Volume : 3 | Issue : 1 | Jan 2014 • ISSN No 2277 - 8160



Research Paper | Education

Perceived Impact of Prostitution Tendencies on Academic Performance of University Undergraduates in South East, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated perceived impact of prostitution tendencies on academic performance of university undergraduates in South East Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study. The design of the study was descriptive survey. The sample consisted of 1,983 university undergraduates from two federal and three state universities in South East, Nigeria. The instruments used for the study were questionnaire titled Perceived Impact of Prostitution Tendencies on Academic Performance Questionnaire (PIPTAPQ) and Focus Group Discussions Guide(FGDs) which were validated by experts. The data were analysed using percentage, mean and standard deviation. Content analysis was employed to capture major themes and patterns from the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The major findings of the study are: The numbers of undergraduates that possess moderate and high levels of prostitution tendencies were quite high. The results also indicated that examination failures, course carry over, involvement in examination malpractice, repeating of classes, skipping of class assignment/group work, poor concentration, irregular attendance to classes, missing examinations, dropout of school, over staying prescribed maximum course duration, and other attendant academic problems were some of the negative impact of prostitution tendencies on the academic performance of university undergraduates in South East, Nigeria. It was recommended among others that professionals in the guidance and counseling centres in universities should organize seminars, symposia and workshops for staff and students of tertiary institutions on negative effects of prostitution on the academic performance.

KEYWORDS : Prostitution tendency, academic performance, perceived impact, university undergraduates.

1. Introduction

Universities for ages have been regarded as institutions where students pursue and acquire intellectual, technological, character, moral and virtuous skills. As a result, universities in certifying their graduates indicate that they have groomed them both in character and in learning. However, this tradition does not seem to stand the test of time any more in Nigeria, as the students in the universities appear to have different agenda (Anadi, Egboka and Anierobi, 2011). There are observable multiplicity of distractions such as cultism, fashion, watching pornographic films in the internet, prostitution, among others that exist today in the higher institutions that many students strive to pursue rather than academic excellence. In line with the above observation, Uzokwe (2008) stated that some Universities have become citadels for cultists, cheats, armed robbers and even prostitutes. To make matters worse, some students see these vices as a way of life in many universities. According to Olugbile, Abu and Adelakun (2008), for example many undergraduates have resorted to full time prostitution in their campuses under the guise that they are hustling. According to these authors, prostitution goes by different names in the universities such as "Aristo", "Runs", "Parole", "Flexxing", "Digging", "Late hour", "Survival" and many others. Some students seem to have become so adept at prostitution that they remorselessly engage in the act. For instance, Olugbile, Abu and Adelaku observed that there is an innovative approach to prostitution. According to them, some student-prostitutes now advertise themselves through photo albums kept by middlemen in popular hotels close to university campuses. In some cases also, these student-prostitutes are recruited on contract basis by politicians to attend parties and see to the sensual needs of the men in the parties. It is very common these days in many cities in Nigeria to see some young girls roaming the streets and hotels seeking for clients when they are supposed to be in schools or at home. Both male and female undergraduates are actively involved in prostitution. While the boys indulge more as the go between among the female prostitutes, the girls are more prone to the act of prostituting itself.

Throughout its long history, prostitution has always been a controversial discuss. This is evident by the widespread tolerance interspersed with periodic condemnation and attempts to abolish it (Bullough & Bullough, 1996). The ambivalent attitudes towards prostitution have been part of the feminist discussion of prostitutes since attempting to first understand this social phenomenon in the 19th century. In the last three decades, there have been more studies investigating the extent, nature, causes, and possible solutions for prostitution due in part to the massive campaign about AIDS, the growing number of countries that are reviewing legislation and reforming laws governing prostitution, and the interest in the topic brought about by feminist oriented scholars who have been encouraging a better understanding of prostitution (Bullough & Bullough, 1996). Prostitution is certainly a global issue prevalent in many countries worldwide.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defined prostitution as a process that involves a transaction between a seller and buyer of a sexual service (World Health Organization, 1988). This definition is unique since it is the only one that includes the customer and the prostitute, (Kissil and Davey, 2010). The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) (2002) defined a sex worker as female, male and transgender adults and people who receive money or goods in exchange for sexual services either regularly or occasionally, and who may or may not consciously define those activities as income generating. For them therefore prostitution is sex outside of marriage involving transaction of money or other form of material wealth. To Zatz (1997) prostitution might be provisionally defined as attending to the sexual desires of a particular individual (or individuals) with bodily acts in exchange for payment of money. Such a definition according to him immediately raises several questions. First, are the actors just anyone? Many feminists have been inclined to say "no" emphatically, insisting on prostitution as paradigmatically women selling to straight men. The West African Project to Combat AIDS (WAPCAS) (2005) defined a prostitute as one who for one reason or the other engages in sex regularly as economic activity to earn a living. In this study, prostitution can be seen as the exchange of sexual services for money. It may be men, women or children, and the buyer of prostitute is a man except in very rare cases where the buyer may be a woman.

The earlier evidence was that female sex workers in Nigeria were young widows, separated wives, or women thrown out of marriage because they were sterile (Falola, 1984). Presently, however, the Nigerian sex industry has far more young and single women than any other profession (Ilesanmin and Lewis, 1997). Sex workers in Nigeria today are not always below average in educational attainment. Studies have shown that university, polytechnic and colleges of education students needing extra money to support their education are into this business

(Pickering and Wilkins 1993, Orubuloye, Caldwell and Caldwell, 1994). Studies conducted in different parts of the world show that endemic and vicious cycles of poverty, economic hardship, insecurity, broken homes, male child preference, peer group influence, influence from the environment, lack of opportunity and early sexual experience largely predispose women and girls into sex work (Izugbara, 2005; John, 2003; James and Meyerding, 1978; Macleod, 2006; Ogbonnaya in Onwuka, 2002; Otite and Ogionwo, 2006). It is pertinent to note that the socio-economic background of the family may be one of the reasons why undergraduates engage in prostitution.

The socio-economic status of the family is very important in a child's learning and academic performance. Onyia (2002) observed that a family of high income status is likely to adequately provide the needs of a child more than a family of low socio-economic status. It is a known fact that high socio-economic parents are likely to attach greater importance to their children's school requirements than a poor family because they have the financial capability to provide adequately for their children's education. Consequently, a family of high economic status tends to have good library at home and buy the necessary recommended textbooks and school equipment for their children. Conversely, people from families with low socio-economic background are not adequately provided with the basic necessities of life and these force some of them into prostitution as a way of augmenting their income for the provision of these needs. Again within the social units – family, community, and other cultural groups that make up Nigeria, Izugbara (2005) observes that women and girls are the weakest and most vulnerable. They suffer educational, economic and other forms of social deprivation and are often ill-equipped to negotiate better life chances for themselves. For most of them sex work is the only way out of the hardship, misery, deprivation and marginalization which they suffer.

2. Statement of the Problem

The prevalence of youth prostitution has become a serious social problem to universities in Nigeria, the government and society in general. Prostitution has its attendant risks which include health, physical, emotional, psychological and sociological risks. There is a high health risk in prostitution owing to the fact that commercial sex workers (CSW) are considered to be the main source of sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis, gonorrhea, the dreaded Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Many of these diseases are incurable and may lead to death or permanent health disorder. It has also resulted in gender based violence, unwanted pregnancies, abortion, school dropout and others. Many commercial sex workers (CSW) have been victims of ritual murders, violent rape, and other physical injuries. Literature evidence indicates increasing prevalence of students' involvement in prostitution in universities in Nigeria. It is not quite clear the impact prostitution tendencies may have on academic performance of undergraduate students in universities in the South East Nigeria.

This study is anchored on social structure and anomie theory. This theory, propounded by Merton in 1968, holds that some members of the society deviate from societal norms because of the desire to overcome poverty and become successful without matching it with hard work and creativity. Prostitution encourages young persons to mortgage their bodies for the purpose of receiving financial rewards as a fast means of acquiring material wealth in a highly materialistic society. The South East Nigeria is well known as an ethnic nationality in Nigeria in a great hurry to have the good things of life.

Research Questions

The following two research questions guided the study:

1. What is the level of prostitution tendencies among university undergraduates in South East, Nigeria?
2. What are the perceived impacts of prostitution tendencies on academic performance of university undergraduates?

3. Methodology

The design of the study was descriptive survey. The study was carried out in the public Universities in South East, Nigeria. Final year undergraduates from four Federal and five State Universities in South East, Nigeria constituted the population of the study. The population was 30,816 (comprising 16,672 male and 14,104 female) undergraduates in the universities (Academic Planning Units of the Universities 2009). Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 1983 respondents. First, the universities were stratified into Federal and State universities. Then proportionate sampling technique was applied to pick 50% from each of the stratum (from four Federal universities, two were selected from five State universities three were selected). To arrive at the subjects for the study, the respondents (students) in each of the universities were stratified into male and female and a proportionate sample of 10% was used to select the subjects from each of the selected universities based on the strata (male and female).

The instruments used for data collection were researchers-developed questionnaire titled "Perceived Impact of Prostitution Tendencies on Academic Performance Questionnaire (PIPTAPQ) and Focus Group Discussions Guide (FGDs). The questionnaire compromised 28 items in two clusters A and B. Cluster A sought information on the level of prostitution tendencies among university undergraduates. Cluster B focused on the impact of prostitution on academic performance of undergraduates in the universities in South East Nigeria. A 4-point response mode of Strongly Agree (SA = 4 points), Agree (A = 3 points), Disagree (D = 2 points), and Strongly Disagree (SD = 1 point) was adopted.

The instruments were validated by experts, one in educational measurement and evaluation, one in sociology of education and one educational psychology at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. They were asked to assess the items in terms of clarity and relevance. Their inputs were reflected in the final instruments.

In order to determine the reliability of the instrument, the PIPTAPQ was administered to 30 final year undergraduate students in Kogi state University compromising 15 males and 15 females. This University is outside the study area. Cronbach Alpha method was adopted to estimate the internal consistency coefficient of the questionnaire. Reliability indices of 0.79 and 0.85 respectively were obtained for cluster A and B.

The questionnaire was administered on the respondents by the researchers with the help of five research assistants. Descriptive statistics were used to answer the research questions. Content analysis was employed to analyse the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) data. The FGDs were tape-recorded and the recordings were transcribed after each discussion. All the statements made by discussants were analysed to identify running themes and patterns.

4. Results

Table 1: Percentage on level of Prostitution Tendencies Among University Undergraduates (N = 1983)

Level	n	Percentage
Low Tendency	633	31.92
Moderate Tendency	941	47.45
High Tendency	409	20.68
N	1983	

Table 1 shows that 633, representing 31.92% of the University undergraduates sampled displayed low level of prostitution tendencies. Also, 941 representing 47.45% University undergraduates displayed moderate level of prostitution tendencies. Further the result indicated that the number of undergraduates with high level of prostitution tendencies is 409 representing 20.68%. The data obtained tend to show that the number of undergraduates that possess moderate prostitution tendencies and high levels of prostitution tendencies was quite high.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of the University undergraduates' response to impact of prostitution tendencies on academic performance (N = 1983)

	Items	Mean	Stand Dev.	Decision
1.	– not to pass their examinations	2.97	0.82	Accepted
2.	– have carry-over courses	2.96	0.77	Accepted
3.	– be involved in examination malpractice	2.92	0.85	Accepted
4.	– repeat a class	2.90	0.81	Accepted
5.	– not to take part in class assignments/group work	3.06	0.72	Accepted
6.	– lose concentration	3.15	0.81	Accepted
7.	– not to attend classes regularly	3.09	0.85	Accepted
8.	– miss examinations	3.11	0.81	Accepted

9.	– drop out of school	2.92	0.89	Accepted
10.	– over stay, thereby not graduating on time	3.16	0.89	Accepted
	Cluster mean	3.02	0.72	Accepted

Table 2 shows that all 10 items were accepted by the University undergraduates as perceived impact of prostitution tendencies on academic performance. The response means were above the cutoff point of 2.50. It is therefore the perception of the University undergraduates that the impact of prostitution on academic performance were that they could not pass examination, tend to carry-over courses, were involved in examination malpractices, tend to repeat classes, did not take part in assignments or group work, experienced poor concentration, did not attend classes regularly, missed examinations, may drop out of school, had overstay problems and therefore could not graduate on time.

5. Discussion

The results indicate that there are three levels of prostitution tendencies among University undergraduates in South-East universities in Nigeria. The levels of prostitution tendencies as identified include: low, moderate and high levels respectively. The results indicate high level of prostitution tendency among undergraduates in universities in South East of Nigeria. Prostitution is a public health issue. Any health issue that claims up to 20% of the population is alarming and calls for urgent action from government and stakeholders. If 20 percent of young persons in the universities self report high level of prostitution tendency there is indeed cause to be alarmed.

Also the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) report added credence to that data obtained from the survey report. From FGDs with the discussants (undergraduates) at Abia State University, Uturu, it was reported that the prevalent level of prostitution in the institution is about 98%, for Anambra State University of Science and Technology, Uli according to the discussants, it is about 60 – 70% and at University of Nigeria, Nsukka, the prostitution level is about 30%. These findings seem to be in agreement with the report of Uzokwe (2008), Olugbile, Abu, and Adelakun (2008) who asserted that a great number of university undergraduates have resorted to full time prostitution practices in University campuses. The analysis of FGDs suggests that the prevalent rate of prostitution was higher in state universities than in the federal universities. This may be due to some demands which the state universities place on the undergraduates which require financial or other related issues. In order to solve such problems, some students may take to prostitution.

From the finding of the study, it was observed that the major impacts of prostitution tendencies include: examination failures, course carry-overs, involvement in examination malpractices, repeating of classes, skipping of class assignments/group work, irregular attendance to classes, poor concentration, missing examinations, drop out of school, over staying prescribed maximum course duration, and other attendant academic problems. The FGDs analysis revealed that students who indulged in prostitution were not able to cope with academic requirements occasioned by:

travelling every now and then, not consistent in lecture attendance and school activities, poor academic coping skills, bartering sex for marks, not really bordering about knowledge acquisition, don't care about knowing just care about certificates, poorly focused on academic matters, generally lazier faire attitude to scholarship and low cumulative grade point averages.

These findings are in line with John (2003) who observed that it is very common in many Nigerian cities to see a great number of young girls roaming the streets and hotels seeking for clients when they are supposed to be in school or at home. Bambose (2002) noted that one major effect of prostitution on undergraduates is that they never do well in school, and that not withstanding the psychological trauma suffered by the prostitutes themselves.

6. Conclusion

The following conclusions have been drawn from the findings of the study:

Prostitution level among University Undergraduates of South-East Nigeria warrants attention. Prostitution is a public health matter. Increasing prevalence of prostitution among students population increases the public health hazard index. The situation is even more worrisome since student population is a segment of sexually active part of the general populace that is apparently least suspected for sexual promiscuity.

Prostitution tendency has direct negative impact on academic performance of students. Increasing prevalence of prostitution among university undergraduates has the potential to lower academic standards in university. Also discipline and character training will be negatively influenced.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made based on the findings of this study:

- Sociologists of education should organise seminars, symposia and workshops for staff and students of tertiary institutions on negative effects of prostitution on the academic performance of University undergraduates.
- Federal, State and Local Governments and other stakeholders should award scholarship and bursaries to indigent students as this may discourage them from indulging in prostitution.
- Culture of the people should allow open discussion of sexual matters with children, and not see sexuality education as a taboo.
- Sex education should be introduced and emphasised in the curriculum programme of tertiary institutions.
- Universities should organize seminars and symposium for the students where the issues relating to prostitution can be discussed.
- Religious groups (churches, mosques etc) on campus should also begin to educate these students on the effects of prostitution on academics as well as relationship with God.
- Public health institutions should be alerted on this emergent potential public health hazard.
- Regular free medical examinations should be encouraged among university undergraduates.

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