

## Prostitution as a Social Evil in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges

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### Abstract

The global increase in expansion of various kinds of business due to urbanization, population explosion and the perpetual need to meet man's basic needs has posed social and economic challenges to most societies. This challenges no doubt, had also resulted to increase in crime rate while there is continuous quest to liberalize some questionable social and moral actions of the citizens. Prostitution falls into this category. Although, the legal status of prostitution varies from country to country but its existence has gone global and the industry is estimated to be generating over \$100 billion annually. This research therefore is written to explore the issues and challenges of prostitution as a social evil. The researchers shall elicit data from both primary and secondary sources while analysis of the data shall be made using frequency, simple percentages and tabular method respectively. The research concludes that though, prostitution may have contributed to the economic and social well-being of commercial sex workers, it still calls for moral questioning considering the hazard involved in the business and it is also counter-productive to the global quest for women emancipation in political and social-economic scene of the society. Therefore, the paper recommends that employment opportunity should be expanded and sex education should be prioritized to discourage the morally bankrupt business.

**Keywords:** Prostitution, sex, sex tourism, sex workers, HIV-Aids.

### Introduction

Every society prescribes a set of norms which it expects that all its members should faithfully follow and any conduct that violates these social norms is referred to as deviancy (Sule, 1994). Though, these social norms, values, ethics and acceptable conduct varies from society to society for example, gay marriage is liberalize in most Western countries whereas it is criminalize in most African countries. Prostitution however have gained prominence in practices by various nations across the globe even though some nations especially in the Arab countries condemn the act in totality, its practices in sub-Sahara Africa, the prevalence ranges between 0.7% and 4.3%, 0.2% and 2.6% in Asia, 0.4% and 1.4% in Europe, and 0.2% and 7.4% in Latin America respectively.

Even though, the sex industry has divergent legal status, it practices is sometimes referred to as the world oldest profession estimated to be generating over \$100 billion globally, consequently showing the extent to which this business is contributing to the psychological and socio-economic well-being of the commercial sex workers, it is based on this justification that most of those that involve in the business find it difficult to see the act as a social evil (John, Ken 2005). Moreover, apart from the moral question that may fault the justification of the sex industry, the Christian and Moslem faiths condemn the act in totality. The Holy Bible in Deuteronomy 23:17-18, Matthew 5:27-28, Jude 1:17 and Joshua 6:17-25 also Qur'an Chapter 17 (Surah I sra a) verse 32: said do not even go near "zina" (fornication and adultery) for it is



indecent and very evil way and concurred in Qur'an (24) surah 1 – nur (the light) which condemned “zina”.

Consequently, this business has suffered several hazards such as societal condemnation, unwanted pregnancy and abortion, sexual infection, high risk of insecurity to lives and property; and lack of prospects in the job especially at old age. These have threatened the fortunes of the business on one hand, the moral value on the society, the personal lives and integrity of the women on the other hand. Thus, it has posed series of challenges to the society, women folk and the citizenry in general. Therefore, this research shall explore the various issues and challenges to the sex industry.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Jeffreys (1987) posits that women's redemption from sex slavery can only be achieved through man's redemption from sex obsession. The sex industry cannot be successful without the two major parties (male and female) involved because they are partners in progress and their activities consequently resulted to increase in sexually transmitted diseases especially (HIV/AIDS), decrease in moral values of the society globally and geometric increase in human trafficking. It is on these premises that the researchers decide to carry out this research.

### **Objective of the study**

This study will inquisitively explore the causes, effects and consequences of prostitution to the Nigerian society. More so, the researchers shall take a step further to make sound recommendation that would discourage the practice globally through an alternative means of livelihood, improved government commitment to addressing these challenges and promotion of ethical values towards enhancing an egalitarian society.

### **Hypothetical Structure**

Prostitution even though it addresses some socio-economic challenges such as self-employment, sexual satisfaction and decrease in the rate of rape is harmful, anti-social and inimical to Nigerian society.

### **Justification of the Research**

Research as noted by Aina (1994) and Dangana (2012) does not consider issues, since scientific investigations do not seek answers to questions rather it only attempt to find logical explanation for any action and avoid value judgment. This research topic ordinarily is difficult to explore considering the perceived societal perception especially in a nation like Nigeria. Though, the researchers do not intend to raise contest between absolute good and total evil but ignoring this research area will rather do more harm than good as it is hope that issues and recommendations made will go a long way to address various moral questions occasioned due to prostitution.

### **Scope and Limitation of the study**

The study examined prostitution as a social evil and sex tourism which is also an aspect of the sex industry. The research shall focus on prostitution as a self-employed business and some selected hotels in Lokoja the Kogi State capital shall be the focus.

Considering the moral and ethical issues attributed to prostitution business in Nigerian society, the researchers find it difficult to reach the respondents though, even the respondents

that finally agreed to answer the questionnaire preferred to be anonymous including their hotel names and locations. The peculiarity of the research topic therefore posed serious challenges to the researchers.

### Study Questions

1. What are the causes of prostitution in the Nigerian society?
2. What are the various ways they carry out this business and what are the effects to the prostitutes and the society?
3. How can these challenges be addressed to ensure that prostitution is completely removed from Nigerian society?

### Conceptual Framework

The word prostitution is derived from the Latin word *prostituta* meaning: *pro* (up-front) and *situere* (offer for sale). Though, most sex workers activist group rejected the name since late 1970 and preferred to be called sex workers. James (2007) sees prostitution as the business or practice of engaging in sexual relations in exchange for financial reward. The person who works in this field is called a prostitute and is a kind of sex worker and it is one of the branches of sex industry. Prostitution occurs in variety of ways such as full time prostitution, some engage in legitimate business in the day time and go into prostitution at night while some indulge in it as an auxiliary service. Loy (1984) and Paul (1991) resolved and defined prostitution as an act of offering oneself for hire to engage in sexual action for money. Of course, this definition justifies the activity such that it is voluntary and it is only for a financial reward.

More so, the moment it is not willingly, then it becomes rape while if it is not hire (on temporary basis) then the duration of the contractual agreement becomes questionable since the sex industry is constantly targeted at obtaining financial reward. Those involved in the sex industry have been given different names such as hookers, call-girls, harlots, sluts, and courtesans however; they are mostly preferred to be addressed as commercial sex workers. This business is facilitated by enticing their potential customers through pornography as Vance (1984) noted that pornography is the theory while sex is the practice.

Sex tourism according to Kempadoo and Doezema (1998) is a travel planned particularly with the intension of having sex, generally to a country where prostitution is legalized. Though, Bahago (2013) and NACA (2005) agreed that this practice exposes these sex tourist and prostitute, to sexual transmitted infections especially HIV/AIDS. John and Ken (2005) noted that Bangkok is fast emerging as the sex-tourism capital of the world which according to centre for Disease Control and Prevention (2013) supports human trafficking, one of the largest criminal industries globally. Sex tourism is also the organization of vacation to take advantage of the lack of restrictions imposed on sex and prostitution by some foreign countries. This according to Akus (2012) promotes human trafficking even though the traffickers are usually highly organized crime groups, the wide spread role of decentralized criminal network has gained recognition globally while Paul (1993) noted that women suffers by being part of an oppressed group hence those who fall victim of this social menace are the women and they are principally transported across national borders to either willingly or forcefully engaged in prostitution. This may attract some financial reward both on the short and

long-run however, its social and psychology trauma have deeply affected the prostitutes, nations health profile, crime rate and the moral values of the citizens.

### **Prostitution in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges**

Nigeria no doubt, is a religious nation with Christianity and Islam as the two major religions and the nation's social and moral practices is correlated to its religious norms hence, the practice of prostitution is not encouraged that is why it is not legalize this, which is an attempt to protect the nation's moral values.

However, there is no gain shying away from the fact especially considering the research of this magnitude which is aimed at protecting the moral and ethical value of Nigerian society. Prostitutes are all over the streets, hotels, and hostels across the major cities of Nigeria.

Having pointed earlier the unjustifiable reasons attributed to economic, social and psychological angles in engaging in prostitutions, its negative consequences are better imagined as it ranges to increase in crime rate, rate of divorce in marriages, human trafficking, sexual transmitted diseases such as syphilis, genital herpes, human papillomavirus, chlamydia, scabies, Bacteria vaginitis, Hepatitis B and HIV/AIDS (Akus 2012). This has consequently affected the socio-cultural, religious, moral values and health of the nation hence, it is very harmful in practice.

### **Historical Perspective of Prostitution**

The history of prostitution extends to every ancient and modern culture. Its practice is described as the oldest profession globally. Since the 18th century BC, the society of Mesopotamia cherished the need to protect female property right. In the code of Hammurabi, such practices were recognized as the inheritance rights of women, alongside the female prostitution, for example, if a dowry was paid by the parent for the unwedded daughter, upon their death, her brothers would act on her behalf as the trustee.

However, if she received such property as a gift from her parent the woman owned such property outrightly and could offer the property to whoever she pleases. One of the earliest forms of prostitution is sacred prostitution which was more predominant among the Sumerians. In the ancient city of Babylon the sacred prostitution is imminent where each woman had to travel to the sanctuary of militia and have sex with a foreigner as a sign of hospitality for a unique price. This is not far from what is referred to as sex tourism in this modern age. Therefore, prostitution even though it recognition and legal status varies from nation to nation is linked to ancient practice and has become a common practice in modern society.

### **STD/HIV AIDS: The Risk in Prostitution**

The Acronym STD stands for sexually transmitted diseases. They are several diseases that could be contacted when certain body fluids from an infected person enters the body of another person directly and in some cases indirectly. They include: Gonorrhea, Syphilis, Ecolf, Staphylococcus, HIV/AIDS etc. However, the prominent and most recent that is threatening the globe is HIV/AIDS.

AIDS stand for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, while HIV stands for Human Immune deficiency Virus, the germ that causes AIDS. When this germ, that causes AIDS enters the body, it disorganizes and gradually destroys the (antibody) which protects diseases when the power to resist infection has been destroyed, the infected person becomes sick and is

said to have AIDS. AIDS is thus the name given to the disease condition that occurs when HIV has weakened the body system. From an uncertain origin of 1989, AIDS has assumed the undisputed number one threat to the survival of humanity globally. It can be contacted through unprotected sex, blood transfusion of infected person, sharing of contaminated unsterilized sharp objects, mother to child etc. The best way to prevent the diseases globally is through sensitizing the public and abstinence from unprotected sex.

### Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The researchers employed the services of two academic staff in Federal Polytechnic, Idah and two medical doctors to ensure validity of the instrument and after thorough scrutiny and valuable contribution the instrument was validated. More so, in ascertaining the reliability of the instrument, the researchers administered the questionnaire twice to 10 prostitutes, the second questionnaire was administered after one week and the result were correlated using Pearson product moment correlation approach. The result yielded the coefficient of  $r = 0.72$ . This score indicates that the instrument is reliable.

### Methodology

The study was conducted in Lokoja the Kogi State Capital and the focus group were prostitute in some selected hotels. More so, considering the peculiar controversy on the moral and social justification of prostitution in Nigerian society, there is no accurate data of prostitutes in the nation hence, the entire population could not be ascertain meanwhile the researchers were able to reach sixty respondents even though they insisted that their responses should be treated with utmost anonymity. The researchers also employed the services of two field officers and they assisted in the administration of the questionnaire. Meanwhile, only 54 questionnaires were returned giving 90% response rate as other respondents were said to have gone for outside services and could not be reach after several attempts.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Personal Profile of the Respondents

S/N	Variables	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
1	Age (in years)	16 – 25	17	31.48	31.48
		26 – 35	28	51.85	83.33
		36 – 45	7	12.96	96.29
		46 and above	2	03.70	100
		<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>		<b>100</b>
2	Religion	Christianity	34	62.96	62.96
		Islam	15	27.78	90.74
		Others	05	09.26	100
		<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>		<b>100</b>
3	Marital Status	Single	41	75.92	75.92
		Married	-	-	75.92
		Divorced	09	16.67	92.59
		Widowed	04	7.40	100
		<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>		<b>100</b>
4	Educational Qualification	No Education	08	14.81	14.81
		Dropped out	15	27.78	42.59
		Primary	06	11.11	53.70
		Secondary	17	31.48	85.18
		Tertiary	08	14.81	100
		<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>		<b>100</b>
5	Previous Occupation	None	15	27.78	27.78
		Student	22	40.74	68.52
		Self-employed	10	18.52	87.04

		Apprentice	05	09.26	96.30
		Civil servant	02	03.70	100
		<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>		<b>100</b>
6	Monthly Income	₦1000-₦20000	03	05.56	05.56
		₦21000-₦40000	06	11.11	16.66
		₦41000-₦60000	31	57.41	74.07
		₦61000 above	14	25.93	100
		<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>		<b>100</b>

Source: Field Research (2014)

**Table II: Questions relating to causes, effects and solution to prostitution in Nigeria.**

S/N	Variables	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
1	Reason for prostitution	Unemployment	19	35.19	35.19
		Sexual satisfaction	02	03.70	38.89
		Lack of sponsor to school	20	37.04	75.93
		No husband	05	09.26	85.19
		Frustration from former husband	04	07.41	92.60
		Others	04	07.41	100
		<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>		<b>100</b>
2	What benefit do you desire from the business?	Access to my basic needs	26	48.15	48.15
		Emotional stability	09	16.67	64.82
		Sexual satisfaction	02	03.70	68.52
		Formal education	06	11.11	79.63
		Sponsor my siblings	10	18.52	98.15
		Others	01	01.85	100
		<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>		<b>100</b>
3	How many customers do you have weekly?	1 – 10	09	16.67	16.67
		11 – 20	14	25.93	42.60
		21 – 30	27	50.00	92.60
		Above 30	04	07.41	100
		<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>		<b>100</b>
4	What kind of service do you render?	Short service (kpa-kpa-kpa)	14	25.93	25.93
		Till Day Break (TDB)	05	09.26	35.19
		Auxiliary services	02	03.70	38.89
		All of the above	30	55.56	94.45
		Others	03	05.76	100
		<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>		<b>100</b>
5	Do you protect yourself from infection?	Yes	29	53.70	53.70
		No	15	27.78	81.48
		Often	10	18.52	100
		<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>		<b>100</b>
6	What are the likely hazards you have in the business?	Several infection	08	14.81	14.81
		Abortion	02	03.70	18.51
		Pregnancy	03	05.76	24.27
		High cost of maintenance	21	38.89	63.16
		No payment after service	04	07.41	70.56
		Others	16	29.63	100
		<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>		<b>100</b>
7	Do you have any regret in the business?	Yes	10	18.52	18.52
		No	44	81.48	100
		<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>		<b>100</b>
8	What are likely reasons that will make you to quit this business?	Employment	13	24.07	24.07
		Marriage	31	57.41	81.48
		Education	08	14.81	96.29
		Others	02	03.70	100
		<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>		<b>100</b>

Source: Field Research (2014)

### Discussion

In table I, most of the respondents are between the ages of 26 – 35 years with a total of 28 (51.85%) while 17 (31.48%) are between the ages of 16 – 25, 7 (12.96%) are between the ages of 36 – 45 and 2 (3.70%) are of 46 years and above. More so, most of the respondents are Christians with a total of 34 (62.96%) while 15 (27.78%) are Muslims and 5 (9.26%) are of other religion. Most respondents are single with a total of 41 (75.92%) while 9 (16.67%) are

divorced, 4 (7.40%) are widowed and none of them were married. Most of the respondents have secondary education with a total of 17 (31.48%) while 15 (27.78%) dropped out of school, 8 (14.81%) had no formal education, 8 (14.81%) attended tertiary education and 6 (11.11%) attended primary education. Most of the respondents with a total of 22 (40.74%) were previously students before joining prostitution, 15 (27.78%) had no occupation, 10 (18.52%) were self-employed, 5 (9.26%) were apprentice while, 2 (3.70%) were civil servants. And most of the respondents earn between ₦41, 000 – ₦60, 000 with a total of 31 (57.41%) while 14 (25.93%) earn ₦60, 000 and above, 6 (11.11%) earn between ₦21, 000 – ₦40, 000 and 3 (5.56%) earn between ₦1000 – ₦20, 000.

Table II, shows that most of the respondent joined prostitution due to lack of sponsorship with a total of 20 (37.04%) while 19 (35.19%) due to unemployment, 5 (9.26%) no husband, 4 (7.41%) frustration from former husband, 4 (7.41%) other reasons and 2 (3.70%) to get sexual satisfaction.

Most of the respondents now have access to their basic need with a total of 26 (48.15%) while 10 (18.52%) can now sponsor their siblings to school, 9 (16.67%) emotional stability, 6 (11.11%) formal education and 2 (3.70%) sexual satisfaction. Most of the respondents have between 21 – 30 customers weekly with a total of 27 (50.0%) while, 14 (25.93%) between 11 – 20 customers, 9 (16.67%) between 1 – 10 customers and 4 (7.41%) above 30 customers weakly. Most of the respondents offer all kind of services to their customers with a total of 30 (55.56%), while 14 (25.23%) offer short services (kpa-kpa-kpa) depending on the agreement with their customers, 5 (9.26%) Till Day Break (TDB), 3 (5.76%) other kind of services and 2 (3.70%) auxiliary services according to them they have permanent customers who they only travel with whenever they want to travel, however, they are on a fixed payment.

Most of the respondents protect themselves by using female condom or ask their customers to use condom with a total of 29 (53.70%) while 15 (27.78%) said no and 10 (18.52%) said it depends on the agreement with their customers as the price of Direct Entry Service (DES) without condom is higher than wearing rain coat (condom) during sex. Most of the respondents face the challenge of high cost of maintaining their body to keep fit for the business with a total of 21(38.89%) while 16 (29.63%) others, 8 (14.81%) sexual infections, 4 (7.41%) none payment after rendering services to hoodlums, 3 (5.76%) pregnancy and 2 (3.70%) abortion. Most of the respondents said they are not regretting the business as it is highly profitable with a total of 44 (81.48%) while 10 (18.52%) said they regret as “na condition make crayfish bend” meaning if they have their way they could quit the business. Finally, most of the respondents said if they could see husband they could quit the business with a total of 31 (57.41%) while 13 (24.07%) employment, 8 (14.81%) schooling and 2 (3.70%) said if they could have any good alternative that will make their life better they will quit the business.

### Concluding Remarks

The paper concludes that though prostitution may have contributed to the well-being of the perpetrators, reduce rate of rape in the society but it still question the moral and social value of Nigerian society and promotes human trafficking that is still universally accepted globally as a crime against humanity. Therefore, the paper recommends that employment opportunity should be widen by all sectors of the economy to enable female have equal access to job opportunity,

girls child education should be promoted and financed by government to cater for under-privilege women whom parents could not afford sending them to school or either had no parents. The National Orientation Agency (NOA), religious and traditional institutions should vigorously carry out sensitization programme to educate the women on the danger of prostitution.

Finally, government agencies should keep close watch to their border to avoid human trafficking in the country.

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