

*'I trap her with a CD, then tomorrow you find her with a big old man who bought her a smartphone'*

Constructions of masculinities and transactional sex: a qualitative study from North-Western Tanzania



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# Introduction: Transactional Sex

*“Non-commercial, non-marital sexual relationships motivated by the implicit assumption that sex will be exchanged for material support or other benefits” (Stoebenau et al., 2016, p.23)*

# Introduction: Aims

- Gain clarity on men's behaviours within, and perspectives of, transactional sex
- Unpack homogenous view of the role of men and adolescent boys in transactional sex
- Strengthen initiatives working with men and boys to shift social norms and for greater gender equity

# Methods

- Focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews
- Transcripts translated verbatim from Kiswahili into English
- Thematic analysis and grounded analysis

	IDs	FGDs
Young men (14-24 years)	8	4
Adult men (>24 years)	12	4
Total	20	8

# Results: Masculinities and Transactional Sex

Men are expected to provide material items to their sexual partners

Men should demonstrate their masculinity through heightened sexuality and sexual prowess

# Results: Performing and Questioning the Provider Norm

- Young men had to ‘work very hard’ to provide in relationships
- Older men used the ‘gift method’ to ‘trick and trap’ girls, including those having a ‘money emergency’
- Some men were outcompeted for TS partners by others better able to provide

# Results: Performing and Questioning the Heightened Sexuality Norm

- Men express a bodily desire for sex: ‘the body is harassing you’
- Monogamy unlikely to satisfy men’s sexual desire
- Men gain ‘swag’ by boasting about the number and young age of their sexual partners

# Results: Questioning Transactional Sex

*He has lost his self-awareness that he has responsibility for a family [...] he forgets that when he has more than one partner, his expenses will be too high, and there are important things that his family is going to miss.*

(IDI, Older man)

*I think that somebody that gives out money to get sex [...] his muscles are small [...] when you don't have money, [sex] stops there.*

(FGD, young men)

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*[My friends] always come [and say] “the wife at home is tiresome my friend, escort me here” [...] but] I don't need to embarrass myself, to lose my dignity and respect.*

(IDI, older man)



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# Discussion

- Transactional sex presents an opportunity for men to enact provider norms and heightened sexuality norms and align themselves with a hegemonic masculinity
  - Perpetuating women's and girls' economic dependence on men,
  - Sexual coercion and control – differentiate men from 'easily manipulated girls'

# Discussion

- Men's participation in and perspectives of transactional sex are influenced by reference groups of other men
  - Non-conforming individuals are sanctioned (outcompeted, ridiculed)
  - Men mitigate threat of social sanctions by preemptive behaviours and narratives – directly influence participation in TS

# Discussion

- Men who question transactional sex do not necessarily challenge harmful hegemonic masculine ideals
  - Older men men discredited men TS participants for risking ability to provide for their families and protect children
  - Younger men discredited older men using narratives of their sexual prowess, or love and trust

# Limitations

- Strong ecological validity, but limited generalisability to a wider population
- Limited understanding of views and behaviours of older men non-participants in transactional sex
- Did not track changes in the same men over time

# Conclusion

- Transactional sex provides men with an opportunity to adhere to gendered expectations
- Men are influenced by sanctions exerted within reference groups of other men
- Age and access to resources has an important influence on men's participation in and attitudes toward TS

# Thank you



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