, 2012: 120). This is evident in how women have had to endure historical structures that were already in place and how they constantly struggle to change these structures that limit their agency. It is these structures that push the blessees towards participating in the BBP. Thus, this chapter highlights the nature of the agency that stems from the structure of an individual. Because of prejudice, reasoning has become an alternative in understanding morality as compared to religion and culture (Gobind and Du Plessis, 2015: 6724). Thus, the understanding of structure to utilise agency is understood as structural agency.

4.2 The structural agency of the blessee within the BBP

Based on the ancient Greeks and Romans, morality was structured on religious and cultural ethics but with the transition to modernity and due to the diversity of beliefs it now includes reasoning (Lamsal, 2012: 117). Morality recognises the agency one has by emphasising whether it is translated through free will or coercion. Here, free-will can be considered as the freedom from structures that pushes individuals towards certain decisions while coercion (or the absence of free-

will) is when the structures or agents outside of one's self force one to conform to specific decisions. However, this is insufficient in terms of understanding the morality of the human agent and the reason why reasoning and rules are relevant in understanding the idea of morality. According to the BBP, the rules and resources in the relationship are to the advantage of the blesser, thus highlighting the power dynamics within the phenomenon. These power dynamics are not in the favour of the agency of the blessee.

Throughout history, people with more resources and power tend to impose their agency on agents with less power and resources to change the social structure (Musolf, 2003). This historical fact ultimately sheds some light on the BBP in terms of the power dynamics at play. It can be observed that blessees do not act on their own volition in making decisions but are guided by the structures that already exist. These structures are not limited to the blesser's capabilities but rather to the ideologies that already exist such as poverty, unemployment, peer pressure and gender inequality. In the process, the human agency yields unintended structures that are more likely to limit the agency of the blessee because of the created structures which include GBV and health risks. This is not to say that the intended outcomes are not real but that they are not considered as having been gained through hard work.

The main aim of this study was to highlight how structure requires agency to work. The concept of structural agency produces outcomes that further highlight how the BBP ethically impacts the blessee. This is done by understanding structural agency to comprehend whether autonomy exists for the blessee. Structural agency considers agency that is determined by structures to be immoral. This is underscored by the notion that structures can be deterministic which means that the ability of the blessee to make decisions can be undermined. Agency that is determined by structures lacks both freedom and rationality which is what allows moral agents to be morally accountable. Autonomy considers morality as the agent's (blessee's) ability to not make decisions based on desires. However, if a blessee makes decisions based on desires it is important to hold them accountable for the reasoning on which those decisions are made. Those decisions can sometimes seem justifiable because of reasons such as gender inequality, unemployment, peer pressure and poverty.

The existing structures that lead the blessee to participate in the BBP put constraints on their agency thereby resulting in contrasting outcomes, that is, being positive and/or negative. The diagram below illustrates how structure and agency are interdependent by highlighting that structural agency is a yielding factor in that it produces outcomes that can be positive and/or negative on the blessee.

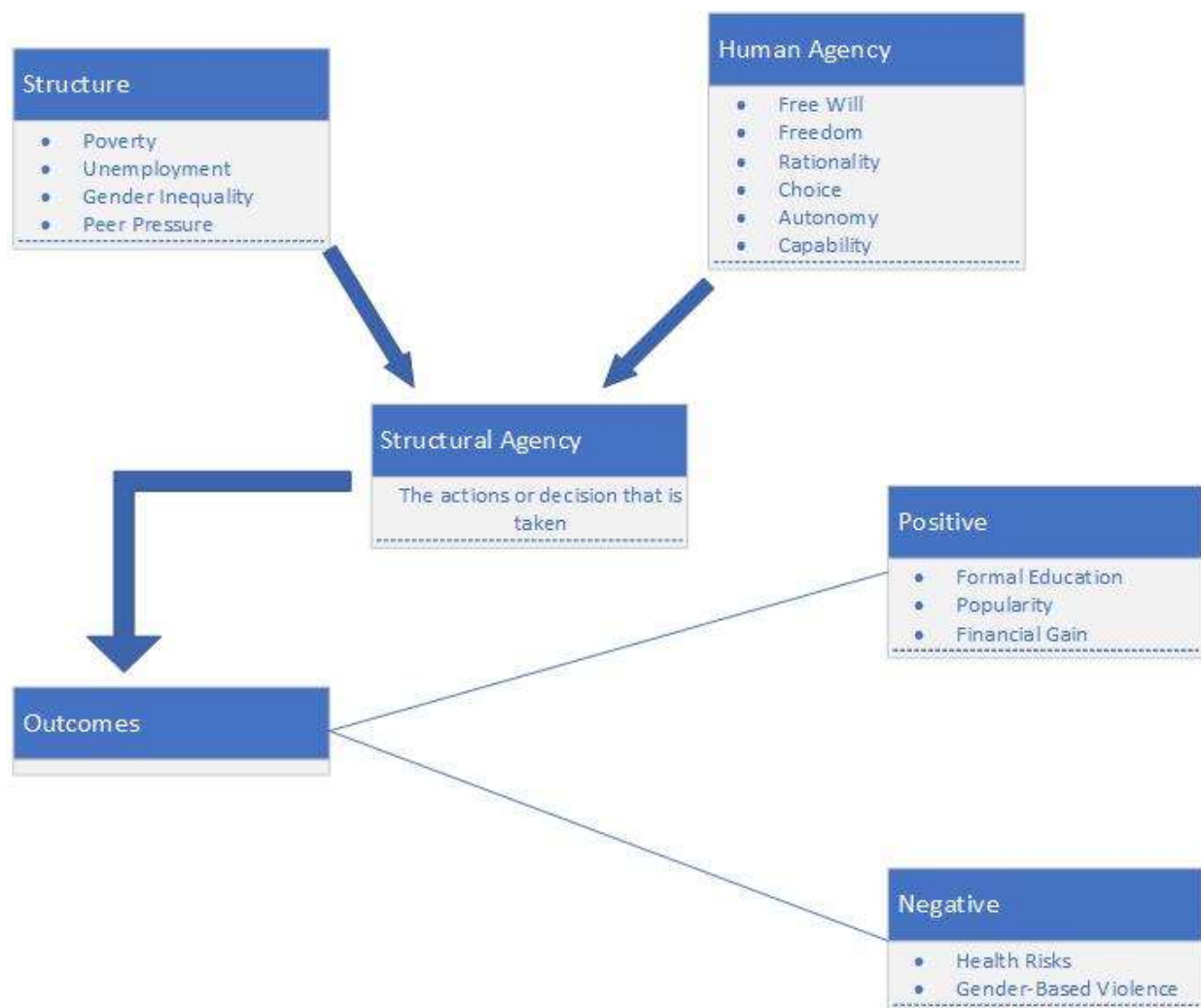


Figure 0.1: Structural agency of the blessee in the BBP and the outcomes it produces

Source: Researcher's analysis of the BBP based on the structural agency framework

The diagram above is an illustration of the BBP through the lens of the Structure and Agency theory. Here, the structures that already exist and which influence the agency of the blessee are labelled as reasons. These structures (or reasons) are considered as limitations of the blessee's

agency. They are gender inequality, poverty, unemployment and peer pressure all of which affect agency. This process is considered as structural agency and is the decisions made while considering structure and agency. The diagram further illustrates that the structural agency of the BBP yields outcomes that can be either positive or negative or both. The negative outcomes include health risks and GBV, which are the unintended consequences while the positive outcomes include formal education, popularity and financial gain which are the intended consequences.

What follows is an analysis of Figure 0.1 commencing with the structures that influence the agency of the blessee. It comprises understanding the BBP through the lens of structural agency focusing on the blessee.

4.3 Structures that influence the agency of the blessee

Frohlich and Potvin (2010: 378) stated that as an individual there are structures that influence one's reasoning and life decisions and, ultimately, the ability to act on those decisions. Thus, it is important to note that there are structures that limit the agency of an individual which consequently limits their freedom. As mentioned above, women throughout history have experienced these limitations and continue to do so for multiple structural reasons including gender inequality, poverty, unemployment and peer pressure. Freedom and rationality are the bases for morality and are also the conditions for individual agency in a structure (Hyman and Steward, 2004: 139). Considering the rationality of an act is of vital importance as it highlights the reasoning behind the act. It is thus important to understand that while freedom entails free-will which in turn demands no coercion, this is questionable for women in general because of the gender inequalities that exist. The existence of gender inequality has long suppressed the freedom and consequently the rationality of women (Lamsal, 2012: 120). Through modernisation, morality has been redefined due to the diversity of beliefs and the movement away from the religious and cultural rules that have been the root of gender inequality (Arab, 2016: 39). Morality has thus been considered a tool that humans for centuries have utilised to help them live and work together in structures depending on their interests. These interests differ from individual to individual and can involve being able to provide for oneself so one can avoid suffering and pursue pleasurable and fulfilling experiences. Doing so can be considered ethical according to utility.

4.3.1 Gender inequality as a structure and limitation of the blessee's agency

Through the lens of structural agency, an issue that stands out is gender inequality. The post-apartheid period in South Africa came with a well-written Constitution that promised to correct the gender imbalances that existed in South Africa (Mishra and Tripathi, 2011: 59). This made women aware of the amount of work that needed to be done because of class exploitation, social discrimination and political oppression. These were linked to the broader structures of domination and their individual agency was linked with social transformation (Williams, 2017: 525). Thus, according to the Structure and Agency theory, gender inequality highlights differential access to and control over survival resources. Gender inequality is considered a product of gender norms and stereotypes that reinforce gendered identities and constrain the behaviour of women in ways that lead to inequality (Sehlikoglu, 2018: 78). Gender inequality is a structure that considers women being “less” in terms of race, social class and sex. Due to this, women are considered to be vulnerable in society. Gender inequality highlights how women are vulnerable to an agency that has no free will and their rationality is based on structures limiting this free will.

One of the challenges for South Africa is that it continuously struggles to address cultural and societal norms and practices that perpetuate gender inequality in society (Lamsal, 2012: 122). Despite the notion of gender equality being broadly accepted by women and men, patriarchal norms of male control continue to limit female access to and participation in education, employment, and political decision-making (Mishra and Tripathi, 2011: 80). They also drive very high levels of violence against women and children in the country. Societal norms, cultural and customary practices, and laws severely constrain sustainable development change which consequently impedes the agency of young women (Rooyen, 2013: 498). According to Sachs *et al.*:

“The implementation of South Africa’s strengthened legal and legislative framework for protecting women and girls is hindered by embedded cultural and social practices such as early marriage, gender socialisation, restrictions on the inheritance of land by women, discriminatory attitudes towards women, and patriarchy and its perpetuation of fixed gender roles” (Sachs *et al.*, 2004: 118).

This highlights that structures consist of mutually sustaining cultural norms and a collective of resources that can either empower or constrain the action of an agent socially and can be systemically reproduced by that action. The National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 highlights the link between gender equality and its relation to successful national development (Williams, 2017: 530). The NDP 2030 re-establishes how gender equality is a catalyst that not only creates equality for women but also reduces poverty. This reasoning and the fact that women's emancipation is vital to social transformation and national development should compel us to look at the agency of young women in South Africa.

The BBP is a form of social transformation that can have a positive and/or negative impact on the blessee. Gender inequality highlights the different access to and control over the resources that provide for the livelihoods of young women. Women gaining access to and control over resources are part of the intentions of the MDGs, three of which advocate for gender equality and the empowerment of women, and this is also captured in the Constitution (MDGs Report, 2015). The BBP is evidence of the power of inequalities within the relationship. The blesser in the relationship has the power to engage or not engage since their economic resources are their power. The current gender inequalities in South Africa are part of the reasons why young women resort to the BBP and whether the decision to do so is based on free will and rationality. It is important to note that rationality is based on logic in which the reasoning of the blessee is to emancipate herself from her current marginalisation through economic endorsement which the blesser provides. Embedded within gender inequality is the concept of poverty, which is also one of the reasons why the blessee participates in the BBP.

4.3.2 Poverty as a structure and limitation of the blessee's agency

In Chapter two, poverty was described as a lack of economic and natural resources. Poor living conditions of young women in South Africa play a major role in exposing them to the idea of the BBP. This is because these young women would engage in transactional relationships not through coercion but for economic reasons (Mampane, 2018: 7). Developing countries are mostly the victims of poverty and people within South Africa, a developing country, resort to multiple ways to combat poverty (Fehling *et al.*, 2013: 1109). The eradication of poverty is the main priority for South Africa and this is in line with the first of the MDGs (MDGs Report, 2015). The BBP is a

momentary solution for young adults that sometimes contradicts and at other times aligns with some of the development goals as mentioned in Chapter two. In this kind of relationship, the power is with the blesser and he has the freedom to include or to exclude the lessee, leaving the lessee with limited agency. According to Thobejane *et al.* (2017) and Williams (2017), poverty increases the possibility of young women involving themselves in sex work as well as other forms of transactional sex. Thus, the BBP cannot be addressed outside the context of poverty within South Africa.

The BBP is a survival strategy for young women which involves sexual favour in exchange for financial gain so that they are able to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, protection, affection, a job and other livelihood opportunities. This transactional relationship is a further disadvantage for the young women in the BBP since there are already power inequalities that lead to one having agency and being in command. The person commanding and having the agency is the blesser. This begs the question of where this leaves the agency, which highlights their freedom and rationality, of the lessee. The lessee's reasons for participating in the BBP are driven by poverty but the reasons also highlight the motivation of poverty as a limitation of the agency of the lessee. The concept of poverty from the perspective of women is linked to a loss of dignity (Williams, 2017: 539). Thus, poverty causes a limitation of agency for the lessee. As mentioned in Chapter two, Cloete (2015: 516) highlighted Fourie's bi-directional causality which is defined as two things having a causal relationship such that poverty contributes to unemployment and unemployment causes poverty.

4.3.3 Unemployment as a structure and limitation of the lessee's agency

A further issue that stands out when one examines the BBP through the lens of structural agency is unemployment. Poverty can be caused by unemployment which pushes the lessee to find alternative ways of maintaining a livelihood. Cloete (2015: 514) described unemployment as an economic issue and argued that it poses a threat to human dignity and should, therefore, be both a social and ethical concern. Furthermore, according to Cloete (2015: 516), the focus on youth unemployment is motivated by the idea that young people are the largest number of new job seekers and are the most vulnerable regarding unemployment. Unemployment in South Africa has an undeniable structural character making it hard to address. Structural unemployment implies the

inability of an economy to provide employment for the total (or potential) labour force, even at the peak of its economic cycle (Terreblance, 2005: 373).

Young adults in South Africa are significantly affected by unemployment and this is largely the group, more specifically young women, this study focused on. Sanjaya (2008) referred to how women endure the unfair imbalance of unemployment, how they form the majority of people who are employed as contract (not permanent) workers, how they are part of the low-income earners, and how they are poorly represented at top and senior positions of management. This situation means that women are already at a disadvantage in terms of unemployment and this, for them, becomes a reason to participate in a BBP relationship. This further substantiates the existence of a power disparity within the BBP, namely, the lack of economic power the blessee has within the relationship.

The lack of economic power makes the concept of unemployment relevant in this research since the BBP represents financial, social and sexual concepts within the relationship. The way people assign and distribute things of value depends on how integrated and segregated their relationships are and how powerful they are in relation to one another (Terreblance, 2005: 374). The power dynamics are issues in the blesser-blessee relationship. For the blesser, power lies in his monetary ability while for the blessee, it resides in her sexual and social influence. Unemployment limits the agency of young women and they participate in age-disparate relationships to empower themselves financially.

As mentioned in Chapter three, having no agency means the lack of morality due to the necessity of freedom and rationality in the making of moral action. According to Van Breda (2016: 40), rationality could be based on benefiting oneself if it is equated with actions of self-interest. Rationality could also be based on benefiting a group where selfish behaviour is considered irrational. It is, therefore, important to note how the people around one (peers) are vital for one's wellbeing.

4.3.4 Peer pressure as a structure and limitation of the blessee's agency

The people around the blessee have a huge influence on the decisions that she makes. They range from family and community to colleagues and social media. These people create a community that plays a significant role not only in the agency of the blessee but also in her intrinsic value. According to Mampane (2018: 5), peer pressure plays a major role in the over-all life (including sexual life) of young people and hence their susceptibility to transactional relationships. Young women are motivated by their peers to be involved in the BBP for economic reasons in order to get an improved social status. According to Karjanto (2018: 51), the easiest way to influence young women is through social media platforms. These platforms consist of social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter and are there to create connections that consequently result in friendships. These friendships, based on social networks, pressurise young women to become accustomed to these relationships and thus acquire more benefits (Bhana, 2015: 5).

These social networks promote extravagant lifestyles (depicted in the form of images) that young women want for themselves and which they perceive their peers enjoying. Social networks further motivate the young women to have multiple partners within the BBP since doing so increases their chances of gaining more economic resources (Kieslinger, 2015: 7). Tobejane *et al.* (2017) believed that the reasons for some young women being part of the BBP are not because of poverty but rather the desire and the importance attached to being more fashionable, privileged and popular among their peers. Other reasons may include the possibility of sleeping with the most influential man both financially and socially which would provide a blessee with status in both these areas. This suggests that blessees have sexual encounters with blessers for sexual self-determination rather than for basic needs. This self-determination is motivated by expensive gifts that they would otherwise not ask their parents for (Thobejane *et al.*, 2017: 8717). It is important to question this rationality on the grounds of the self-esteem of the agent herself. The question of the type of agency one has when one is constantly seeking the validation of others in turn questions the rationality that is based on the validation of a group of peers and which ultimately impedes freedom or free will. These outcomes create structures that can limit and/or free the agency of the blessee.

4.4. The outcomes of the BBP creating structures that either limit or free the blessee

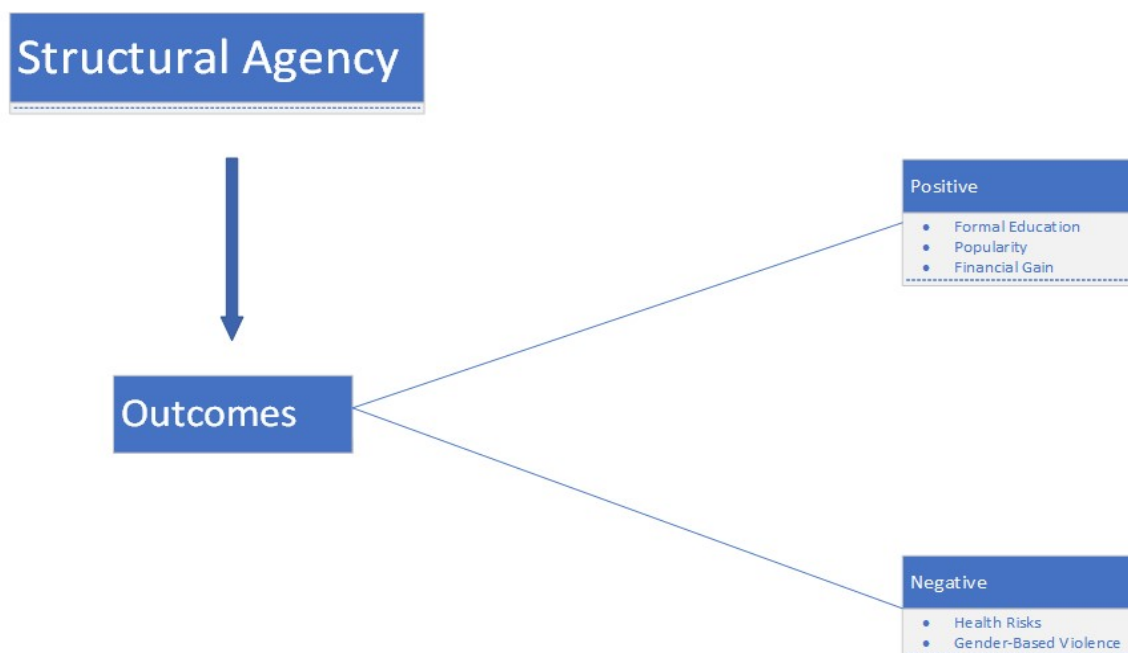


Figure 0.2: Structural agency outcomes in the BBP

Source: Researcher's illustration of the outcomes of structural agency in the BBP

According to Figure 0.2, the BBP is most likely to lead to consequences that are both intended and unintended. The attempt of the blessee to find solutions to her livelihood problems by participating in the BBP can bring about both positive and negative consequences. Although to some extent, participating in the BBP may reduce the blessee's poverty level and increase their social status, it may also yield the possibility of GBV and health risks. McAnnalla (2002: 281) pointed out that autonomy can lead to structural changes which can be both anticipated and unwanted.

Every decision that is made has an effect, proving that structure is dynamic due to temporal spaces and social interactions. This demonstrates that the world is continuously evolving. Resourceful agency thus enhances the reproduction of structures which, according to Kort and Gharbi (2013: 95), yield the transformation and remobilisation of resources that make new structures recognisable. People conforming to these changes is proof of the agent's potentiality to shape their reality and that the possibility of exploiting this reality is attainable. It is also important to note that

agents are so involved in their reality that, at times, they do not comprehend what is outside normal. The fact that the BBP shares characteristics with prostitution does not mean it is the same as prostitution. Furthermore, sharing traits with what is considered a pure or conventional relationship does not make it the same either. This emphasises how the BBP is unique in its own right and creates structures that are relevant to it although it might share some similar traits with these phenomena. Thus, the outcomes can either impede on the freedom of the blessee or increase their freedom.

4.4.1 Agency influencing unintended negative outcomes

The negative outcomes tend to decrease and sometimes remove the agency of the blessee within the BBP. They constrain the capabilities of the blessee by making the conditions of the structure unfavourable. These unfavourable conditions may have traits of disempowerment, lack of freedom and engagement in sexually risky behaviours. Most blessers want to have absolute control over their blessees hence advocating domination over them. This highlights how these young women either do not have any or have minimal say over their lives once they are part of this relationship. This is due to the blessers having control of their movements and activities which they (the young women) have exchanged for material or financial gain. Disagreeing with these terms would lead to abuse within the relationship which in this case would be considered as GBV. To continue in the relationship in most cases would also mean the blessee having to engage in sexually risky behaviours which are usually one of the conditions in the relationship.

4.4.1.1 Health risks through the lens of structural agency

In South Africa, health risks are part of the issues or constraints that women are susceptible to. These health risks can include sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and mental health risks. However, mental health risks are not given as much attention as physical health risks. According to Oram *et al.* (2017: 161), symptoms of depression, PTSD and psychological distress suggest that the BBP can be traumatic for the blessee due to the abuse she suffers in the relationship. STDs and infections include HIV/AIDs which blessees are more prone to. This disease has created a structure that constrains women's agency. Mavhandu-Mudzusi (2019: 259) identified intergenerational sex as disassortative sex. This is considered a disassortative sexual relationship because young people

who have had less sexual exposure are sexually connected with adults whose HIV infection rates are likely to be higher.

The above claim is indicative of how blessees are vulnerable to HIV because they are involved with more experienced men that are usually considered to have multiple partners. The blessers in this case are considered as high risk. According to Table 0.1 below, less than 10 percent of the students in a survey at a South African university disagreed that sugar daddies spread HIV while over 30 percent of the students agreed that sugar daddies spread HIV. This perception of HIV spread among sugar daddies also applies to the BBP since it was indicated in Chapter two that the BBP is related to the sugar daddy phenomenon.

<i>Sugar daddies give you HIV</i>		
	Frequency	Percent
Not sure	242	53.80
Strongly Disagree	11	02.40
Disagree	39	08.70
Agree	97	21.50
Strongly Agree	61	13.60

Table 0.1: Sugar daddies give you HIV

Source: Gobind and Du Plessis (2015: 6724)

This means that the free-will of an agent (blessee) is premised on HIV/AIDS, which means that one has created a structure that requires the constant use of ARV medication. This does not imply that the blesser does not experience the same consequences of contracting HIV but as has been noted, this research was focused on the blessee. This outcome produces consequences that shorten the blessees' life spans and decrease their health quality thus leading to more problems. According to Harling *et al.* (2014: 451), in transactional relationships the male dominance is evident and the chances of not using condoms during sex are increased such that blessers are at a heightened risk of spreading or even contracting STDs. The possibility of blessees disagreeing with not using a condom during sex is minimal to none since the power dynamics within this transactional relationship play a huge role in the BBP and they are often in the favour of the blesser. This further

highlights the limitation or removal of the agency of the blessee within the BBP which, as a consequence, also results in their abuse.

4.4.1.2 GBV through the lens of structural agency

Another important issue that comes to the fore when BBP is viewed through the lens of structural agency is that GBV is a long-standing structure that has impeded women's agency and is a result of gender inequality. GBV is a form of disempowerment that highlights how women are considered to be inferior to men in most communities around the world (Mazvariwofa, 2014). Being young and dating an older man is already a disadvantage, especially if the older man has negative intentions for the younger party (Beauclairl and Delva, 2013: 6). This increases the susceptibility of women in terms of playing into the gender inequality structure which often leads to abuse. It does not imply that men do not experience abuse but statistically women are more prone to be victims (Jewkes *et al.*, 2010: 44). The BBP is a relationship that comprises these power inequalities – the blessers hold the power within the relationship because they have the resources that blessees want and sometimes need. The vulnerability of women being economically dependent on men is the main push factor of GBV (Mngomezulu, 2019; Moagi, 2019).

For women who are financially dependent on their male partners, leaving their abusive partners is usually not an option (Jewkes, 2002). This reaffirms the idea that there is a visible connection between poverty and GBV. To substantiate this, research has shown that economically independent women are educated and less likely to be abused (Mngomezulu, 2019; Moagi, 2019). These women are often confident about leaving abusive relationships and letting the specific authorities know of such abuse. GBV is a serious threat to young women involved in the BBP since their agency is shaped according to what the blesser wants. Abuse on its own is an unethical component within the BBP that further impedes the agency of the blessee and stresses how much the blessee lacks freedom within the relationship. The GBV embedded in the BBP can be very potent and can sometimes lead to death. This is supposed to be a deterrent for most young women. However, it does not deter the blessee from looking at this from a positive perspective by assessing the positive outcomes.

4.4.2 Agency influencing intended positive outcomes

The intention of the blessee when choosing to be part of the BBP is to gain financial relief for their basic needs and sometimes wants. These intended outcomes may entail the ability of agents to alter structural circumstances through an active process of strategic learning (Connor, 2009: 5). This means that blessees are capable individuals that can reformulate their identities and interests making them competent to do a strategic calculation of their current standing. The BBP is considered a safer transactional relationship compared to sex work (Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2019: 260) although the sense of ownership is more significant in BBP than in prostitution.

The outcomes are ones that motivate free will and rationality which can be considered to yield moral agency since they improve the lives of the blessees and limit the hold structures have on their agency. Education is considered one of the main outcomes that create emancipation for the blessees.

4.4.2.1 Creating a structure of formal education

Education creates opportunities where one can grow and a new structure where one can expand their agency. Furthermore, formal education can expand a person's ability to act (DeCapua, 2016: 230). Formal education, therefore, provides for the possibility of entering a profession or starting a business thus creating a way to sustain the blessee's livelihood. In the past, attaining formal education meant financial freedom for most people but, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the structure of unemployment has become a hindrance these days (Cloete, 2015: 517). Human agency is about the intentions and motivations of an individual from a moral perspective. This perspective highlights the positive attributes of the BBP as it provides the chance of getting a formal education that could better an individual's life (in this case the blessee). Although formal education is an outcome of the BBP, the reasons for becoming a blessee include poverty, unemployment and gender inequality which do not emphasise freedom. In the modern world, importance is placed on a sustainable livelihood which involves resources and financial emancipation.

4.4.2.2 Creating a structure of financial and resource emancipation

Financial and resource emancipation creates an opportunity for the blessee to get out of the structure of poverty that impedes her agency in making decisions. This begs the question of morality and how this can strain the agency of an individual. Thus, morality cannot be perceived from a narrow perspective as agency is flexible depending on the structure. Some blessees have the agency to build a life for themselves and sustain themselves in terms of attaining material gifts such as businesses, houses, cars and expensive clothes (Varjavandi, 2017: 89). They intend to create a better future for themselves and their family and, as a consequence, attain financial freedom in the process. The wealthier you become the more attention you receive on social media resulting in others wanting to be like you and to know how you made it to where you are. This is what influences most young women to be part of the BBP.

4.4.2.3 Being the influencer of your own structure

Being an influencer (or popular) means that in most cases one has multiple followers on social media and everything one does is generally put on a pedestal. The influencer creates their own structure but this can be obstructed by peer pressure which comes about due to the desire to be like other peers whom they feel have better social and economic standing. The reasons for becoming a blessee in the BBP are structures that ultimately derive negative and/or positive outcomes (considered as structures that are reproduced through human agency). The moral effect of this structure is impeded by a collective of people who expects influencers to live according to certain expectations which, in turn, have an impact on their agency. When the influencers do not meet these expectations, they put much pressure on themselves to do so. This is an example of structural agency within the BBP.

4.5 Conclusion

The structures are the reasons why blessees partake in the BBP. When they constrain their freedom, the blessee cannot have agency as her freedom is constrained by structures. Furthermore, the outcomes that are a result of the BBP are established as ones that can either emancipate or constrain the blessees. The blessees' emancipation would be access to formal education which opens multiple doors to employment or even creating business opportunities. The blessees' emancipation could also mean attaining financial freedom coupled with material freedom which includes assets

that yield agency on the blessee. Emancipation further means the blessee having the freedom to create their own structure that influences other agents. The outcomes, however, also yield constraints that create a structure that can limit the agency of the blessee, something considered unethical. While the BBP can create momentary emancipation, the question is whether it is worth the cost. These costs or constraints can include the contraction of health risks that shorten the lifespan of the blessees and at the same time limits their freedom. These limitations also include GBV which entails abuse and the death of women in South Africa and which further limit the autonomy of the blessee.

The BBP is a relationship in which there are power dynamics. The relationship itself is not immoral, it is what happens within the BBP that derives consequences. It is the agent that carries out immoral acts which do not promote happiness at certain points in the relationship. In conclusion, the agency of the blessee within the BBP relationship is either minimal or non-existent. Besides looking at the reasons for the blessees' decision to become part of the BBP, the main aim of this research was to analyse the outcomes within the BBP and how they impact the agency of the blessee. Thus, for morality to exist, agency needs to be recognised within an individual that has autonomy.

This chapter examined the structures that influence the agency of the blessee and the outcomes this agency produces. Furthermore, it illustrated that the decisions of the blessee are based on structure hence creating structural agency for the blessee within the BBP. The chapter concludes that there is limited freedom of action for the blessee thus limiting their moral accountability for their actions.

Chapter five will provide an overview of the study through chapter summaries, including the study's limitations and recommendations.

Chapter five: Conclusion

“Economic growth can promote the exercise of women’s agency by removing financial constraints, by increasing women’s economic opportunities and autonomous income, and by expanding services and infrastructure. But its overall impact hinges on women’s greater access to their own incomes and economic opportunities” (World Development Report, 2012: 152).

5.1 Introduction

The above quotation highlights the importance of removing financial constraints for women not having to find alternative means of survival such as the BBP to make up for their economic struggles and ambitions. The quotation further highlights the autonomy of women to actively use their agency by having economic freedom and an income. Without these, their freedom is threatened which, in turn, threatens their agency.

The previous chapter dwelt on how structures influence our perception of the world and consequently our individual agency within the Structure and Agency theory. The chapter started with understanding why the blessee resorts to the BBP by understanding the agency of the blessee. The chapter then outlined the outcomes of the BBP and how these outcomes influence the blessee’s agency. These outcomes were either negative or positive. It is evident that agents are born into structures that might limit their agency but this does not mean that their agency does not exist. It is the power and access to resources that yield the agency inequalities that are visible within the BBP.

The altering of the social structure causes a constant need for people to find alternative ways of maintaining a livelihood for their everyday survival. Hence, there is a consistent need for changing methods of survival which are caused by societal struggles such as unemployment, peer pressure, poverty and gender inequality. Improvising becomes a key way to overcome the existential reality in which the people exist. Thus, the responsibility of moral agents is to hold and understand accountability for reasoning from which their actions flow and keeping in mind why they stray from the standard norms is important. In simple terms, it is not easy to understand the morality of

an action, but one cannot simply judge based on the notion that it has strayed from what is perceived as normal. According to Connor (2011), individuals have the capacity to judge whether normative standards in accordance with their social and cultural order can limit their needs with good reason. This is also substantiated by Immanuel Kant where he premised human action on freedom and rationality as an ethical view of human agency (Hyman and Steward, 2004: 139).

This chapter will conclude this research by providing chapter summaries. This will be done to highlight the reasons for each chapter and to give an overview of each. Chapter one, being the introduction to the study, gave an overview of what the study comprised. It also provided a brief summary of each of the chapters of the dissertation. Chapter two assessed the existing literature on the BBP to gain an understanding of what the BBP is and what it entails. The literature review revealed the gap addressed by the study. In Chapter three, an appraisal of the Structure and Agency theory was conducted. A brief background on the origin of the Structure and Agency theory was given. It was shown that the theory is built up of multiple theories. It further went into a detailed understanding of what the Structure and Agency theory entails and highlighted the power relations within the theory. It concluded by demonstrating the relevance of the theory within the BBP and how the theory guided the attainment of the structural agency of the blessee in the BBP. The fourth chapter analysed the BBP through the lens of structure and agency. The final chapter concludes the study and specifies the study's limitations. It also provides recommendations emerging from the findings of the study.

5.2 Chapter summaries

Chapter one: Introduction

This chapter introduced what the BBP is and where the phenomenon originated. It was said that the BBP has been popularised by social media. Chapter one provided an overview of what the study entailed. It included the research questions and objectives of the study. The objectives, which were in response to the main research objective and which answered the main research question, were as follows:

- To define the BBP in South Africa.
- To elucidate and differentiate between the BBP and the idea of a conventional relationship.
- To investigate the factors that lead to the BBP in South Africa.

- To explore the ethical impact of the phenomenon on the blessee.

The objectives were realised throughout the research in the different chapters. Chapter one also stated that the methodology for the research was a desktop study. A desktop study means an analysis of secondary data which includes newspaper articles, TV shows, social media, academic articles, and books. A desktop study also means analysing data that already exists using a theoretical framework to understand a phenomenon. The theoretical framework used in this research was the Structure and Agency theory. Structure was used to understand the social institutions and structures that already exist and their effect on the individual agency of an agent, which in this case was the blessee. This led to an explanation of the concept of structural agency. The chapter outlined the limitations of the study, namely, time and limited information. However, these limitations did not impede the overall goal of the research.

Chapter two: Literature review

In this chapter the first three objectives were answered which include defining, understanding, differentiating and investigating the BBP. The literature review started by defining the concepts within and related to the BBP to give an overall understanding of the study. This breakdown included defining the concepts of blesser and blessee. It was mentioned that the blesser could be either a female or male. Although not part of the main research question, this was mentioned for the sake of clarity and informed research. Furthermore, the chapter described the nature of the relationship between the blesser and blessee within the BBP. The description also included the phenomena that are confused with the BBP (the second objective of the study) such as conventional relationships and prostitution. Prostitution was described as transactional sex but not a transactional relationship as with the BBP. Conventional relationships are relationships that do not need transactions as a condition for the relationship to exist. Although related, conventional relationships and prostitution were both shown to be different from the BBP. The reasons why blessees choose to have relationships with blessers were highlighted. These reasons varied depending on the blessee and were the third objective of this research. The reasons included gender inequality, poverty, unemployment and peer pressure. They were further defined as structures that influence the decisions of the blessees and their relation to the BBP was further explained. The decision to partake in the BBP has outcomes that can be negative and/or positive. The negative

outcomes were identified as health risks and GBV. The positive outcomes included formal education, financial gain and popularity. Some of these outcomes were in line with the MDGs while others were contrary to them. Although the BBP can momentarily reduce poverty there is an increase in gender inequality.

Chapter three: Theoretical framework of 'Structure and Agency'

The theoretical framework of this research was based on structure and agency hence yielding the concept of structural agency. A brief background was given to highlight the development of the theory. This was done to underline that the Structure and Agency theory is a product of multiple theories. These theories include functionalism, Marxism, interactionism, ethnomethodology, structuralism, the sociology of knowledge, and structuration. These theories have been part of the construction of the Structure and Agency theory and provide a broad understanding of the theory. The chapter further highlighted how structure and agency can be defined and seen as separate theories. Structure is critiqued for being incomplete without agency while agency is also criticised for being incomplete without structure. This, therefore, calls for both structure and agency to make a complete theory. The chapter defined the Structure and Agency theory and outlined the arguments against it. The chapter highlighted how the concept of power is important when addressing the agency of a being thus indicating the relevance of the theory for this research. The idea that a person cannot be understood when their structure and agency are looked at separately led to the concept of structural agency.

Chapter four: Analysing how structure affects the blessee's agency

The fourth and main research objective was attained in this chapter by exploring the effect of the BBP on the blessee. This chapter critically analysed the information obtained on the BBP by assessing the structure or reasons for the blessee's participation in the relationship. This led to the further appraisal of the agency of the blessee within the BBP. Using the Structure and Agency theory as a guide, how the challenges of gender inequality, poverty, unemployment and peer pressure influence the autonomy of the blessees were analysed. The chapter emphasised how people conform to different types of lifestyles due to the structures in which they exist. Thus, the decisions that the blessee makes are based on the structures in which she exists. The outcomes for the blessee are considered both negative and positive, which indicate the extent of their freedom

and the limitation of their autonomy. The morality of an agent is based on the freedom and rationality for their action to be justified as autonomous. The negative outcomes of the blessee within BBP include health risks and GBV. On the other hand, the positive outcomes include material gains, formal education and becoming an influencer. The concept of structure and agency within the BBP together is considered the structural agency of the blessee. Thus, the main aim of the research was to examine the structures surrounding the blessee and how these structures influence her agency in the BBP. The structural agency of the blessees is considered morally compromised due to the structures they find themselves entangled in and which are referred to as reasons and outcomes in the study.

Chapter five: Conclusion

This chapter is an overall summary of the study and includes a summary of all five chapters. There were some limitations the study encountered. These included time constraints and the use of secondary research materials. The research identified structures that had an impact on the overall objectives of the research and outlined various recommendations. The structures and recommendations included gender equality, unemployment, poverty, formal education, health risks and peer pressure. These structures provide an idea of what is currently happening concerning the BBP. The chapter ends with suggestions for further research and some concluding comments.

5.3 Limitations of the study

Conducting a desktop study instead of an empirical study was a limitation. A desktop study uses secondary information to attain the objectives of the research that is undertaken. First-hand information directly from individuals engaged in the BBP would have added deeper insight and enriched the study. However, the time limitations faced by the researcher made it unfeasible to have included interviews. Furthermore, including interviews would have meant acquiring ethical approval which would have taken a lot of time given the sensitivity of the issues at stake. Financial assistance for an empirical study to be conducted would also have been needed. However, despite these constraints, they did not affect the study from reaching its objectives in any significant way.

5.4 Identified structures and recommendations

5.4.1 Gender equality

Gender inequality has created a yawning gap between men and women. Gender inequality stems from institutions such as culture and religion (Mishra and Tripathi, 2011: 59). It creates a pattern of social structure in which social and economic inequalities lead men to have sexual exchanges with young women.

The South African Anti-blesser Campaign (SAAC) was put in place by the Health Minister, Aaron Motsoaledi, in 2016. The campaign was created to keep girls in schools and deter them from blessters. International donors and governments have given to this cause to help the Department of Health in their goal to decrease social inequalities such as sexual exploitation. According to social media, the progress of this campaign has not been given much attention. The campaign has a social media presence of fewer than 50 followers. Yet, the ‘BlesserFinder’ which promotes the BBP has more than 90 thousand followers on their Facebook platform – far more followers than that of the SAAC. This is an indication of the lack of interest in helping to alleviate the challenges of the BBP.

Thus, it is important to empower girls and women from a young age by educating them to be independent. This would mean providing educational incentives for girls and women. Positive parenting, which is getting parents involved in their children’s lives, must also be encouraged. These interventions will help reduce age-disparate relationships and GBV. GBV is a worldwide issue that has multiple causes and is not limited to the BBP. Another recommendation would include a campaign that helps promote gender equality such as the ‘Men and Boys for Gender Equality’. This campaign would be aimed at engaging men and boys in helping to reduce gender inequalities, preventing the spread of HIV, eradicating GBV, and promoting the health of women, children and men. The perpetrators of gender inequality need to be involved in advocating for equality and how to treat women as equals.

Another issue is that one cannot force women not to choose the BBP as an economic strategy because of the structures of unemployment and poverty.

5.4.2 Unemployment and poverty

Unemployment and poverty contribute to the BBP in that the blessees use the BBP as a source of economic relief. Unemployment is an issue as it causes poverty as described by Fourie's bi-directional causality. Advocating against poverty is in line with the MDGs which emphasise the eradication of poverty. The eradication of poverty is a crucial requirement for sustainable development which is needed to decrease the probability of more young women joining the BBP. While formal education has made a difference, it does not solve the issue of unemployment. In a country such as South Africa being educated does not guarantee employment. However, formal education is one of the tools that help decrease poverty.

It is thus recommended that more job opportunities are created and more young adults motivated to involve themselves in entrepreneurial activities that create employment. There is also a need to establish mechanisms that would fund young women and offer financial education and mentorship programmes. This would result in strong relationships between the mentor and the mentee thus assisting in the formation of business and career networks. Avenues for women to gain work experience so that they have a better chance of getting jobs need to be developed. Young women should also be involved in the creation of female-led start-ups. Sponsorships need to be considered as well as the incentive of tax waivers from the government. Finally, young women should be taught to be business owners and to create their own development opportunities.

5.4.3 Issues of formal education

Research has indicated how uneducated women are vulnerable to transactional relationships. This is because most young women in vulnerable situations face socio-economic challenges and poverty. Being uneducated increases the chances of the young women being unemployed and even when employed they are in low-level and low-paying jobs (Bindela, 2018: 82). In order to even the odds' for less privileged young women, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and other bursaries have been put in place to ensure that everyone has a chance to study at a tertiary level. This helps in decreasing the number of students who want to date for money because their basic needs are not being met.

The recommendation is to include career campaigns that educate young women on the career opportunities available to them because most young women are exposed to a limited number of careers. Ambition in young women starting at a primary school level needs to be encouraged and special presentations on different qualifications achieved by women provided.

5.4.4 Health risks

The BBP leads to sexual risks thus, it is important to cultivate health and risk awareness campaigns directed at young adults. These campaigns should include teaching the need to increase the use of condoms to reduce health risks. This does not imply that there are no campaigns in existence. For example, there was the ‘2019 World Aids Day’ campaign that targeted vulnerable groups in high-risk areas such as those with a high HIV prevalence, the LGBTI community, youth, orphans, young women, and high-risk men. As emphasised, the BBP attracts young women, entangling them in health risks such as HIV. These campaigns should include understanding HIV and the medication needed for it such as PREP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) and PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis), which are methods to avoid HIV through anti-retroviral drugs.

The recommendation is that for information to be communicated and understood, there should be door-to-door education, health screening and condom distribution in communities. Young women should be educated about sexual risks through communication and the distribution of materials on health care. These health risks could also include sexual risks and mental health issues caused by the BBP. This means including social science and healthcare to come up with solutions.

5.4.5 Peer pressure

Involvement in social media produces peer pressure. Peer pressure is one of the main influencers of the blessee. The BBP sustains and increases intergenerational relationships, HIV infections, infidelity, and the division of moral values. This is due to the instigation of platforms like Facebook pages such as the aforementioned ‘BlessersFinder’. As its name suggests, the blessees follow the page to find blessers, clearly specifying that they want older men with money. The ‘BlessersFinder’ page has received many criticisms from people having moral issues with the page and the BBP. The page responded with the hashtag ‘morals must fall’ (#MoralsMustFall) as a slogan to defend itself.

The recommendation is that committees such as the Student Support Services (SSS) must empower young women and build their self-esteem to the extent that they do not consider blessers as an option. This would encourage healthy lifestyle decisions. Programmes such as the 'Zazi' (Know yourself) campaign need to be developed. This programme encouraged young women and girls to overcome adversity through understanding their value and strength. The 'Zazi' campaign took place on the Westville campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. It advocated for young women to be self-reliant and taught them that they are responsible for their actions. It further highlighted the need for good mental health that advocates for strength, identity and strong potentials in young women. Without such campaigns, young women are susceptible to the BBP.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

- Dialogues with the blessees to address the BBP. These would include having interviews and focus group discussions with blessees from different spatial areas for different perspectives.
- The role of consumerist culture/materialism/capitalism and how it impacts the BBP
- Masculinities in the BBP.
- Why the blesser-blessee relationship is not subject to legal restrictions/penalties.

5.6 Conclusion

The ability to occupy the empty places in structures provides agents with the additional capacity to transform society (Musolf, 2003: 14) if the occupation of these positions is seen as a means rather than an end. This simply means that the BBP occupied a space in a structure that transformed phenomena that already existed such as prostitution and conventional relationships. The driver of this issue is not only economic but also social which makes it an agential issue. Thus, the question is not whether one exhibits agency but at what level and to what end. This does not automatically mean that everyone in the same structure is doomed with the same results because rationality and freedom exist.

This chapter began with an overview of the previous chapter and this was followed by an introduction to the chapter. It provided a summary of chapters one to five and highlighted the

objectives of the study as well as its limitations. The study identified the structures and provided recommendations stemming from these. These structures (and their recommendations) were gender equality, unemployment, poverty, formal education, health risks and peer pressure. The chapter ended with suggestions for further research and a conclusion.

To conclude: agency that has rationality and freedom is one that lacks morality. Hence, the freedom of a moral agent is important as it helps agents to be morally accountable for their actions. Therefore, according to the structural agency within the BBP, the agency of the blessee is minimal to non-existent.

References

- Anson, C. M., Schwegler, R. A., and Muth, M.F. 2000. *The Longman writer's companion*. New York: Longman.
- Aksan, N., Kısac, B., Aydın, M. and Demirbukan, S. 2009. Symbolic interaction theory. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 1(1), 902-904.
- Arab, R. 2016. A review of agency and structure: Where does Rorty's Ironist stand? *European Scientific Journal*, 12(8).
- Archer, M. 2000. *Being human: The problems of agency*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Archer, M. 1982. Morphogenesis versus structuration: On combining structure and action. *British Journal of Sociology* 33 (4), 455-483.
- Athens, L., 2007. Radical interactionism: Going beyond mead. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 37(2), 137-165.
- Beauchair, R. and Delva, W. 2013. Is younger really safer? A qualitative study of perceived risks and benefits of age-disparate relationships among women in Cape Town, South Africa. *PLoS One*, 8(11), 1-8.
- Bhana, D. 2015. Sex, gender and money in African teenage conceptions of love in HIV contexts. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 18(1), 1-15.
- Boghossian, P. 2001. What is social construction? *PhilPapers*. 1-12. Accessed from: <https://philpapers.org/rec/BOGWIS> Date: 20 June 2019
- Blignaut and Dlwati, 2017. My rapist is now a Deputy Minister. *City Press*. Accessed from: <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/my-rapist-is-now-a-deputy-minister-20171210-2>. Date: 15 September 2018.
- Bloom, S. L. 2008. "Domestic violence". *Encyclopedia of Gender and Society*. SAGE. Available from: http://www.sage-ereference.com/gender/Article_n121.html Date: 20 June 2019.

- Boughey, C. 2013. The significance of structure, culture and agency in efforts to support and develop student learning at South African universities. *Access and Success in Higher Education*. Pearson Educational. 2-25.
- Butler, A. 2017. *Contemporary South Africa*. Macmillan International Higher Education. South Africa.
- Chabalala, J. 2016. 'Bad blesser' jailed for killing girlfriend. *News24* Accessed from: <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/bad-blesser-jailed-for-killing-girlfriend-20160914> Date: 15 September 2018.
- Chen, J. 2020. What is influencer marketing: How to develop your strategy? Sprout Social. Adapted from source: <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/influencer-marketing/> Date: 16 March 2020.
- Cherkowski, S., Walker, K.D. and Kutsyuruba, B. 2015. Principals' moral agency and ethical decision-making: Toward a transformational ethics. *International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership*, 10(5), 5.
- Cohen, I.J. 1989. *Structuration theory: Anthony Giddens and the constitution of social life*. MacMillan International Higher Education.
- Connor, S. 2011. Structure and agency: a debate for community development? *Community Development Journal*, 46(suppl. 2), 97-110.
- Cornelissen, S. 2017. *The global tourism system: Governance, development and lessons from South Africa*. Routledge. Retrieved from: <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/poverty.html> Date: 27 April 2018
- Cloete, A., 2015. Youth unemployment in South Africa. A theological reflection through the lens of human dignity. *Missionalia*, 43(3), pp.513-525.
- Crombie, D. 1996. A structuration theory of organization. *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences*, 16(19), 197-211.

- Cummiskey, D. 1996. *Kantian consequentialism*. London: Oxford University Press.
- DeCapua, A. 2016. Reaching students with limited or interrupted formal education through culturally responsive teaching. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 10(5), 225-237.
- Department of Basic Education. Annual Report 2012/2013. Vote: 15 Republic of South Africa. 30 September 2013. Accessed from: <https://www.education.gov.za/researchreports.aspx>
Date: 20 August 2020. ISBN: 978-1-4315-1858-6
- Dépelteau, F. 2008. Relational thinking: A critique of co-deterministic theories of structure and agency. *Sociological Theory*, 26(1), 51-73.
- Dornan, J. 2002. Agency and archaeology: Past, present, and future directions. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, 9(4), 303-329.
- Dr Muhangwi Ben Mulaudzi (MBChB) SA HIV Clinician Society 02 February 2017, Glenhove Conference Centre. Date retrieved: 16 July 2019.
- Elbasha, T. and Wright, A. 2017. Reconciling structure and agency in strategy-as-practice research: Towards a strong-structuration theory approach. *Management*, 20(2), 107-128.
- Fehling, M., Nelson, B.D. and Venkatapuram, S. 2013. Limitations of the Millennium Development Goals: a literature review. *Global Public Health*, 8(10), 1109-1122
- Frohlich, K.L. and Potvin, L. 2010. Commentary: structure or agency? The importance of both for addressing social inequalities in health. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 39(2), 378-379.
- Gablin, A. 2014. An introduction to social construction. *Social Research Reports*, 26, 82-92.
- Gashi, L. 2017. Social media influencers - why we cannot ignore them. An exploratory study about how consumers perceive the influence of social media influencers during the different stages of the purchase decision process. Bachelor Thesis.

- Garsd, J. and Crossan, A. 2017. What it means in South Africa when you are #blessed. *Across Women's Lives*. PRI's the world. Accessed from: <https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-08-10/what-it-means-south-africa-when-you-are-blessed> Date: 22 August 2018.
- Geldenhuys, K. 2016. #Blessed-By whom? *Servamus Community-based Safety and Security Magazine*, 109(11), 10-14. Accessed from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s35658-016-0032-8> Date: 17 September 2019.
- Georganas, S., Tonin, M. and Vlassopoulos, M. 2015. Peer pressure and productivity: The role of observing and being observed. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 117, 223-232.
- Giddens, A. 1992. *The transformation of intimacy: sexuality, love and eroticism in modern societies*. Cambridge, Polity. 3-78.
- Giddens, A. 2001. *Sociology: Introductory readings*. Revised edition. Chapter 21: Theoretical thinking in sociology. 666-672.
- Gobind, J. and Du Plessis, G. 2015. Sugar daddy: the student attraction. *Gender and Behaviour*, 13(2), 6720-6729.
- Harling, G., Newell, M.L., Tanser, F., Kawachi, I., Subramanian, S.V. and Bärnighausen, T. 2014. Do age-disparate relationships drive HIV incidence in young women? Evidence from a population cohort in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes* (1999), 66(4), 443-460.
- Hay, C. and Wincott, D. 1998. Structure, agency and historical institutionalism. *Political Studies*, 46(5), 951-957.
- Hoss, J. and Blokland, L. M. E. 2018. Sugar daddies and blesser: A contextual study of transactional sexual interactions among young girls and older men. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 28(5), 306-317.

- Hunter, M. 2004. Masculinities, multiple-sexual-partners, and AIDS: the making and unmaking of Isoka in KwaZulu-Natal. *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, 54(1), 123-153.
- Jamieson, L. 1999. Intimacy transformed? A critical look at the pure relationship. *Sociology*. 33(3), 477- 494.
- Jewkes, R., Dunkle, K., Nduna, M. and Jama Shai, N. 2010. Intimate partner violence, relationship power inequity, and incidence of HIV infection in young women in South Africa: A cohort study. *Lancet*, 376(9734), 41-48.
- Jewkes, R., Watts, C., Abrahams, N., Penn-Kekana, L. and Garcia-Moreno, C. 2000. Ethical and methodological issues in conducting research on gender-based violence in Southern Africa. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 5(15), 93-103.
- Jewkes, R., Flood, M. and Lang, J. 2015. From work with men and boys to changes of social norms and reduction of inequities in gender relations: A conceptual shift in prevention of violence against women and girls. *Lancet*, 385(9977), 1580-1589.
- Johnston, T. 2016. Synthesizing structure and agency: A developmental framework of Bourdieu's constructivist structuralism theory. *Journal of Theoretical & Philosophical Criminology*, 8(1), 1.
- Jones, M.R. and Karsten, H. 2008. Giddens's structuration theory and information systems research. *MIS Quarterly*, 32(1), 127-157.
- Kaijanto, R., 2018. *Peer influence in social media*.
- Karp, I. and Masolo D. A. 2000. *African philosophy as a cultural Inquiry*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Kekana, C. 2017. #BlessersMustFall: Actress launches anti-blesser talks for young girls. *Sowetan Live*. Accessed from: <https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/good-life/2017-05-02-blessersmustfall>. Date: 21 June 2019

- Kieslinger, B. 2015. Academic peer pressure in social media: Experiences from the heavy, the targeted and the restricted user. *First Monday*.
- Kratz, C. A. 2000. Chapter six: Forging unions and negotiating ambivalence: Personhood and complex agency in Okiek marriage arrangement. 136-171.
- King, A. 2010. The deep questions: structure/agency, micro/macro and time/space. *Historical Developments and Theoretical Approaches in Sociology*, 1(1), 65.
- Kort, W. and Gharbi, J.E. 2013. Structuration theory amid negative and positive criticism. *International Journal of Business and Social Research*, 3(5), 92-104.
- Kruger, 2016. How the blessing system works. *Graphic24*. Available at: <http://cdn.24.co.za/files/Cms/General/d/4310/9a514c347c4e4bbebce210204715bbb3.jpg>
Date: 26 June 2019.
- Laurie, G. 2010. What does “Blessed” mean? Accessed from: <https://www.christianity.com/jesus/life-of-jesus/teaching-and-messages/what-does-blessed-mean.html> Date: 15 September 2018.
- Lamsal, M. 2012. The structuration approach of Anthony Giddens. *Himalayan Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 5, 111-122.
- Lash, S. and Urry, J. 1984. The new Marxism of collective action: a critical analysis. *Sociology*, 18(1), 33-50.
- Lee, R. and Jones, O. 2015. Entrepreneurial social capital research: resolving the structure and agency dualism. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 21(3), 338-363.
- Linstead, S. 2006. Ethnomethodology and sociology: An introduction. *Sociological Review*, 54(3), 399-404.

- Mangena, T. and Ndlovu, S. 2013. Implications and complications of bride price payment among the Shona and Ndebele of Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 3(2), 472-481.
- Masenya, M. 2017 Reading proverbs 7 in the context of female blessers and sugar mamas in South Africa. *Scriptura*, 116(2), 120-132.
- Marx, M.H. 2010. Systems and theories. *Corsini Encyclopedia of Psychology*, 1-2.
- Mahar, C., Harker, R. and Wilkes, C. 1990. The basic theoretical position. In *An introduction to the work of Pierre Bourdieu* (pp. 1-25). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Macintyre, A. 1999. Social structures and their threats to moral agency. *Philosophy*, 74(3), 311-329.
- Mampane, J.N. 2018. Exploring the “Blessers and Blessee” phenomenon: young women, transactional sex, and HIV in rural South Africa. *Sage Open*, 8(4), 2158244018806343.
- Mavhandu-Mudzusi, A.H. 2019. Are “Blessers” a refuge for refugee girls in Tshwane, the capital city of South Africa? A phenomenographic study. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 20(2), 257-270.
- Mazvarirwofa, K. 2014. Having a sugar daddy is not prostituting, say sugar babies at Wits. *Wits Vuvuzela*. A publication of WITS Journalism. Retrieved from <http://witsvuvuzela.com/2014/05/09/having-a-sugar-daddy-is-not-prostitutingsay-sugar-babies-at-wits/> Date: 29 April 2018
- McAnulla, S. 2002. Structure and agency. *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, 2, 271-291.
- Mishra, N.K. and Tripathi, T. 2011. Conceptualising women’s agency, autonomy and empowerment. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 58-65.
- Mielnik, K. 2017. God as a source of the power of blessing. The biblical bases and meaning in priesthood’s ministry. *Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej*, 16, 19-35.

- Millennium Development Goals: Country report 2015. Statistics South Africa. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa, 2015, 3-13.
- Moagi, C. 2017. We won't forget. *Daily Sun*. Accessed from: <https://www.mysubs.co.za/pdf/897540/true?hash=I9Kf4WghkiL9d0bg-jcs8NEY7uFMxQ2Kcv7OjW1qXt41> Date: 15 September 2018.
- Morgan, S. 2009. Can there be a Kantian consequentialism? *Ratio*, 22(1),19-40.
- Mngomezulu, N. 2016. The blessee and the damned. *The Journalist*. 27 June. Accessed from: www.thejournalist.org.za/spotlight/the-blessee-and-the-damned/ Date: 13 November 2019.
- The Citizen*. 2019. (The big debate, 17 March) Kaunda Selisho. Merkin's essay. Retrieved from: <https://sites.tufts.edu/alquestaeng2spring2018/response-posts/response-7/> Date: 21 April 2020.
- Musolf, G.R. 2003. Social structure, human agency, and social policy. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*.
- Naidoo, P. 1989. The implication of the structuration theory for education. (M.Ed. Dissertation). Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Ndlovu, S. 2005. Identities under threat: A study of experiences of adult homelessness (Doctoral Thesis). Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Nkohla-Ramunenyiwa, T. 2017. Virtual ontology, moral responsibility and agency: The ethical implications of mobile communication technology use on parenting style in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. (Doctoral Thesis). Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- LEGIT, 2018. What is the "slay queen" meaning? Accessed from: <https://www.legit.ng/1141152-what-slay-queen-meaning.html> Date: 18 August 2019.

- Luck, M. and d'Inverno, M. 1995. A formal framework for agency and autonomy. *ICMAS*, 95, 254-260.
- One Day Leader. 2016. Episode 6, Blesser culture. Accessed from: <http://youtu.be/JLRHv3Lp3I>
Date: 20 June 2017.
- Ontiza-Ospina, E. and Roser, M. 2018. Economic by gender. Accessed from: <https://ourworldindata.org/economic-inequality-by-gender> Date: 28 September 2019.
- Phamotse, J. 2017. *BARE (The blesser's Game: The breeding of an underdog)*. Maluleka, C. Johannesburg: Porcupine Press, 13-281.
- Pham, L.T.M. 2019. Qualitative approach to research. A review of the advantages and disadvantages of three paradigms: positivism, interpretivism and critical inquiry. University of Adelaide.
- Parthemore, J. and Whitby, B. 2013. What makes an agent a moral agent? Reflections on machine consciousness and moral agency. *International Journal of Machine Consciousness*, 5(02), 105-129.
- Risner, V. R. 2016. What does it really mean to be #Blessed? Accessed from: <https://www.christianity.com/jesus/life-of-jesus/teaching-and-messages/what-does-blessed-mean.html> Date: 15 September 2018.
- Ritzer, G. 2012. *Sociological theory*. 8th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Sandholtz, W. and Sweet, A.S. 2012. Neo-functionalism and supranational governance. *The Oxford Handbook of the European Union*. 18, 33.
- Sachs, J., McArthur, J.W., Schmidt-Traub, G., Kruk, M., Bahadur, C., Faye, M. and McCord, G. 2004. Ending Africa's poverty trap. *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, 1, 117-240.
- Schlosser, M. 2019. Agency. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Editor: Zalta N. E. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.

- Seekings, J. 2011. State-business relations and pro-poor growth in South Africa. *Journal of International Development*, 23(3), 338-357.
- Sehlikoglu, S., 2018. Revisited: Muslim women's agency and feminist anthropology of the Middle East. *Contemporary Islam*, 12(1), 73-92.
- Selikow, T.A. and Mbulaheni, T. 2013. "I do love him but at the same time I can't eat love": Sugar daddy relationships for conspicuous consumption amongst urban university students in South Africa. *Agenda*, 27(2), 86-98.
- Sewell Jr., W.H. 1992. A theory of structure: Duality, agency, and transformation. *American Journal of Sociology*, 98(1), 1-29.
- Shava, G.N. and Heystek, J. 2019. Agency and structure: Principals' ability to bring about sustainable improvement in underperforming schools in South Africa. *Africa Education Review*, 16(2), 50-68.
- Shepherd, A. 2007. Understanding and explaining chronic poverty: An evolving framework for phase III of CPRC research. *Chronic Poverty Research Centre*, 80, 1-38.
- Solontsi, J. 2016. *News24*. The blesser phenomenon: Has it always been around? Accessed from: www.news24.com/mynews24/the-blesser-phenomenon. Date: 21 June 2019
- Sophie V. 2016. Blessers inside South Africa's sugar daddy culture. Accessed from: <https://www.sbs.com.au/topics/life/culture/article/2016/05/26/blessers-inside-south-africas-sugar-daddy-culture> . Date: 18 September 2019.
- Stryker, S. 2008. From Mead to structural symbolic interactionism and beyond. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 34, 15-31.
- Sugarman, J. 2005. Persons and moral agency. *Theory & Psychology*, 15(6), 793-811.
- Terreblanche, S. 2005. *A history of inequality in South Africa 1652-2002*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.

- Thobejane, T.D., Mulaudzi, T.P. and Zitha, R. 2017. Factors leading to “blesser-blessee” relationships amongst female students: the case of a rural university in Thulamela Municipality, Limpopo province, South Africa. *Gender and Behaviour*, 15(2), 8716-8731.
- Tittenbrun, J. 2017. *Concepts of capital: The commodification of social life*. Routledge.
- Tholen, G. 2015. What can research into graduate employability tell us about agency and structure? *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 36(5), 766-784.
- Urban Dictionary. 2020. Slay Queens. Accessed from: <http://www.urbandictionary.com> Date: 16 March 2020.
- Varjavandi, R. 2017. # BlessersMustFall: Youth-led participatory action research and photo story creation on teenage pregnancy, transactional sex and gender-based violence. *Agenda*, 31(2), 87-98.
- Vanden Abeele, M., Campbell, S.W., Eggermont, S. and Roe, K. 2014. Sexting, mobile porn use, and peer group dynamics: Boys’ and girls’ self-perceived popularity, need for popularity and perceived peer pressure. *Media Psychology*, 17(1), 6-33.
- Van Breda, A.D. 2016. The roles of agency and structure in facilitating the successful transition out of care and into independent living. *The Social Work Practitioner-Researcher*, 28(1), 36-52.
- Van Rooyen, M. 2013. Structure and agency in news translation: An application of Anthony Giddens’ structuration theory. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, 31(4), 495-506.
- Van Gramberg, B. 2006. The case for adaptive theory for investigation meaning in the workplace. 2-16.
- Williams, M. 2017. “Practicing” women’s agency and the struggle for transformation in South Africa. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 35(4), 525-543.

Wonci, T. 2019. South Africa has a long history of gender discrimination. Accessed from:
<https://www.iol.co.za/business-report/opinion/south-africa-has-a-long-history-of-gender-discrimination-22170778> Date: 22 September 2019.