MORE THAN CARS, CASH AND CELLPHONES

EXPLORING YOUTH PERCEPTIONS ON INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSACTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

Author: Lydia Olofsgård
Supervisor: Lisa Eklund
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis was to contribute to a more holistic understanding of how youth reason around Intergenerational Transactional Relationships (ITRs) by moving beyond the customarily analysis of youths’ motivations for the engagement. Empirical data was gained through qualitative semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with youth in Windhoek. Informants’ accounts were analyzed against an analytical framework inspired by the integrative model of behavioral prediction and the underlining concepts gender, norms and stigma. The findings suggest that youth engage in ITRs for much more than short-term material benefits, e.g. to belong in a group, improve long-term life chances and feel in control over their life situation. Youth appear to be well aware of risks related to ITRs. The analysis pointed to the importance of using the ITR concept with care since it is a socially constructed term that to youth encompasses many diverse relationships with varying traits. The wide meaning of the term furthermore causes difficulties in appreciating how accepted ITRs are, but youth suggested ITRs in general are shameful and taboo. Finally, whenever youths’ desirability to engage in ITRs is discussed, a distinction between how youth view ITRs in themselves and the life the relationships enable, is needed.

Word Count: 14 934 words.

ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
HIV Human immunodeficiency virus
ITR Intergenerational Transactional Relationship
IMBP Integrative Model of Behavioral Prediction
NGO Non-Governmental Organization
SRHR Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
UN United Nations
UNAIDS Joint United Nations Program on HIV and AIDS
UNICEF United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID United States Agency for International Development
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Almost one and a half year after my first brainstorming about this study and about 150 mind maps later I seem to be holding a thesis in my hand. My thesis! The road has sometimes taken unexpected turns and many times been bumpy and uncomfortable, but looking back I know that this winding process has taught me incredibly much, possibly more about myself and life than about field research or thesis writing. The road moreover took me to Namibia and gave me five months of fascinating experiences, a stimulating internship, beautiful views and new friends, and I am incredibly grateful for all of this.

I reached my end destination with support from a great number of people, both in Namibia and in Sweden. In Namibia, I would like to thank all UNAIDS staff who guided me through my internship and my field study, and I send a special recognition to Henk van Renterghem, Inkeri von Hase, Jacobus Witbooi and Sarita Sehgal who assisted me with contacts, showed interest for and gave advice on my field study. I also want to thank Charles Simakumba, Florence Khaxas, Hilma N Iyambo and Ivy Rutize for directing me to informants in Windhoek; without you there would have been no study. I moreover thank Gerhild Kolling at the UNICEF library for the very useful reports and documents you searched for and shared with me. Finally, to everyone participating in the study; thank you for your interest, time and thoughts. This thesis consists of your words as much as of mine.

In Sweden, my thesis supervisor Lisa Eklund provided direction when I was lost and pushed me to move on when it felt as if I could go no further. My thesis supervision group offered support, encouragement and advice when any of the bumps in the road got too big for me to pass on my own. I am incredibly grateful for all of your support.

The biggest thanks however goes to my boyfriend Vidar Bley and friends and family in Sweden and Namibia who, more or less voluntarily over phone, e-mail, skype and in person have listened to me brainstorming aloud, spitting out frustration and asking for help with formulations. I know my talk did not always make sense to you but it sure helped me to move forward with renewed energy.

This thesis belongs to all of you.

Lydia Olofsgård
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Introduction – “21 Yr Guy Lkg for Sugar Mummy”</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Aim and Research Question</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Disposition</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Background</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Overview and Historical Context</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Youth in Namibia</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 The Intricacy of Defining ITR:s</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Methodology</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Research Design</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Methodological Process</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1 Primary and Secondary Data</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2 Target Groups and Sampling Strategy</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.3 Transcribing and Analysis of Data</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Quality Assurance</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Ethical Considerations</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Theoretical Perspectives</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Literature Review – “The Why Question”</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.2 Gender Dimensions</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Theoretical Concepts</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1 Understanding Behavior</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2 Norms, Stigma and Gender</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.3 Operationalization</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Empirical Analysis – Youth Perceptions of ITR:s</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Perceived Gains</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1 “Managing Life”</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.2 Material Desires or a Sense of Belonging?</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.3 “Climbing Life”</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.4 Gendered Outcome Beliefs</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Control and Power</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Negative Outcome Beliefs</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.1 Risk Awareness</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3.2 Stigma and Shame

5.4 Acceptance

5.4.1 Gendered Acceptance

6. Discussion and Concluding Remarks

6.1 Reflections About the Belief Approach

6.2 Understanding Contradictions

6.3 Programmatic Implications

6.4 Concluding Remarks

7. References

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix A, Record of Informants and Break-down of Informant Characteristics

8.2 Appendix B, Interview and Focus Group Guide

TABLE OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1 – Disposition 4
Table 1 – Frequency of Transactional Sex 8
Figure 2 – Research Process Model 11
Figure 3 – Integrative Model of Behavioral Prediction 9
Figure 4 – Analytical Framework 24
Figure 5 – Integrated Belief Approach 38
Table 2 – Record of Informants (Appendix A) 47
Table 3 – Record of Key Informants (Appendix A) 48
Table 4 – Breakdown of Informants’ Characters (Appendix A) 48
The ads on the front page of this thesis are taken from two copies of the Namibian newspaper *the Namibian Sun*. Each day young women and men in the lonely-hearts column of this paper seek partners specifically outside their own age group, partners they themselves call “sugar daddies” and “sugar mummies”. These advertisements mirror how some young Namibians seek to engage with older partners for various benefits in so called transactional relationships. Intergenerational Transactional relationships (ITRs) occur all over the world in various shapes but have received particular attention in Sub-Saharan Africa. They might be problematic for several reasons. It has been shown that the age difference together with the transactional trait, and for young women also a gender-based hierarchy, increases the risk of a relationship with significant power imbalances and the ability for the young party to for instance negotiate safe sex or to end the relationship might be limited (Luke 2003:63; Muula 2008:426; Wyrod et al. 2011:1275). Older partners are also more likely to carry infections such as HIV than younger partners are (Wyrod et al. 2007:1275). For these reasons, ITRs are often discussed as a behavioral factor impacting the HIV epidemic in Namibia (see e.g. de la Torre et al. 2009:22-25; Quinlan & Koster 2012:30-38).

Apart from investigating what risks are associated with ITRs, much research has been devoted to explore youths’ motives for engaging in the relationships. These motives have been found to include peer pressure to be “hip” and possess fashionable items (often referred to as youths’ desire for “the three C:s Cars, Cash and Cellphones”), efforts to support the family, a need to pay school-related fees and a will to improve social connections (see e.g. Chatterji et al. 2005; Kuate-Defo 2004; Lafont 2010:78). Though these motives provide some insights about why youth enter ITRs, other aspects and perspectives for understanding youth engagement in ITRs are less explored. Behavioral theory for instance stipulates that many other factors than motives, such as self-efficacy, norms and risk awareness also influence people’s behavior (Rimer 2008), yet these concepts have received less attention. Luke (2003:76) specifically advocates for research exploring how youth consider both risks and benefits of ITRs. Furthermore, few studies have explored stigma and acceptance in relation to the relationships and

---

1 *The Namibian Sun*, 16th of November and 30th of November 2012.
research on this has been called for by e.g. Chatterji et al. (2004:8).

I argue that completing the knowledge gaps portrayed above is important to avoid misconceptions about and prejudice toward ITRs. Such misconceptions might exist among the general population, school and health professionals and in research (suggested e.g. by Chatterji et al. 2005:71; LeClerc-Madlala 2008:24). For instance, in an article on sugar daddies in the newspaper *The Namibian*, the Gender and Child Protection Program Manager from the NGO Lifeline/Childline states that “We help the victims but we are discussing the possibility of creating a support line for perpetrators too” (Hartman, 2013:7). She thereby polarizes the relationships’ actors to victims and offenders.\(^2\) A police officer from the police’s woman and child protection unit in the same article states that “…it is mainly the ‘child’s fault’”, hence signaling harsh judgment towards youth in ITRs. A third example comes from a poster used in a major sexual health campaign (developed by the Ministry of Health and Social Services together with a wide range of partners such as USAID, UNICEF and UNAIDS), in Namibia a few years ago which reads “NO to sugar daddies, you are not for sale” (UNICEF 2012:7). The poster links ITRs with the sale of young people’s bodies though youth themselves clearly distinguish transactional sex from sex work (Quinlan & Koster 2012:31; Wamoyi et al. 2011:8). Finally, reports frequently define transactional sex as a woman receiving material benefits for sex and thereby fail to recognize young men involved in ITRs (see e.g. Quinlan and Koster 2012:31).

These examples hardly reflect all professionals’ and campaign mindsets about youths in ITRs but they exemplify how understandings can be lined with simplifications and value judgments. Moreover, much research on ITRs departs from the conviction that something should be done to respond to the negative consequences of the relationships (see e.g. Chatterji et al. 2005; Quinlan & Koster 2012; Wamoi et al. 2011) and it is then vital to possess adequate knowledge free from misunderstandings and prejudice. One of the most frequently suggested programmatic measures seem to be that youth should be made aware of the risks related to ITRs and that age-symmetric relationships should be promoted among youth (see suggestions by e.g. Leclerc-Madlala 2011; Muula 2008;

\(^2\) The Lifeline/Childline is a Namibian NGO that, among other things, provides counseling to support children and youth in difficulties and emotional distress.
Wyrod et al., 2011). Such measures however fail to see that it is not ITRs per se that are problematic but certain characteristics of the relationships. I argue that a more nuanced understanding of how youth reason around ITRs is important before developing responses, so that whatever efforts put in place correspond to the needs of youth.

1.1 AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTION

This study seeks to complement previous research on youth involvement in ITRs by analyzing youths’ understandings of the relationships against a theoretical framework that moves beyond an exploration of only motives. The aim is to contribute to a more holistic understanding of how young people reason around ITRs. I hope that the study this way will generate insights that can inform and improve programmatic responses towards youth engagement in ITRs. The study builds on Leclerc-Madlala’s (2011) proposition that ITR and HIV “…policies and programmes need to start from an understanding of how those engaged in risky behaviour perceive their sexual relationships and conceptualize the choices they make…” (2011:17). Youths engaged in ITRs were not possible to target for this study but through discussions with Windhoek youth in general I intend to answer the following research question:

How do youth in Windhoek perceive and explain young people’s involvement in Intergenerational Transactional Relationships?

This rather wide research question is narrowed down by analyzing it through a theoretical lens that highlights three types of beliefs for understanding behavior; outcome beliefs, self-efficacy beliefs and normative beliefs (as explained in chapter four). The focus of the study is on young people and ITRs, meaning that both young women and young men’s engagement is encompassed. In order to interpret informants’ perceptions about male and female involvement in ITRs it is deemed important to grasp their construction of gender. A sub-aim is therefore to explore how youths’ beliefs around ITRs are gendered.
1.2 DISPOSITION

The following figure presents the different sections of the thesis:

**FIGURE 1, DISPOSITION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BACKGROUND</th>
<th>This section provides a short contextual account of the Namibian history, society and youth environment to portray the context in which ITRs in Windhoek exist. It also elaborates upon the ITR terminology.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>In the methodology, the research process, quality of primary and secondary data, validity and reliability aspects and ethical considerations are discussed. Limitations of the study are brought up within these discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES</td>
<td>Since the study seeks to complement prior studies on youth involvement in ITRs, theoretical concepts and perspectives have been used to enable an analysis which sheds light on ITRs from a new angle. The theory section presents these concepts and gives an overview of prior research in a literature review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS</td>
<td>In the empirical analysis, findings are presented through conversions of informants' testimonies into an analytic text. The accounts are put in relation to findings generated by other researchers and a first attempt to interpret study participants' propositions is made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS</td>
<td>In this section a deeper discussion of the findings is pursued to ensure that the study's research question, aim and sub-aim are addressed. Furthermore, the main findings are concluded and their programmatic implications discussed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. BACKGROUND

To understand youths’ perceptions on ITRs it is important to also grasp the context in which Windhoek youth live and ITRs occur. In this section a short overview over the Namibian society and youths’ living environment is provided. The terminology around ITRs is furthermore also elaborated upon.

2.1 OVERVIEW AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Namibia is situated in South-Western Africa, north of South Africa and south of Angola. Namibia is a middle-income country which despite a steady economic growth
is the world’s most unequal country as measured by the gini-coefficient (NPC & UNICEF 2010:26). The country has been struck hard by the HIV epidemic but prevalence rates have been dropping since the peak in 2002, from 18% to a prevalence rate of 13.1% in 2009 (MoHSS & UNAIDS 2011:7). This makes Namibia one of nine countries in the world with an HIV prevalence rate over 10% (UNICEF 2013). The capital Windhoek, with about 233,000 of the country’s two million habitants, is the financial and commercial hub situated in the relatively affluent Khomas region (NPC 2007:4). As any capital it attracts people from other regions looking for employment and it is estimated that both the country’s best waged citizens and some of the poorest segments of the population reside here. The National Planning Commission (2007:11) suggests that the gini-coefficient at the country level presumably also is applicable for Windhoek as a city.

Namibia was first colonialized by Germany but South Africa took over the occupation after the First World War and ruled until 1990 when Namibia gained independence (Brown, Sorrell and Raffaelli, 2005: 587). Namibia’s history of colonial rule and apartheid is mentioned by de la Torre et al. (2009:1) as a contributing factor to the spread of HIV within the country, by having caused male migration, segregation, institutionalized racism and economic inequalities. Several academics also suggest that Namibia’s colonial rule and the introduction of Christianity influenced gender norms and values. Ambunda and de Klerk (2008:44), Becker (2010) and Lafont (2010:4-5) all argue that German colonists altered previous gender relations and spurred male hierarchy by solely offering positions of power to men and refusing women rights they previously had enjoyed. When Namibia gained independence the country adopted a constitution that puts much emphasis on gender equality, but according to Ambunda and de Klerk (2008) progress is slow since “much of Namibian society is fairly conservative, particularly where issues of morality, customs and family values are concerned” (2008:44).

Lafont (2007:2) argues that Christianity and local gender and sexuality ideologies today coexist, though in different constellations depending on ethnic group. German and South African groups still reside in Namibia as two of about thirteen ethnic groups, all with their own values, culture and traditions. Wambo speakers represent the largest group and make up about half of Namibia’s inhabitants (Brown, Sorrell and Raffaelli,
Hailonga-van Dijk (2007:131) paint a picture of how the newly independent Namibia consisted of a mix of people of whom some had benefitted and some had been victims of the apartheid system, some came back to Namibia from exile after independence and some were new migrants entering Namibia. She argues that “This diversity made it necessary for people to negotiate between the local and global and these processes have contributed to changes in the norms and values of society, creating a hybrid society” (ibid.). This heterogeneity of norms, values and people renders it difficult to present a short overview of the Namibian society.

### 2.2 YOUTH IN NAMIBIA

About 43% of Namibia’s population is under the age of eighteen (NPC & UNICEF 2010). The HIV prevalence among young pregnant women, as an indicator for the rate among young people in general, in 2010 was 6.6% among 15-19 year olds and 12.5% among those aged 20-24 (Quinlan & Koster 2012:12). This is a drop since the peak in 2002 but Quinlan and Koster (2012:13) still judge the rates to be “alarmingly high”. There are also other issues indicating limitations in young people’s Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). The National Planning Commission and UNICEF (2010:78) state that 14% of all children leaving school do so because of early pregnancy. They further highlight that about 27% of children under twelve reported having been forced to have sexual intercourse in a recent national study (ibid.:83).

Life skill classes in school offer young Namibians a platform to discuss issues around sexuality and relationships, but research indicate that they are missing in some schools (NPC & UNICEF 2010:81). Furthermore, fees are introduced in secondary school and only 40% of learners who started primary school (which almost 100% of Namibian children do) remain at the final year of secondary school (MGECW 2012). In terms of university enrollment, youth from less financially stable homes might not only have economic barriers to attend university but UNICEF³ (2011:3) states they are moreover less likely to perform well enough to qualify for university than youth from wealthier homes.³ Unemployment or engagement in the informal sector is common among out of

³ Data on the ratio of youth who enroll at university or the fees for tertiary education could not be found.
school youth and among those aged 20 to 24, broad unemployment rates increased from 42% in 2002 to 67.4% in 2008 (MoLSW 2008:65-66).

2.3 THE INTRICACY OF DEFINING ITR:S

“Intergenerational” and “transactional” are two complex terms and to ensure that they are used and understood in all their complexity, a short discussion around them is required. The section also touches upon the frequency of ITRs in Namibia.

The terms transactional sex and transactional relationship (if it is a more explicit partnership engagement) describe a sexual relation entailing a transaction of material benefits from one party to another. This wide description is however complicated as it can have different meanings to different people. Quinlan and Koster (2012) in a Namibian report for instance highlight that “The fact that 30% of schoolgirls got something in exchange for sex or 49% of schoolgirls got money from a boyfriend does not mean they perceive this as transactional sex” (2012:34), though the exchange can fall under the definition of transactional sex. If an older party in a relationship has a higher income than his/her younger partner and therefore covers more of the household expenses, this could also be considered an ITR. To move to the other end of the spectrum, transactional sex might also be confused with sex work. The term transactional sex is however used just to make a distinction from sex work, a distinction emphasized not least by youth. Wamoyi et al. (2011) illustrate the differentiation by describing how youth in their study said “Women engaged in transactional sex will choose a lover, whereas women in prostitution will sell their bodies” (2011:8). The distinction is about control and power, and Quinlan and Koster suggest (2012:31) it is also about the self-image of engaged youth, who do not view themselves as sex workers.4

The wide meaning of transactional sex also causes difficulties in interpreting the limited data available on the phenomenon’s frequency in Namibia. The surveys conducted have used inconsistent terminology when asking youth if they have engaged in transactional sex (as seen in the table on the following page). Furthermore, questions

4 The term "engaged youth" will repeatedly be used to describe youth engaged in ITRs. It has hence nothing to do with an engagement in the sense of a betrothal.
about having been offered, asked for or accepted gifts/money for sex could by the respondent be interpreted as all from having received a gift from a partner to having involved in sex work. The meaning and reliability of the results are hence uncertain. The table below shows studies’ varying results and indicates that transactional sex of some sort occurs (this is also evident from qualitative studies) but that it is uncertain to what extent.

**TABLE 1, FREQUENCY OF TRANSACTIONAL SEX**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Prevalence of transactional sex, age group</th>
<th>Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NANASO (1995)</td>
<td>34% of boys and young men were asked by women for a gift in exchange for sex 37% of boys and young men had offered a gift for sex to a woman</td>
<td>Caprivi, Okavango, trans-Caprivi highway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricardo (1998)</td>
<td>46% of sexually active schoolgirls received money from their partner</td>
<td>Caprivi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHS 2006/7</td>
<td>0.8% of 15-19 year old and 1.1% of 20-24 year old sexually active males paid money for sexual intercourse in the last 12 months</td>
<td>national</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Facilitation Services (2006)</td>
<td>8% of 10-14 year old boys and girls who had had sex were paid or received a gift to do so the first time they had sex; 6% of the sexually active 15-24 year olds received or gave something for sex.</td>
<td>Kavango, Omaheke, Changwena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIAPAC 2005, in de la Torre et al (2008:25)</td>
<td>7% of young women and 10% of young men reported engagement in some form of transactional sex.</td>
<td>Katima Mulilo, Rundu, Oshakati, Walvis Bay and Windhoek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF 2011a</td>
<td>30% of sexually active schoolgirls 15-19 had received money or goods for sex in the last year (28% of 15-16 and 30% of 17-19 year olds)</td>
<td>Oshikoto, Ohangwena, Oshana</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Quinlan & Koster 2012:31*

In this study the term transactional relationship was discussed with informants before each interview so that everyone would have the same definition in mind. The definition used was limited to partnerships in which the transaction of benefits is an important feature determining the nature of, and motivations for, a relationship.

Moving on to intergenerational relationships, these are commonly defined as entailing an age difference of at least ten years between the parties (Leclerc-Madlala 2008:18, Wyrod et al. 2011). There however seem to be some disagreement on this definition, Muula (2008:426) for instance suggests that intergenerational relationships entail an age difference of at least five years (by others called “age-disparate relationships”). Many writers also appear to use the term in a less strict numeric meaning. In this study the term is used to qualify transactional relationships that also entail a significant age difference, but the term is used in a non-strict numeric manner since it cannot be
ensured that informants only had relationships with an age difference of over ten years in mind when discussing the relationships.

The frequency of intergenerational relationships in Namibia is as uncertain as that of transactional relationships. 27% of female Namibian youth are estimated to live/be married with a partner more than ten years older than them (Quinlan & Koster 2012: 36), but this says little about the frequency of more casual intergenerational relationships. No quantitative studies appear to have investigated how occurring intergenerational and transactional relationships, hence ITRs, are. Intergenerational and transactional relationships must not necessarily occur in combination but since the older generation often have financial resources which younger women and men lack, they are thought to frequently occur in liaison (de la Torre et al. 2009:26). The United Nation’s definition of a youth or a young person is a person between the ages of 15 and 24 (UN, N.D). This study uses this definition whenever referring to youth in general, though targeted informants were between 18 and 24.

3. METHODOLOGY

This section will introduce the field study’s methodological process and rational so that readers easily can follow how the findings of the study have been derived.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

A researcher’s personal and subjective understandings of reality will underline any research design, and Bryman (2008:25) and Mikkelsen (2005:35) therefore propose that these understandings are important to clarify for readers. A study’s position towards theory might be called the cornerstone of its research design. Many studies take on a deductive or inductive research design but this study approach should rather be described as iterative. An iterative process in Bryman’s (2008:12) words “...involves a weaving back and forth between data and theory”. Theory was used to construct a framework depicting how ITRs could be understood and analyzed, but this framework was not tested as if in a deductive research design. It was instead assessed and rebuilt as the ideas and understandings deriving from the analysis became clear.
The study is based in the epistemological orientation interpretivism combined with the ontological assumption constructionism. Bryman (2008:15, 20) explains how interpretivism is concerned with seeing the world from the eyes of those being studied, and how constructionism represents a worldview in which reality is regarded as in a constant state of revision ruled by social actors. This research philosophy has directed me to explore and interpret Windhoek youths’ perceptions of the world around them, a reality which might be mundane to them but which when conceptualized could provide useful accounts on notions of gender, sexuality and social norms among young people. Based in these worldviews the indisputable strategy of inquiry is qualitative.\(^5\)

In terms of data construction procedures; semi-structured interviews, focus groups and literature reviews were used to respond to the research question. As touched upon in the paragraph above, I sought to grasp informants’ conceptualization of ITRs and the semi-structured approach suited this purpose as I could cover pre-set discussion themes with flexibility (as also discussed by Bryman 2008:389). Interviews and focus groups were combined to complement each other. Focus groups allowed informants to probe and challenge each other’s views and as Bryman (2008:473-475) proposed, this appeared to provide more thought-through and genuine reflections. Focus groups furthermore permit documentation of how informants discuss a given topic, and this indeed proved useful for instance when gender norms were discussed in mixed-sex focus groups. Focus groups however also entail the risk of creating a “false” majority opinion and therefore individual interviews were also conducted. Furthermore, having read Mack et al. (2005:51) I feared that though no questions about personal experience were asked, personal reflections might be more likely to come up in individual interviews than in focus groups. In the end this did not appear to be the case as informants overall were more personal when in focus groups, but the accounts given in group sometimes appeared to be adjusted to correspond to group norms. The combination of interview procedures hence nonetheless proved important.

\(^5\) Since the study does not present an obvious “case” according to definitions suggested by Creswell (2007) and Yin (2003) (e.g., there are no strict boundaries of the group studied and the study seeks to explore attitudes and understandings rather than a precise behavior) it is not labeled a case study but a qualitative study on youth involvement in ITRs.
3.2 METHODOLOGICAL PROCESS

Theoretical and philosophical viewpoints might underline my research design, but the actual field study departed from much less abstract reflections. My process started with loads of reading, the drawing of countless mind-maps and a sensation of embarking on a new, exciting and, to be honest, quite scary road. The model below illustrates my research process. It has not been a linear progression and many of the stages are continuous. For instance, the data analysis started well before and continued after the specific analysis stage (as illustrated by the model’s triangles). Knowledge has accumulated throughout the process, and so has e.g. the literature review lead me to certain theoretical concepts and further on guided the analysis. To avoid that any early understandings contaminated the interpretation of the findings, some precautionary measures (described in boxes A, B and C) were taken. This for instance included writing down assumptions and expected findings before initiating interviews and then returning to these after the data analysis to critically assess that findings truly were based in the analysis and not on early suppositions.

FIGURE 2, RESEARCH PROCESS MODEL

Note that start and ending points do not create a perfect circle; conclusions made are in line with the final research question, but not with the initial one. This is science; assumptions were permitted to change and reality was aloud to intervene with plans.

Source: author
3.2.1 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DATA

Literature reviews were first used to gain knowledge about ITRs, secondly to assure that the study would fill a research gap and thirdly to contextualize the findings and relate them to previous research. The secondary data mainly comprises Namibia specific journal articles, reports and books from local authors, the Namibian Government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the UN (United Nations). Academic articles about ITRs in other countries were also used to grasp the departure points and contributions of earlier studies on ITRs. The literature is hence varied both in type and geographical origin. Material of a non-academic character, though potentially less trustworthy than e.g. academic journals, was used to gain statistics, background information about the Namibian context and Namibia-specific findings about ITRs. Since I had reviewed numerous publications on SRHR issues during my UNAIDS internship I had gained rather deep insights about the quality of local studies and reports, and this proved useful when searching for reliable local literature. Literature of dubious origins and quality has not been used and a dialogue with the literature has been maintained throughout the thesis to ensure critical use of it. At times I have questioned authors’ wording but nonetheless continued to use their work (e.g. Leclerc-Madlala 2011; Quinlan and Koster 2012). This is because those authors despite certain imprudence have had other important points and qualities.

Interviews and focus groups were conducted in privacy at the UN building, in parks and once at a NGOs’s office in Windhoek. Holding interviews at the UN might have influenced the power relations between informants and me, but some interviewees specifically preferred this location and I observed no negative consequences of it. Focus groups were held both with women and men separately and in mixed groups. This proved useful as discussions were often more vivid in the mixed groups, but women sometimes seemed more confident in same-sex groups. All discussions were recorded and held in English without any communication difficulties. Interviews in average lasted about 50 minutes and focus groups about an hour and twenty minutes.

Several study participants brought up transactional relationships before the topic was introduced by me, indicating that ITRs are an important phenomenon in young people’s lives. Informants were in general talkative and some openly discussed their own or friends’ engagement with older wealthier partners. Such accounts proved useful but
were not a prerequisite for a successful study since the aim of the study is to explore beliefs and not the actual situation of youth in ITRs. All informants seemed credible and frank in their suggestions but their stories might sometimes rather have been accounts of what they had heard about or seen in newspapers than testimonies deriving from own experiences. Therefore informants’ perceptions are treated as insights but not facts about e.g. why youth enter ITRs or risks associated with the relationships. It is also important to remember that “Morals, taboos, laws, and religious beliefs influence not only the sexual behavior of individuals but also the way they perceive and describe it” (Collumbien et al. 2012:8). Informants’ self-stated attitudes and beliefs might not always have reflected their actual mindsets. Finally, informants mainly had women in mind during their discussions and therefore it should be emphasized that the findings might be more applicable to female involvement in ITRs than to male involvement.

3.2.2 TARGET GROUPS AND SAMPLING STRATEGY

The study targeted Windhoek based youth between 18 and 24 and reached a total of 53 individuals; 33 women and 20 men (a list of interviewees, given fictive names, is provided in appendix A). Previous research indicate that ITRs occur among youth in various socioeconomic situations and by targeting both youth in and out of university I hoped to include participants from different socioeconomic backgrounds in the study. The plan was also to compare views expressed by students and youth not at university to explore potential differences in their beliefs, e.g. in terms of motives and acceptance. This however proved too difficult since informants often grounded their accounts on friends’ experiences, and friends did not necessarily belong to the same socioeconomic group as they themselves. Informants were not given pre-set alternatives when asked about occupation/main daytime activity as it might have been sensitive for unemployed youth and my categories might not have corresponded well with their life situations. Informants are in the empirical analysis therefore presented with their personal identification, e.g. as a “volunteer” or “helping family”.

The sampling method was purposive in the sense that informants with certain characteristics were targeted on the basis of providing the most useful information (Marshall 1996:523). I was reliant on helpful gatekeepers who directed me to informants and just as in much qualitative research, convenience sampling hence also played a certain role in the sampling strategy (as described by Bryman 2008:182;
Marshall 1996:523). Payne and Payne (2004:136) highlights that relying on a gatekeeper entails the risk of only accessing people of a certain interest group. In order to minimize the homogeneity among informants, six different gatekeepers were used as entry points to informants and snowball sampling was not used. Despite the effort to reach young people from different situations and backgrounds, an important limitation is that many informants were linked to NGOs (as volunteers or beneficiaries) and that less visible youth probably were not reached. No informants were furthermore of upper class and this exemplifies how informants by no means are representative of all Windhoek youth. Finally, informants are a sample of urban youth and their beliefs might no doubt contrast with perceptions among youth in rural Namibia.

I also interviewed key informants who were targeted on basis of their knowledge, diversity and availability. Key informants are actors who have deep specialist knowledge relevant for the research (Payne and Payne 2004:135). Six key informant interviews were conducted (before and after interviews with youth informants) to get input on the relevance of the study, to gain a better understanding of the Namibian context and to discuss certain issues raised by youth informants. This was not due to mistrust of young informants but to strengthen their points by cross-validating them. Having talked to two young key informants prior to the interviews also proved useful since no pilot interview was conducted. This was because the planned pilot interview was postponed and I with short notice was given the opportunity to conduct several focus groups.

3.2.3 TRANSCIBING AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

I transcribed recordings as soon as possible after each interview/discussion to avoid forgetting details, to help improve my interview skills and to better judge when theoretical saturation was reached. Furthermore, returning to previous interviews while also conducting new ones helped me connect what was said in one interview with another. Everything said was transcribed since what might first seem unimportant could be interesting at a second glance, but less attention was given to exact wording when discussions seemed irrelevant. The transcribed data was then categorized using Mikkelsen’s (2005:182) three-step approach consisting of primary open coding (establishing broad themes), axial coding (developing sub-categories within the themes) and selective coding (integrating and refining theory). The broad themes, based on prior
knowledge and theoretical perspectives, were more or less consciously determined already in the interview guide, but new themes were also introduced along the route.

The categorization process facilitated the following, written analysis of the data. A first text emphasizing important quotes, summarizing informants’ testimonies and relating these to prior research and theory was developed. This first text was very extensive and it proved challenging to cut out discussions which were not truly relevant. When analyzing material it is the researcher’s role to interpret informants’ testimonies. As Bryman (2008) discusses this step entails the risk of misinterpreting or even misusing data, but it is nonetheless necessary because “your findings acquire significance in our intellectual community only when you have reflected on, interpreted, and theorized your data” (2008:554). I have strived to clearly differentiate between informants’ accounts and my interpretation of their words and hope that this will help the reader to assess the appropriateness of my conclusions.

3.3 QUALITY ASSURANCE

There is no real consensus on how to guarantee the quality of qualitative research, but two often discussed criteria are validity and reliability. Validity is the accuracy of conclusions drawn from the collected material. To assure validity, I have taken specific considerations during the data construction, data analysis and the presentation of findings. Golafshani (2003:603) discusses how triangulation of research methods and sources can help guarantee validity. Individual interviews, focus groups and literature reviews were combined to ensure cross-validation of data and key informants provided important secondary input. Furthermore, I cautiously observed newspapers and campaigns on sexual health and engaged with young people in the field of SRHR in Namibia prior to the study. This provided me with a basic understanding of contextual factors and limited the risk of misinterpreting data (as proposed by Creswell 2009:191). Through cautious note taking of the atmosphere during discussions and careful transcribing of interviews, the risk of misreading data during the analysis was also minimized. Finally, a clear and “thick” description of the study context and informants has been included in this thesis to facilitate the validity judgment of the reader (as suggested by Creswell 2009:19; Mikkelsen 2005:197). This is also important for reliability aspects. The better described the study is the easier it will be for other actors to scrutinize its reliability and to potentially replicate the study (Bryman 2008:32).
Another reliability aspect I have strived for is to present discrepant findings, for instance when informants were in opposition or when they contradicted themselves, and to not make unnecessary simplifications.

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

“Do no harm”. This research principle at first appeared self-evident and uncomplicated to me. I would (and did) make sure to address issues such as confidentiality, getting oral consent, explaining the purpose and usage of the study for participants, taking up informants’ time and raising expectations on change or rewards among participants (see e.g. Chambers 2008:162; Mikkelsen 2005:29, 34), and would thereby cover most ethical concerns. As my first focus group discussion got closer I however got more and more nervous. My main concern was that since some focus group participants probably would know each other (I unfortunately could not control this), a participant actually engaged in an ITR might feel exposed and uncomfortable even if no one discussed his or her involvement. Furthermore, how should I react if someone in the group started talking about another participant’s involvement? Mikkelsen (2005) states that researchers need to reflect on “what we are doing when we intervene in other people's worlds in the name of development” (2005:27) and I realized that managing ethical concerns in research is about much more than consent and confidentiality.

I planned and prepared for the discussions so that the risk of exposing or troubling informants would be minimal. For instance, participants were not asked about personal experiences and I tried to lead discussions in a neutral way without e.g. blame or encouragement. Furthermore, discussions were not restricted to heterosexual relationships to avoid exacerbating heteronormativity and I made sure to know where participants could be directed for consultation if needed after discussions.6 Finally, informants did not receive financial contributions for their participation as this might have indicated that they should perform in a way pre-determined by me, but they got refreshments and were reimbursed for transportation costs.

6 For the record, no informants however brought up same-sex ITRs and the occurrence of such relationships is hence not discussed in the thesis.
My study has furthermore attempted to comply to the research principle of “doing good” (concept discussed e.g. by Scheyvens, Nowak and Scheyvens 2005:139). I was cautious to conduct a study that fills a knowledge gap relevant for improving young people’s lives so that my informants’ contributions would be worthwhile. I also sought to conduct discussions that interviewees could enjoy and find interesting, and I find it reassuring that several participants after focus groups thanked me for having held the discussions and asked if I would not do it again.

To do research in a foreign (and not least developing) context also evokes other ethical concerns. My five months as an intern with UNAIDS in Namibia allowed me to gain a good cultural understanding, but I nonetheless remained an outsider. Qualitative research is a relationship, and though I strained to untangle myself from any initial (western) assumptions and meet informants as equals, I have no way of knowing how informants perceived me. These reflections left me with an understanding of my own fortune, an acknowledgement of the study’s limitations and an informed research design. And to finish off where I started; it did indeed happen that participants referred to other group members’ involvement in ITRs, but only in small groups of closer friends and never with malice intentions. As far as I could tell, some informants engaged in ITRs even appeared relieved and content having the possibility to explain their involvement.

4. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

This chapter includes two sections equally important for developing an analysis that builds upon but also develops prior understandings about youth involvement in ITRs. A literature review first provides an overview of the contributions of previous research. After this some theoretical concepts assisting in developing the study’s analytical framework are presented and operationalized.

4.1 LITERATURE REVIEW – “THE WHY QUESTION”

It was in the introduction emphasized that there are knowledge gaps in the understanding of how youth reason around ITRs, but this does not mean there has be no research on why youth enter ITRs (see e.g. de la Torre et al. 2009; Donovan & Ross
2000; Lafont 2010; Leclere-Madlala 2008; Luke 2003). As emphasized in the introduction, such research has mainly centered around youths’ motivations for the relationships. Some studies have complicated this analysis by describing how motives can be about more than material gains (see e.g. Leclere-Madlala 2008; Luke 2003). Leclere-Madlala (2008:17) for instance discusses how some women depict ITRs as a way to “affirm self-worth, achieve social goals, increase longer-term life chances, or otherwise add value and enjoyment to life”. This illustration of how young women might see ITRs as a conscious empowerment strategy sharply contradicts previous portrayals of engaged women as victims of poverty and gender structures that limit women’s economic freedom (Wamoyi et al. 2011:6).

Historical and societal structures such as men traditionally being the breadwinners of the family, youth unemployment and gendered economic inequalities have also been discussed, especially as explanations for young women’s engagement with sugar daddies (see e.g. de la Torre et al. 2009:25; Luke 2003:68). When contemplating such statements it is however important to remember that youth themselves might not see transactional relationships as a consequence of unequal structures or as a further marginalization of women. Wamoyi et al. (2011:10, 13) for instance found that both men and women in their study saw women’s demand for money and gifts as a way for women to gain power and equalize power imbalances in relationships.

The role that poverty plays for transactional relationships has also been discussed. It has been suggested that the relationships are rarely born out of extreme poverty but that they might be more common among disadvantaged groups than others (de la Torre et al. 2009:25; UNICEFb 2011:38). Simultaneously, studies have indicated that youth in school or university and from economically stable household also engage in the relationships (see e.g. Chatterji et al. 2005:70; Kuate-Defo 2004:26; Wamoyi et al. 2011:6) and it remains uncertain how and if poverty is related to ITRs.

The cultural and normative context in which the relationships occur, in Namibia and other sub-Saharan countries, has also received attention. It has repeatedly been suggested that new values with regards to sexuality and consumerism are at the backbone of youth involvement in ITRs. Hailonga-van Dijk (2005:134) writes that young Namibians today are met by global messages on sexuality that do not necessarily match traditional ideals in their society and culture, and takes the example of how views
on sex before marriage are changing. Regarding consumerism Lafont (2010:77) states that men today often are expected to provide women with gifts to demonstrate their love, and in Windhoek persistent poverty exists side by side with an increased supply and perceived need of consumer goods. Luke (2003:73) and Quinlan and Koster (2012:32) make similar propositions. The values and ideals just described can however also have historic origins. Leclerc-Madlala (2008:22) points out that what is now called age-disparate and transactional relationships originates in older practices which have outlined social life and sexuality norms for a long time. Some traditional practices such as polygamy are for instance on retrieve but might still influence people’s mindsets about having multiple partners. Furthermore, older men have been viewed as desirable partners because of their financial stability in the past too. Leclerc-Madlala (2008:23) also states that “For a woman to ‘do sex for free’ has meaning throughout the region [Southern Africa] as a signifier of lack of dignity and self-respect”. Though one can question generalizing half a continent like this the suggestion is noteworthy and a study from Uganda similarly states that “To expect no gift or to have sex for pleasure are the hallmarks of the worst kind of woman” (Nobelius et al. 2010:490). These discussions about how transactions might be valued and assessed are moreover the closest prior research seem to go in terms of investigating acceptance towards ITRs. Attitudes towards ITR might have been touched upon but have rarely been awarded any greater attention. In Namibia, one study suggests that transactional relationships are becoming increasingly accepted but do not further elaborate on this (see de la Torre et al. 2009:25).

To sum up, ITRs might best be described as a product of new values integrating with older traditions and norms in a societal context where youth and especially women are economically constrained and socially disadvantaged.

4.1.2 GENDER DIMENSIONS

The just portrayed explanations for youth engagement in ITRs mainly relate to young women’s involvement since few studies have investigated young men in ITRs (an issue also highlighted by Chatterji et al. 2004:1). The assumption that young men are not as engaged in ITRs as young women are seems to derive from how men tend to be more financially independent than women (as suggested e.g. by de la Torre et al. 2009:ix). The conception might however also originate from gender-stereotypical images of men
as strong and independent actors who should not and will not rely on a woman for support. Whether researchers have been mislead by this conception or if young men indeed stay out of ITRs is unclear. A Namibian UNICEF study from 2006 showed that it was more common among men aged 15 to 24 to have accepted money for sex than it was among female respondents. Furthermore, ads such as those on the front page were predominately written by young men, not women. This might merely signify that men and women have different approaches to engage with wealthier partners, but also indicates that young men too seek older wealthier partners though studies portraying them are missing.

4.2 THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

People engage in sexual behavior for many various reasons and it is therefore difficult to determine how youth involvement in ITRs could be best understood. The literature review depicted how prior research exploring youths’ reasons for the engagement on an individual level (as opposed to the societal, historic and normative structures also discussed) mainly has focused on youths’ motives. This study seeks to complement prior research by drawing inspiration from a behavioral prediction model that enables a new angle for exploring youths’ reasoning around ITRs. This model is furthermore useful as it allows for an exploration of acceptance towards ITRs and a conceptualization of how youth understand both gains and risks with the relationships. Research in these fields has, as mentioned in the introduction, been called for.

This section will first present the inspiring theoretical model and then discuss the concepts stigma, norms and gender. These notions are especially important for the upcoming analysis of normative beliefs and of how informants’ beliefs are gendered. Finally, the model and theoretical concepts are operationalized into an analytical framework.

4.2.1 UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOR

It is not necessarily enough to analyze youths’ motives to involve in ITRs to understand their behavior or how youth reason around ITRs. A young person might for instance have motives to engage with an older, wealthier partner, but societal norms condemning the action or knowledge about the risks involved might stop the youth from pursuing
such behavior. The Integrative Model of Behavioral Prediction (IMBP) offers a theoretical base for how people’s behavior can be understood and analyzed. The IMBP suits this study well because it puts emphasis on individuals’ beliefs. Informants engaged in ITRs could not be targeted but by exploring young people’s general beliefs about e.g. where ITRs can take youth, norms related to the relationships and how accepted or non-accepted ITRs are, some insights about how youth reason if engaging in ITRs can still be gained. The IMBP looks as follows:

**FIGURE 3, INTEGRATIVE MODEL OF BEHAVIORAL PREDICTION***

*The IMBP as presented by Yzer (2012:21) but graphically modified to better suit this thesis.

The model (as explained by Yzer, 2012:21) suggests that three main beliefs influence people’s intention to pursue a behavior. It is these beliefs that will be integrated into the study’s analytical framework. The beliefs are:

1. **Outcome beliefs** about whether the behavior will have positive or negative consequences. N.B. that people might accept short-term negative outcomes because they expect positive long-term outcomes (Mcalister, Perry and Parcel 2008:172).
2. **Self-efficacy beliefs**, hence “a person’s beliefs about her capacity to influence the quality of functioning and the events that affect her life” (Mcalister, Perry and Parcel 2008:172). For instance, a person must believe he/she can and would benefit
from stop smoking to actually try and do so. Self-efficacy differs from skills since skills represent the actual and not self-perceived ability to carry out a behavior.

3. **Normative beliefs** about how people around you will react to the behavior and the individual’s willingness to comply to perceived norms (this willingness is however left aside in this study since youth actually engaged in ITRs were not targeted).

Other components of the IMBP are left aside in this study. The proximal determinants are only a prolongation of the beliefs, but beliefs are better suited to investigate in this study since it is not individuals’ actual behavior that is explored. How background variables influence beliefs or how youths’ actual skills (e.g. ability to attract a partner) and environmental constraints (e.g. access to partners) impact youth behavior is not of relevance here and could not have been explored in this qualitative study.

### 4.2.2 NORMS, STIGMA AND GENDER

Norms can be said to indicate “acceptable” behavior in a society and though people are not obligated to comply to them, they can have great influence over people’s actions (as also depicted in the IMBP) (Collumbien et al. 2012:8). People who diverge from what is considered “acceptable behavior” might be penalized, for instance through stigmatization (Eagly 2000:450). Norms can be of different types and they do not always work in harmonization. *Injunctive* norms indicate people’s support or opposition of a behavior while *descriptive* norms represent people’s perceptions about how others around them actually behave (Montaño & Kaspzyk 2008:79). *Gender norms* can be considered socially constructed ideas about acceptable female and male behavior. These are not least relevant for how male and female sexuality is perceived. Brown, Sorrell & Raffaelli (2005:568) propose that though ideals of masculinity (and femininity) differ between cultures, masculinity ideals such as toughness, stoicism and sexual vigor are close to universal. Wingood and DiClemente (2000:544) further suggest that women’s sexuality rather has been related to notions such as impurity and immoralities.

Gender is however more than a concept for analyzing norms about male vis-à-vis female characteristics or behavior. Correll, Thébaud and Benard (2009:3) argue that “gender is a set of expectations to which individuals are held accountable while engaging in other seemingly non gendered activities”. The concept of gender is then not only relevant in relations/comparisons between men and women but it can be seen
as underlining individuals’ thinking and reasoning in any interaction where “individuals define themselves in relation to others” (Ridgeway & Correll 2004:511). If connecting such line of thinking to this study, informants’ construction of gender might not only color their perception of male involvement in ITRs in relation or contrast to female involvement, but also how informants conceptualize ITRs alone. Understanding informants’ construction of gender would hence be important regardless if the study explored *only* female involvement. The gender concept can furthermore, as was discussed in the background section, be related to ITRs in Namibia in terms of women’s limited economic independence and decision-making power within ITRs.

When discussing norms, including gender norms, it should be recalled that they might not correspond to people’s preferred and actual behavior. This does not undermine the role norms and normative beliefs have for understanding behavior and acceptance, but it complicates the analysis. Firstly, gender norms are limiting since they tend to rest on a hetero-normative stance and secondly, norms are not static but change as people’s attitudes and behavior change (hence, norms influence behavior and attitudes but the reverse is also true). Finally, Smith and Hogg (2008) highlight how people often belong to sub-groups with different norms (e.g. youths’ peers and parents might have conflicting opinions about ITRs) and it then becomes impossible for an individual to comply to all norms around them. It should also be noted that norms in no way only restrict people but can create an important sense of belonging and group identity.

### 4.2.3 OPERATIONALIZATION

By taking inspiration from the belief approach of the IMBP and by supplementing it with the concepts just discussed, an analytical framework has been created. This framework should not be mistaken for describing a formula with factors thought to impact youths’ decisions to engage in ITRs and the model will not be “tested”. It is used to form a theoretical base and justification for how young people’s reasoning around ITRs can be analyzed. Such an analysis will not say why youth enter ITRs but it can provide insights useful for better understanding their involvement.
As can be seen, the three beliefs from the IMBP have become four as positive and negative outcome beliefs have been separated. It is against these four beliefs the empirical data will be analyzed. Positive outcome beliefs are explored in terms of the gains youth perceive ITRs might have. This hence touches upon the man focus of prior research: motives. Negative outcome beliefs mainly relate to problems and risks interviewed youth anticipate ITRs can have. The role risk awareness plays for behavior has been theorized e.g. in the health belief model. It specifies how a person must not only know about a risk to take action to avoid it but must also perceive the risk as serious, feel personally exposed to it, find it easy to avoid and believe that evading the risk is worth associated costs (Nutbeam, Harris & Wise 2010:9). Self-efficacy beliefs are highly individual and therefore difficult to speculate about but will be discussed in terms of how informants perceive that youth can control and influence their quality of life through ITRs. This issue has been touched upon in some prior research (as was brought up in the literature review) and is deemed important to follow up on. Finally, youths’ normative beliefs are analyzed by listening to informants’ perceptions of friends’, peers’ and parents’ (hence three sub-groups) acceptance towards ITRs. A distinction between injunctive and descriptive norms will be made. Finally, the arrow illustrates how informants’ construction of gender and gender norms are seen as integral to and forming their other beliefs.
5. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS – YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF ITR:S

The analytical framework incorporates four types of beliefs that informants’ accounts will be analyzed against. The beliefs can then no longer be treated as separate. For instance, fear of stigma can be seen both as a negative outcome belief and a normative belief about how others will judge the behavior. In this chapter’s four sections 5.1 Perceived Gains; 5.2 the Complexity of Control; 5.3 Negative Outcomes Beliefs and 5.4 Acceptance, an analysis which treats the beliefs as integral to each other is pursued. Informants’ perceptions about male vis-à-vis female involvement in ITRs and what these accounts imply in terms of interviewees’ construction of gender is something discussed throughout the analysis.

5.1 PERCEIVED GAINS

Informants described three main reasons for why youth enter ITRs; to manage the daily strains of life, to fulfill material desires and to “climb in life”, and it is after these three categories this section is organized.7 If relating the section back to the analytical framework, it mainly touches upon youths’ positive outcome beliefs and normative beliefs.

5.1.1 “MANAGING LIFE”

Informants said some youth engage in ITRs just to “manage life”, e.g. as an alternative to a job (highlighting the role unemployment might play for ITRs), paying rent and other daily costs and to manage school or university. Such motivations have been put forward in prior research too. A previously unheard suggestion described by among others Cheryl, 24, enrolled in secondary school, was that some youth would enter ITRs because they anticipated protection and stability;

---

7 Included among youths’ explanations were also love and desire, but these explanations were awarded little attention. They are nonetheless important to mention since the analysis does not further address such motivations for the engagement, though love, desire and attraction no doubt interplay with other motivations when people engage in any relationship.
Cheryl’s suggestion is particularly noteworthy since informants also were convinced that the relationships are risky, hence the opposite of safe, and said most youth knew about the risks. This is further discussed in section 5.3.

Informants also explained that some youth see ITRs as a way to support the family, for instance to pay siblings’ school fees. Chatterji et al. (2005: 59) have previously found that some parents implicitly (though rarely more explicitly) urge their children to involve in transactional relationships but informants in this study described less encouraging parents. One participant did say parents might push their children into transactional relationships but most interviewees rather suggested that parents in economical hardships would not object to their child’s involvement in an ITR despite knowing about it. As long as the parents were somewhat economically stable informants’ normative beliefs about parents’ reactions were clear; parents would be angry and ashamed. Some interviewees, as the 21 year-old student Raphael, even said: “This is very taboo. Parents might even say ‘Go to the streets, I won’t support you’”. Such beliefs indicate that the relationships are completely unacceptable, at least in the view of parents.

In relation to managing costs related to school, there was a clear distinction between the discussions of student informants and informants who had not continued to higher education. While students said a common motive was to cover university costs which parents failed to comprehend (e.g. registration fees and transportation costs), informants not at university instead said that youth enter ITRs to be able to attend university though parents could not afford it. When it is stated that youth involve in ITRs to “cover school-related costs”, this might hence actually be two significantly different drives; to manage university costs and to attend university in the first place.

### 5.1.2 MATERIAL DESIRES OR A SENSE OF BELONGING?

The 19 year-old Kevin explained that youth enter ITRs for “a combination of ‘needs and wants’”. The “needs” have just been brought forward and the “wants” he referred to was gains such as the possibility to be stylish and to access cellphones, computers and pocket money. Interviewees’ repeatedly referred to “the competition” to keep up with
peers in terms of looks and fashionable items, a peer pressure they suggested was especially pertinent among students since these interacted more with different socioeconomic segments of the society. As discussed in the literature review, this consumerism and desire for “the three C:s” has repeatedly been stated as an underlying explanation for youth involvement in ITRs. Several of the study participants however signaled that the materials gained from ITRs were not truly what mattered. They described an urge to belong to a specific group of people and to be accepted and perceived as a successful person, hence a normative belief about gaining admiration for the life they could live and for having found a successful partner. Some also emphasized the social gains of ITRs, for instance the 19 year-old volunteer Jane;

They [my friends] don’t really do it because they are in need of money or something, they just do it cause by dating an older guy they can have fun by drinking, making sure that every weekend there is a spot to sit, there are plans for the evening, but they don’t do it for their own money. And it’s not just any guy who buys alcohol for you, it is your OWN boyfriend. (Jane)

Jane’s quote furthermore exemplifies the fluid division between a boyfriend and a sugar daddy. Jane talks about ITRs and yet entitles the friends’ partners as “boyfriends”. When informants referred to ITRs of youth in general, not friends, the partner was however always a sugar daddy. This vague designation of who a sugar daddy is appears to support Lecler-Madlala (2011:18) and Wyrod et al.’s (2011) suggestion that the term sugar daddy can be misleading as it creates a generalized image of an old, wealthy man with little interest in the young partner’s wellbeing. Informants in this study furthermore said that anyone could become a sugar daddy and often gave the suggestion of taxi drivers, hence men who in most cases would not be deemed very wealthy.

When informants discussed peer pressure to live up to certain ideals they repeatedly connected this to poverty. 22 year-old Sharon expressed this in the following way;

Mostly I will say it is the poor who are doing this. Let’s say I’m in school and my classmates are looking nice, and they have new clothes in the end of the month. And they’re from the rich families and I’m from the poor families, obviously I have to go for a sugar daddy. (Sharon)

Though almost no informants thought youth involve in ITRs for basic subsistence, they as Sharon repeatedly referred to poverty as an underlying factor for why youth enter ITRs. They described how an exposure to the lifestyles of wealthier groups make youth poor no matter their actual economic situation. Relative poverty was in this sense provided as a stronger explanation for youth engagement in ITRs then actual poverty.
5.1.3 “CLIMBING LIFE”

Though informants said youth engage in ITRs for short-term gains they also described long-term anticipations. Informants then often distinguished between students and youth not at university. They said that youth not at university might seek to get married and build lives with their sugar daddies, though they also thought this might be impossible since many sugar daddies already were married (this is in itself noteworthy considering concurrent, i.e. overlapping, relationships’ linkages to the HIV epidemic). Students would however have another type of long-term expectation, as here explained by the 22 year-old volunteer Nadia;

They [students] will say ‘If I get a sugar daddy he will provide money to pay [for] my education and once I’m done with my studies I will move on with my life /…/ it’s just a passport to get what I want from him in the longer term. I can even deal with him doing whatever he wants, but as long as I get what I want I’m okay with that’. (Nadia)

This signals that for students, ITRs might be a step on the ladder to go through university and thereby reach the life they urge for (they manage negative short-term consequences for long-term gains), but for those not at university the relationship might become the entire ladder to the envisaged life. These are two significantly different long-term anticipations. Another notable point made by Nadia is that the relationship and its set-up is something engaged youth “can deal with”, but not something they appreciate. Several other informants had similar perceptions about how involved youth would feel about the engagement.

5.1.4 GENDERED OUTCOME BELIEFS

Informants suggested young women and young men would engage in ITRs for about the same reasons but repeatedly said that men would be “freer” in their decision. Interviewees explained this with that men would engage with older women “for fun”, for status and for obtaining useful and desirable items such as phones and cars but not for necessities. Informants also said that ideals about how to look were not as strong among men. Whether this indeed reflects the premises of male involvement is however uncertain considering that many informants did not actually know men involved in ITRs. Their suggestions might hence rather reflect their constructions of gender and male and female characteristics.
5.2 CONTROL AND POWER

“It’s not the really rich [who engage in ITRs], it is more people who know that they can do something better than this.” The volunteer Jane, 19, in this quote puts her finger on the self-efficacy beliefs youth engaged in ITRs might have. She describes how it is youth who know life could be different and think that ITRs offer them the ability to positively influence their quality of life who engage in the relationships. This suggestion is strongly connected to how youth view control and power in relation to ITRs, and this is what will be discussed in this section.

Informants had conflicting ideas about how youth involved in ITRs would feel about their engagement;

They feel confident, they feel self-empowered and proud of themselves, they’ll think they got what they want, but in the end of the day they’ll blame themselves if anything comes up, like getting pregnant or being infected. (Letitia)

That person is old enough to be your father, so I wouldn’t know what’s desirable about that. /.../ it’s not desirable at all. (Lesley)

…they [in ITRs] almost change behavior. They become more confident. (Selma)

The quotes display how some informants suggested youth in ITRs would signal confidence and feel empowered though ITRs. Several informants however disagreed and often referred to how they themselves could not understand how the partner or the situation within an ITR could be desirable. It is a dual picture that informants present, a duality that shines through in previous studies as well. Neither de la Torre et al.’s (2009:25) suggestion that sugar mummies and daddies in Namibia are highly desirable, nor Lafont’s (2010:85) finding that ITRs are not desirable and that young Namibians prefer partners of their own age and financial situation, can be validated. The proposition made by Leclerc-Madlala (2008:19) that women may see the engagement in ITRs as an act of liberation and cleverness is closer, but not completely in line, with informants’ suggestions. Study participants seemed to view the relationships’ gains as desirable, and these gains would make youth feel confident and in control over their life. Their general image of an ITR was however that it was an awkward and risky relationship with an undesirable partner (though this image turned more positive if talking about particular friends’ involvement in ITRs). Most participants furthermore said that though some youth feel strengthened by the relationships, few would engage in
them if they saw another way to satisfy their “needs and wants”. The volunteer Letitia’s comment above moreover portrays how some informants said that the sense of power engaged youth believe to gain is an illusion. This is also what Wamoyi et al. (2011) have proposed, stating that;

…the power young women refer to is limited: it emanates from a feeling that they have a resource that is valued, that they can try to dictate the terms around sexual exchange […] however, in reality, it does not translate into safe sexual and reproductive health and, in any case, wanes after the beginning of the sexual relationship (2011:13).

When discussing control and power within ITRs, informants thought that the youth party would have very little power since that was the nature of the arrangement, especially if the youth was truly dependent on the partner and if the young party was a woman. Their beliefs were in line with e.g. Luke’s (2003:74) suggestion that youth who confront power relations within ITRs risk negative consequences and even abuse. When talking about young men engaging with older women, informants’ views about power and control however parted, but most of them suggested a young man would not be subordinate to an older female partner because of his gender. Informants furthermore thought that even engaged young women could exercise control within certain areas since she for instance decides who the partner and what the benefits should be, and can threaten to tell the older party’s partner (if there is one) about the relationship.

To sum up, ITRs seem to be viewed as having both positive and negative outcomes in terms of control and power. Informants suggested that youth can see ITRs as offering life control and independence and even perceive that there is some room for control within the relationships, though being aware of the power imbalances and risks the relationship in itself entails.

5.3 NEGATIVE OUTCOME BELIEFS

In behavioral theory it is stipulated that negative outcome beliefs make people avoid certain behaviors. There were two main issues that informants discussed in terms of negative outcomes of ITRs; health risks and stigma. The first part of the section analyses youths’ risk awareness, and the second part addresses normative beliefs about stigma and shame.
5.3.1 RISK AWARENESS

All informants repeatedly and spontaneously said that ITRs are very risky. They especially mentioned the risk of violence if the young woman (informants only had women in mind when discussing risks) decided to end the relationship, as the 22 year-old student Sharon explains below;

They are very risky, because the moment the girl decides ‘I don’t want to go further with this man’, this man will be hurt, because he might have invested a lot in that girl, this guy might be hurt and kill her or hunt her down. (Sharon)

The undertone in informants’ discussions was that by ending the relationship, the girl exercises power which she according to the set-up of the relationship should not have. Notable is also that informants, just like Sharon above, to some extent understood the man’s anger over his bad investment. Power imbalances within the relationships were moreover often mentioned as the underlying cause of risks such as unsafe sex, STIs and pregnancies. Furthermore, it was highlighted how youth in ITRs risk feeling uncomfortable and unhappy with living up to the partner’s (mainly though not exclusively sexual) expectations on the relationship.

Though risk awareness among informants was strong and informants said youth know about risks, several interviewees also said that knowledge of risks would not necessarily matter since the needs and positive outcomes anticipated by some youth were deemed more important than risks. As the volunteer Jane, 19, said: “You can talk [about risks], but what will I do, your talk won’t help me.” UNICEFb (2011:39) has made similarly findings, and Leclerc-Madlala (2011) has even discussed how experience of AIDS related deaths might make youth more prone to engage in age-disparate relationships because such relationships offer youth the “possibility for enjoying life now while young, beautiful and still alive” (2011:20). Jane’s proposition is also in line with risk theory stipulating that knowledge of risks will not necessarily make individuals avoid risks.

Though informants said the relationships were risky, they when referring to themselves or their friends in ITRs rarely thought the younger party feared the older one but that the two were happy together. This contradiction is difficult to interpret. It could evince that risks related to ITRs are exaggerated, that youth want to perceive friends in ITRs as managing better than they actually do, or that youth do not talk to each other about
problems within ITRs (this is further discussed in relation to stigma). Finally, though the relationships are perceived as risky, youth as discussed under 5.1.1 can see them as providing a safer life by protecting them from economic strains and uncertainties. This contradiction exemplifies the interplay between positive and negative, and long-term and short-term, outcome beliefs that according to the applied theory underline decision-making.

5.3.2 STIGMA AND SHAME

Informants did not use the word stigma very often but clearly stated that it is generally not accepted for a young person to be with an older partner for any sort of benefits, and that the taboo lay both in the transactional trait and the age difference. De la Torre et al.’s (2009:25) proposition that transactional sex is “becoming an increasingly acceptable form of partnership in Namibia” appears questionable, but this study has obviously not made comparisons of acceptance in time. The fear of being judged and the feeling of shame was among informants considered a significant negative outcome of the engagement. The 22 year-old student Rosita for instance said “When you are dating a guy like that he would want to show you off, he might even hold you in town, and sheesh, you might even meet your family, it is very shameful”. Interviewees and key informants however also said that people’s acceptance towards ITRs and especially age-differences vary according to their ethnic group. It was also suggested that women engaging with older men for support would not be judged as long as it was as a formalized relationship which was agreed upon by families and followed traditional patterns. If it was a casual relationship it would however be very taboo.

Interviewees also brought up the difficulties in seeking/acquiring social support due to the feeling of shame and stigma. Informants said youth in ITRs rarely would discuss difficulties within the relationships with friends because the engaged youth would find this shameful, and youth would also avoid telling parents. The student Kristin, 22, said;

Most of the ladies just end up being in those relationships whether they are being abused or treated badly, they just keep quiet about it cause they’re scared that parents will beat them up or quarrel about it. And if they tell friends the friends will just end up telling the whole community. (Kristin)

If the problems were too grave, for instance if the young part became pregnant, interviewees thought that the young person would nonetheless turn to some close friend
or a family member for social support. Informants also mentioned professional actors to whom youth could turn, like “the child line”, health clinics, health counselors, pastors and social workers. The problem, they said, was that most young people, including they themselves, do not know how those actors actually can be reached. Furthermore, informants suggested that youth feared being judged by these professionals (though most informants deemed the fear to be unfounded) and that this would prolong the time before youth sought assistance. They related this fear of judgment to how ITRs were discussed by school professionals if at all discussed during life skill classes; with reprimands and as morally dubious.

5.4 ACCEPTANCE

Normative beliefs have been discussed both in relation to positive and negative outcome beliefs and have proven to be complex. Acceptance towards ITRs is still unclear and normative beliefs will therefore here be further analyzed.

In terms of descriptive norms, that is how youth perceive others around them act, key informants and informants said that ITRs are very common and almost all informants said they knew someone or several peers in such relationships. Interviewees furthermore mentioned “peer pressure because others are doing it” as an important pushing factor for why youth engage in ITRs. The descriptive norms however seemed to be in collision with the injunctive ones about how youth should behave. Informants were convinced that peers would judge and gossip about youth in ITRs. The volunteers Jane, 19, and Sean, 22, openly talked about their own experiences of engaging with older partners and described very negative reactions from friends. Jane said “They won’t talk with me…they were all angry, apparently I can’t date an older guy. They probably thought I was doing it for money and all that, but that was not the case”, and Sean described that “Everyone was having a problem with it /…/ and the other problem was she was white. So they thought ‘This guy, he’s like a gold digger or something’”. Sean however later added that it might not have been judgment he felt and said “…they were more jealous than upset. They wanted to do what I was doing but then the opportunity was not there”.

The two accounts signal that there could be a difference in how male and female engagement is perceived, as will soon be discussed, but also something else. Both informants highlighted that they did not enter the relationships because of the
transactional benefits, but this was what their friends judged them for. Other accounts from informants also indicated that the age difference mainly was taboo because it signaled that it was a transactional relationship. Intriguingly, informants also said exchanges and expectations on gifts were normal in any relationship. The 24 year-old student Florence said “If I’m a student I have to take someone who’s working, who can support me” and Festus, also a 24 year-old student described that young women “don’t expect to have sex if you’ve never given anything. /…/ if you can’t provide from them you are going to be left out for someone else”. Informants said this with a matter-of-fact tone, though frustration could also be detected among male participants.

Informants furthermore said that friends and parents might also question if you are with a partner who do not have the ability support you. Expecting gifts and gains from a boyfriend does hence not seem taboo in itself, though this study’s discoveries are not as radical as Wamoyi et al.’s (2011:9) proposition that young women regard women who have sex without demanding rewards as foolish and lacking self-worth. As already discussed, informants also said that youth can be admired by friends and peers for having found a wealthy partner and for the gains of the relationship. There does not seem to be a strict and predictable division between a transactional relationship judged as on the verge of prostitution and an encouraged and admired relationship entailing transactions. This was also indicated by the number of possible reactions informants described friends might have. The 23 year-old volunteer Destiny said “I will pity, I will envy and I will support, all three at the same time”, and the student Hendrika, 21, said that “some friends [will] even feel ashamed, they’ll think /…/ like if she’s doing that then they’ll think I’m also doing that, so they will even break the relationship between them”. It was also suggested that some friends would try to persuade the youth to end the relationship because of the risks involved, some might see the youth as a role model and some friends would be happy since they could also benefit from the relationship. The varying reactions described might indicate that attitudes towards ITRs vary between different youth, but Destiny’s account also signals that one and the same individual can react with varying emotions.

5.4.1 GENDERED ACCEPTANCE

Normative beliefs as discussed often proved to be complex and sometimes contradictory, but informants’ perceptions about differences in acceptance towards male
and female involvement in ITRs were clear. The working 23 year-old Destiny, just like most informants, said “They might start calling her names, like she’s a gold-digger, she’s a prostitute what what what, but for the guy’s side, it’s not really a big deal”. A woman would hence be judged for the engagement, while men would not. Some study participants thought that a man with a sugar mummy would be perceived as less manly, but that his friends would not do more than mock him a bit about this. A few informants analyzed this further and said that reactions towards male involvement would depend on how the man managed to portray the relationship. As long as he comes off as a conqueror who has “found himself a sugar mummy” and not as being dependent on a woman for basic needs he would not risk social sanctioning but even be admired. It is noteworthy that this was also how informants themselves portrayed male involvement in ITRs, e.g. when discussing motives. The student Raphael, 21, said “If your friends know you are depending on the lady they will make fun of you, but if they don’t know…”, and the working 22 year-old Stanley completed the portrayal with “If they gossip [about a man] they will gossip in a good way, they’ll say ‘That man is a player, man my friend he is living a good life.’”

For young women, there appeared to be little room for admiration. What came across strongly in the discussions was how informants repeatedly gave young women the role of a victim, lured and pushed into the relationship, or that of a manipulator taking advantage of men, but nothing in between. Valorizing comments most often came from male informants but were also expressed by some women, e.g. the volunteer Mary, 21, who no matter the situation blamed the woman in an ITR;

For instance a guy dating an older woman, the woman is looking for attention, which is totally wrong. Because that’s how they get to spread the diseases among the youth. And for the sugar daddies it is the same thing, the youth try to get attention from the older people, but getting it in the wrong way. [Mary]

Comments such as Mary’s might not have been conscious but still indicate an underlying difference in how informants understand young women and young men’s involvement just on the basis of their sex. It is notable that informants thought that a man only would be stigmatized if he came off as in true economic hardship, while several informants expressed how they could only accept a woman’s engagement if she had “valid reasons” like managing school costs or supporting the family.
I have in this study sought to untangle how youth in Windhoek perceive and explain young people’s involvement in ITRs with the aim to contribute to a more holistic understanding of how youth reason around ITRs. This has been attempted through a “belief approach” and though the approach in itself does not provide a holistic way of understanding youths’ engagement, it adds new nuances to the existing image of youth involvement in ITRs. The findings, though not possible to generalize to other settings, can provide insights and perspectives of use elsewhere. I will below pursue a wider dialogue about how youth, not only informants, might reason around ITRs. This dialogue is however based on testimonies by informants who were not necessarily engaged in ITRs and who are not representative of all Windhoek youth. The insights must hence only be seen as providing input, not a complete image, to a deeper understanding of how youth reason around ITRs.

This chapter will first summarize what insights the belief approach has offered. Informants’ perceptions and stories did however not only serve to better understand youths’ outcome beliefs, self-efficacy beliefs and normative beliefs but also spurred an analysis of how youth understand the concept of ITRs. This analysis is equally important for comprehending youths’ reasoning around ITRs and the second section of the chapter is therefore devoted to concluding that analysis. In the third section some programmatic implications are discussed and finally a concluding remark on the study’s main findings is offered. Recommendations for future research, mainly in terms of considerations that future studies on ITRs need to take into account, are provided throughout the discussion.

6.1 REFLECTIONS ABOUT THE BELIEF APPROACH

This study has touched upon various issues discussed in prior research as well. Informants’ suggestions about youth motivations for engaging in ITRs were e.g. in line with prior findings. Through the belief approach I have however analyzed informants’ accounts in terms of the positive and negative expectations youth might have on ITRs (rather than as reasons or “drivers”) and this enabled a new contextualization of how youth reason around ITRs. Below the most important findings enabled by this approach are discussed.
The analysis of positive outcome beliefs portrayed how youth engagement in ITRs is about more than the short-term material gains often used to explain why youth enter ITRs. Apart from managing the daily strains of life, informants’ accounts indicated that youth in various ways see ITRs as offering long-term advances in life. Furthermore, informants introduced the self-evident and yet often by-passed viewpoint that material desires are actually about belonging to a certain group of people and enjoying social life. This might have been assumed and insinuated when articles and reports talk about consumerism, materialism and peer pressure but it has rarely been put down in words. Hence “the three C:s”-explanation has prevailed despite being misleading (and judgmental as it presents engaged youth as craving materialists) if not qualified. Even “paying for university” can be a simplified explanation for youth involvement in ITRs if it is not also taken into consideration what it is youth want to accomplish through university and how the statement can signify both getting to, and staying at, university.

Informants, in line with some prior research, also described how young people can see ITRs as offering them influence and control over their life situation, hence in a sense empowering them. Wamoyi et al. (2011:12) has suggested that this could help explain why youth whose basic needs are met nonetheless engage in transactional sex. It should however be stressed that though youth might view ITRs as offering a safe and stable life over which they feel in control, participants in this study said youth are also aware of risks and the limited control and power within the relationships. Similarly informants in general judged the outcomes of ITRs as desirable but the conditions of the relationship as undesirable (at least when discussing ITRs of youth in general and not friends in ITRs). Moreover, ITRs were described as an acceptable, not desirable, option for managing life. Such a qualification is important since several previous reports and articles have provided polarized images of ITRs as either much or not at all desired among Namibian youth. The underlying finding is that youth interviewed about the desirability of ITRs will provide varying answers depending on if they have the gains or the characteristics of the relationship in mind when answering the question. This needs to be taken into account in future studies exploring the desirability of ITRs.

Finally, the belief approach also enabled insights on perceptions about ITRs’ negative outcomes, something little research has been devoted to before. Apart from health risks and power imbalances, the fear of judgment was also discussed. It seems as if ITRs are
generally not accepted and that at least women risk being judged and gossiped about. The gains youth can attain through the relationships, such as going through school, looking nice and having a wealthy partner, are however judged positively. This creates two conflicting norms that youth have to navigate between. Furthermore, there seem to be a fine line, at least for young women, between being admired for having found a desirable boyfriend and being judged for engaging in transactional sex. This divide between appreciation and judgment turned out to be key for apprehending how youth themselves understand ITRs and it is further discussed in the next section.

A short appraisal of the analytical framework is however first in place. It has become evident that the four beliefs in the analytical framework interact and need to be understood as integrative parts of a system. A new model of the analytical framework, a model which better conceptualize and illustrate this understanding, could look like this;

**FIGURE 5, INTEGRATED BELIEF APPROACH**

![Integrated Belief Approach](image)

This model illustrates that normative beliefs and self-efficacy beliefs take part in forming outcome beliefs, something which neither the analytical framework nor the IMBP fully recognized. It furthermore portrays what proved to cause contradictions in informants’ accounts, namely that normative beliefs take part in forming both positive outcome beliefs (i.e. a belief that others will look up to me if having a successful partner) and negative outcome beliefs (i.e. others will judge me for entering a
relationship for material benefits). Despite a change in the model’s illustration, the analytical framework remains the same. This framework does however not enable an analysis of all elements relevant for understanding youth involvement in ITRs. It is a simplification of the IMBP, and the IMBP is in itself not complete. With this remark I seek to accentuate that whatever approach used to study a phenomenon, some angles will remain in the dark. This is why research must constantly question old routes of inquiry and depart from new, alternative perspectives, and this is also what this study has done.

6.2 UNDERSTANDING CONTRADICTIONS

The study sought to explore how youth reason around ITRs, and informants’ accounts brought about an equally important parallel narrative of how youth understand the term ITR. This narrative is lined with contradictions that appear to be based in the terminology “transactional”. The word is a socially constructed term used to distinguish a relation that has no clear boundaries, and this causes difficulties in using and understanding the concept. Informants described ITRs as taboo, at least for women, while also stating that some degree of transactions is expected in any relationship. Women could moreover be criticized both if searching for, and if not having, a boyfriend who provides for them. Informants’ perceptions of ITRs furthermore varied widely depending on if they discussed friends in ITRs or youth in general, “The Others”, engaged in ITRs. A friend’s partner was described as a boyfriend and the relationship as rather “normal”, safe and accepted, while The Others’ partners were depicted as sugar daddies and the relationships as “abnormal” and taboo. The wide meaning of the word transactional made it inherently difficult to talk about how accepted ITRs in general are.

Despite shortcomings of the word transactional, it remains the only term available when discussing these relationships, and it therefore becomes utterly important that anyone using it has an understanding of its limitations and multiple meanings. This is not least important because the term, just like “intergenerational”, “sugar daddy” and “sugar mummy”, seem to have negative connotations and prejudice connected to it. Examples of such connotations were given in the introduction but were also expressed by study participants who when referring to The Others (of female sex) in ITRs repeatedly talked about greed and material desires with a judgmental tone. This further invokes the
concept of gender. A young man in an ITR was not perceived to be dependent on his sugar mummy or subject to oppression, and in most cases informants thought he would be admired for the involvement. Ridgeway and Correll (2004:513) argue that people’s constructions of gender create narrow representations of women and men. These prove problematic when applied in reality since no one is ever just “a man” or “a woman” but also has other attributes (such as class and ethnicity). It is possible that when informants talked about The Others, the people they had in mind where nothing more than either “women” or “men” and their constructions of gender therefore played a great role for how they described involved youth. Women were then only perceived as victims or manipulators while male involvement was discussed in a more appreciative manner. When informants also tied other attributes and personal relations to the person they had in mind during discussions a more complex image would come forward, and this caused contradictions in their accounts. Considering that informants knew few men in ITRs, their perception about male involvement however remained uncomplicated. Informants’ explanations for male involvement in ITRs might hence be more uncertain than their explanations for female involvement, though both appear colored by informants’ constructions of gender. The analysis of how informants’ beliefs are gendered has moreover shown that perceptions about ITRs are closely linked to perceptions about acceptable female and male behavior. It has also pointed to the extensive norms and values prevailing around female sexuality.

Moving on, the broad understanding of what ITRs are also has implications for how risks associated with the relationships can be understood. It has been shown that ITRs entail risks such as power imbalances, low condom use and the spread of HIV. When informants in this study discussed friends involved in ITRs they however thought that the majority of these friends experienced few or no difficulties within the relationships. This could be because admitting problems within ITRs was considered shameful. It might however also indicate that though relationships that fit the definition of being intergenerational and transactional are frequent, the ITRs that youth experience as problematic and forced might not be. It is mainly the frequency of the latter ones that is important to appreciate. This signals a need for quantitative research which, rather than calculating the mere ratio of youth who have received gifts or money in exchange for sex (as has often been done in the past), explores how many of the youth considering themselves to be in ITRs that actually experience problems within the relationships.
6.3 PROGRAMMATIC IMPLICATIONS

It was argued in the introduction that whatever programs or policies developed in response to ITRs must correspond to the needs of young people. A few suggestions on how this study’s contributions can be of relevance for future research on, and programmatic efforts responding to, ITRs have already been brought up. Some important findings if responding to ITRs however remain to be discussed.

Firstly, this study and others before it has indicated that the image of youth, or rather young women, in ITRs as victims corresponds poorly with at least some youths’ perceptions of ITRs. Efforts to merely “promote age-symmetric relationships” do not recognize this youth perspective and are furthermore flawed since not all intergenerational relationships are problematic. Merely educating youth about risks within ITRs may be an equally flawed approach not only for the reason stated above but since young people (at least in this study) already appear aware of risks but suggested some youth choose to disregard the risks.

Secondly, the role interviewees’ assigned to poverty is of great significance. What might seem like unnecessary desires can be absolute needs in the eyes of youth who want to belong to and interact with a certain group of people. Any response developed must grasp this youth perspective on poverty as a relative, not absolute, term.

Thirdly, both young women and men appear to challenge gender norms by engaging in ITRs though in different ways; women by being sexually active and men by being financially supported by a woman. Women risk more serious judgment, but informants’ accounts also raised questions about how engaged men who cannot maintain the façade of a “conqueror” will be judged by others. Such men might both be in difficult relationships and be highly stigmatized, and it is important that health services can offer adequate support to both sexes.

Finally, programmatic responses to prevent the initiation of ITRs are delicate both in practical and ethical terms. Youth could however be made better aware of, and guaranteed access to, youth friendly services free of judgment and prejudice. This would not only benefit youth in ITRs but all young people.
The main findings of this study can be divided into two categories; findings derived specifically by analyzing informants’ accounts against the belief framework and understandings enabled through an analysis of how informants discussed ITRs.

The belief approach enabled a portrayal of how “simple” motives such as wanting to pay school fees or having the latest phone might be based in complex beliefs about where and to what group of people these things can take youth and the sense of empowerment the gains enable. Certain differences in how students and youth not at university might reason around the engagement were also indicated. Furthermore, a first depiction of young people’s risk awareness and the judgment youth in ITRs might encounter was provided. A depiction of this is not least vital considering how youth in ITRs according to informants might avoid seeking health services due to stigma.

A number of key findings however lie outside the direct analysis of beliefs. These are particularly important for future research to acknowledge so that data is not misinterpreted. It proved vital to separate youths’ perceptions about the life ITRs enable and their perceptions about the relationships in themselves to fully understand the desirability of ITRs among youth. Furthermore, youths’ broad understanding of what an ITR is needs to be taken into account both in future research and if efforts to tackle the problematic traits of ITRs are developed. Finally, young people interviewed about ITRs will, to varying extent, base their discussions on their constructions of gender and perceptions about how women and men “should” behave. Their “othering” of unknown youth in ITRs might furthermore impact how they describe the relationships.

To round up this conclusion, I want to emphasize that the points brought forward in this study do not contradict or disregard prior research but complements it. The literature review concluded that “ITRs might best be described as a product of new values integrating with older traditions and norms in a societal context where youth and especially women are economically constrained and socially disadvantaged”. This study has qualified this statement by providing further details on how youth reason around and understand the relationships and by digging deeper on how acceptance towards ITRs can be understood.
7. REFERENCES


-Chambers, R 2008, Revolutions in Development Inquiry, Earth Scan, Chippenham.


-Ridgeway C L & Correll S J 2004, ‘Unpacking the Gender System’, a Theoretical Perspective on Gender Beliefs and Social Relations, *Gender and Society*, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 510-531.


-UNICEF b (United Nations Children’s Fund) 2011, ‘*HIV Vulnerability of Adolescent Girls in Namibia, the Known and the Unknown*, Windhoek.


8. APPENDICES

8.1 APPENDIX A, RECORD OF INFORMANTS AND BREAK-DOWN OF INFORMANT CHARACTERISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date (2012) and FG/I</th>
<th>Name, Sex, Age</th>
<th>Date (2012) and FG/I</th>
<th>Name, Sex, Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15/11 FG 1</td>
<td>Festus, Man, 24</td>
<td>20/11 FG 4</td>
<td>Julian, Man, 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11 FG 1</td>
<td>Anati, Man, 22</td>
<td>20/11 FG 4</td>
<td>Hendrika, Woman, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11 FG 1</td>
<td>Romanus, Man, 23</td>
<td>20/11 FG 4</td>
<td>Hendrian, Man, 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11 FG 1</td>
<td>Benito, Man, 24</td>
<td>20/11 FG 4</td>
<td>Nicole, Woman, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11 FG 1</td>
<td>Tangeni, Man, 24</td>
<td>20/11 FG 4</td>
<td>Charles, Man, 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11 FG 2</td>
<td>Rose, Woman, 21</td>
<td>20/11 FG 4</td>
<td>Mercedez, Woman, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11 FG 2</td>
<td>Selma, Woman, 21</td>
<td>20/11 FG 4</td>
<td>Marvin, Man, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11 FG 2</td>
<td>Claudia, Woman, 19</td>
<td>20/11 FG 4</td>
<td>Kristin, Woman, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11 FG 2</td>
<td>Esther, Woman, 22</td>
<td>20/11 FG 4</td>
<td>Bernina, Woman, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11 FG 2</td>
<td>Florence, Woman, 24</td>
<td>21/11 I 6</td>
<td>Erica, Woman, 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11 FG 2</td>
<td>Glory, Woman, 20</td>
<td>22/11 I 7</td>
<td>Nadia, Woman, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11 FG 2</td>
<td>Destiny, Woman, 23</td>
<td>22/11 I 8</td>
<td>Mary, Woman, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11 FG 2</td>
<td>Elsie, Woman, 20</td>
<td>22/11 I 9</td>
<td>Stanley, Man, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11 FG 2</td>
<td>Karrina, Woman, 21</td>
<td>29/11 I 10</td>
<td>Nicolau, Man, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11 FG 3</td>
<td>Raphael, Man, 21</td>
<td>29/11 I 11</td>
<td>Sharon, Woman, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11 FG 3</td>
<td>Letitia, Woman, 23</td>
<td>30/11 FG 5</td>
<td>Sean, Man, 22, 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11 FG 3</td>
<td>Silas, Man, 21</td>
<td>30/11 FG 5</td>
<td>Jane, Woman, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11 FG 3</td>
<td>Angeline, Woman, 24</td>
<td>30/11 FG 5</td>
<td>Adriano, Man, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11 FG 3</td>
<td>Erastus, Man, 24</td>
<td>30/11 FG 5</td>
<td>Muriel, Woman, 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11 FG 3</td>
<td>Alyssa, Woman, 20</td>
<td>30/11 FG 5</td>
<td>Naomi, Woman, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11 FG 3</td>
<td>Leonard, Man, 24</td>
<td>30/11 FG 5</td>
<td>Carla, Woman, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/11 FG 3</td>
<td>Flora, Woman, 23</td>
<td>30/11 FG 6</td>
<td>Fran, Woman, 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/11 I 1</td>
<td>Rosita, Woman, 22</td>
<td>30/11 FG 6</td>
<td>Cheryl, Woman, 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/11 I 2</td>
<td>Lesley, Woman, 22</td>
<td>30/11 FG 6</td>
<td>Lilian, Woman, 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/11 I 3</td>
<td>Henry, Man, 21</td>
<td>30/11 FG 6</td>
<td>Shekupe, Woman, 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/11 I 4</td>
<td>Vidette, Woman, 24</td>
<td>2/12 I 12</td>
<td>Kevin, Man, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/11 I 5</td>
<td>Amadeus, Man, 24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Conducted in Windhoek in the UN building, the Disability Rehabilitation Centre in Katutura, Young Women’s Christian Association’s venue in Katutura and Zoo Park and Parliamentary Garden in the city center. Note that it is different individuals in the interviews and focus groups.*
Record of Key Informant Interviews (2012)

11/9 2012, UNAIDS intern (Woman, young Namibian) and UNAIDS Junior Consultant on Youth and HIV (Man, young Namibian)

26/10 2012, Researcher at the International Training and Education Center for Health in Windhoek (Man, non-Namibian)

30/10 2012, Program Director at Namibia Planned Parenthood Association (Woman, Namibian)

6/12 2012, UNAIDS Partnership Advisor (Woman, non-Namibian)

14/12 2012, UNAIDS Admin and Finance Assistant (Woman, Namibian)

18/12 2012, UNDP Program Associate (Woman, Namibian)

Break-down of Informant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Interview</th>
<th>Nr of Women/Men</th>
<th>Nr of Students / Non-Students</th>
<th>Informants’ age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 Focus Groups; 3 with mixed sexes, 2 with only females and 1 with only men</td>
<td>26 Women, 15 Men</td>
<td>20 students, 21 informants who had not continued to higher education</td>
<td>Age 18: 2 Age 19: 2 Age 20: 4 Age 21: 9 Age 22: 8 Age 23: 7 Age 24: 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Total of 41 participants)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Individual Interviews</td>
<td>7 Women, 5 Men</td>
<td>4 Students, 8 informants who had not continued to higher education</td>
<td>Age 21: 4 Age 22: 5 Age 23: 1 Age 24: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Key Informant Interviews</td>
<td>5 Women, 2 Men</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>&gt; 24: 2 24 &lt;: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Total of 7 informants)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following guide was used to ensure that I covered the needed topics with informants. Many of the questions presented here were not asked since informants explored the topic on their own after the first general questions (as I had hoped for). The more specific questions hence rather served as ‘back-up questions’ that were used if a topic had not been discussed by the end of an interview.

1. Before sitting down, ask participants to fill in a sheet with information about name, age, phone number, living area and occupation.

2. Welcome participants, share information about the study and how the participants’ contributions will be used. Guarantee anonymity, ask for permission to tape the discussion/interview. Make it clear that informants are not obligated to answer any question, that they could leave at any point and that they need to respect each other’s opinions. Ask for informed consent and if there are any questions before we start.

3. The interview can start, and the following topics will be covered:

   A. Generally about relationships:
      -How common do you think it is to be in a relationship among people around your age in Windhoek?

   B. Shared definition:
      -Are you familiar with the concept transactional relationships? How would you define such a relationship?

   C. About the relationships:
      -Could you tell me a little bit about these transactional relationships?
      -Would you say that these relationships mostly occur between people of the same age or is there an age difference between the parties?
      -Among what ages do you think these relationships occur?

   D. Frequency in Windhoek/Namibia:
      - I have read some research on these intergenerational transactional relationships, but I do not know whether they are frequent in Windhoek, what do you think?
      -How easy or difficult is it to find such a partner for young people?
      -Do you think it occurs more among certain young people than among others, or might any youth engage in such a relationship?

   E. Motives:
      -Why do you think young people enter these relationships?
      -How do you think motives differ, if at all, between young women and young men?
-How do you think those involved in these relationships feel about their engagement?

F. Risk perception:
-Say a young person is with an older man/woman who is wealthier than the youth. How do you think this relationship will be different or similar to a relationship in which both parties are peers?

G. Acceptance:
-What do you believe people of your age in general think about these relationships?
-How do you get to know if friends or peers are in these relationships?
-How might friends react if they got to know someone close to them was in one of these relationships?
-And how would parents and family react?
-Can you explore on how you think people might react to a woman being with an older man, and how they would react to a man being with an older woman in one of these relationships?

H. Stigma and support:
-If a youth is in a difficult situation (e.g. can’t negotiate safe sex) in one of these relationships, what do you think he or she would do?
-Which actors in the society, if any, do you think one can turn to in such a scenario?

I. Information, knowledge and responsive measures:
-Could you describe the message that schools, NGOs or health services send out in relation to these issues, if they at all talk about it?

4. Thank informants for having participated and taken the time to take part in the study. Hand out remuneration. Take informants aside if needed (e.g. if something sensitive has come up during the interview or I need further information on something.)