

## **AN EXAMINATION OF HIGH RATE OF PROSTITUTION IN NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper discusses the origin of prostitution, the different types of prostitution as well as causes/factors responsible for such deviant abnormal behavior. Some theories that explain these factors are discussed. The consequences that flow from this analysis is that prostitution gravely impair women's health and firmly belong in the category of violence against women considering its emotional and physical harmful effect. It suggests that in addition to needing health services prostitutes must be provided with the economic, social and psychological means to leave prostitution. The paper concludes by proffering solutions to the menace.*

**Keywords:** Prostitution, issue, Prevalence and Provisions

### **INTRODUCTION**

Prostitution is seen as the oldest profession in the world. Although, it is not an acceptable practice in African society but it is found in all culture. Fallon and Tzannatos (1998) describe prostitution as a global phenomenon which spread widely in both developing and developed countries. For example, United Nations International Children Education Fund (UNICEF) (2003) reported that approximately one million youths around the world, are forced into sex work every year and the total number of prostituted youths now could be as high as ten million. There's no gainsaying the fact that the high surge of young female prostitution in the country and everybody including the policy makers seems to be keeping mute. In African countries including Nigeria, where many cultures abhor sex work, the presence of large number of commercial sex workers has now become a major social issue.

In recent time, scholarly attention has focused on the effect of globalization on human rights and women's right in particular. Yet one important and largely neglected aspect of globalization with direct human rights implications is the increased trafficking of human being (Cho & Vadlamannati, 2012). Most victims of human trafficking are women and girls, the vast majority end up being sexually exploited through prostitution. Globalization has in many ways affected the family system changing its traditional agrarian lifestyle to era where the parent have to go to work to fend for the family which makes them give lesser attention to their children even not having time to teach them the norms and tradition.

Uzokwe (2008) explained that years ago families in Nigeria put a lot of premiums on morality, honor and character. Parents took time to bequeath same to their wards during their formative years. There were injunctions and periodic denial of basic necessities for doing things that impinge the family name. Vices like promiscuity, stealing and the like when displayed by a member of the family are capable of spoiling the family image. Families would want to be backlisted or blackmailed so parents pay serious attention to the moral and social welfare of their children, at times taking corrective actions when bad behaviors were detected. Compare to this day to the ages past, certain behaviors that would repulse people no longer do, the reverse seems to be the case.

On the other hand, teachers these days no longer play the invaluable traditional roles they used to play. They are no longer character builders because children have grown wings and tails". These children especially the female ones, feel they have the protection of their parents or boyfriends. Consequently, young girls go through exhibiting sign of unacceptable behavior which metamorphose into bigger issues in future with no one to stop or correct them. The Nigeria society is fast drifting towards social backwardness. The idea about morality in Nigeria is fast losing its essence; as a result of the failure of value system that propelled the people to contribute and provide a framework for societal regeneration.

The unprecedented growth of sex industry in Africa may not be unconnected with rapid and wide ranging socio-economic changes and globalization which has affected the value structure of African society, Nigeria is not spared of this scourge and prostitution has become so prominent that Nigerians refer to it as "the Italian connection", "sex working", "Ashawo business" (Obinna 2009). The outburst of prostitution in Nigeria, in a way is comparable to Western societies where sex trade has posted a moral challenge. The alarming dimension of this menace can be seen not only through the proliferation of brothels and hotels for sex workers in most urban centers but also in the increasing of prostitution rings in the country (Adesina 2001).

Prostitution has been identified by scholars (Dworkin, 1992; Raymond, 1999; Hughes, 1999; Farley, 2000; Cockayne, 2001) as a global social and urban problem which has pervaded every dimension of human survival. The phenomenon is not peculiar to developing countries. Across the globe, it has become prominent social problem. The presence of prostitutes in the major urban centers of the world especially the industrialized countries has transcended the level it was viewed as strictly uncommon to a worrisome global problem. Ausbeth-Ajagun (2005), stated poverty, parental attitude, laziness, greed and avarice, broken home, poor parental upbringing, deceptive media appeal, godlessness, distorted value system and ignorance as factor influencing prostitution.

Loy (1984) and Paul (1991) resolved and defined prostitution as an act of offering for hire to engaged in sexual action for money. Of course, this definition justifies the activity such that it is voluntary and it is only for financial reward. This is the type of service given by ladies who are desperate to attain some certain levels of prosperity. Over the years the business of prostitution has been a covert trade. This is due to the fact that core values and moral system in Nigeria is fast losing its relevance (if there is any left). Although it has been argued that the rise in prostitution is a direct result of growing rate of poverty and hopelessness in the country; occasion by failure of leadership over the years. These general hopelessness and despair is what is propelling these mothers of tomorrow to

sell their honey well for a pattering sum of money to take care of themselves amidst parental neglects and inactions.

Taylor (2005) also provides functionalist explanation of prostitution as he affirms that prostitution provides employment to the poor, the disadvantaged, the unaided individuals who have no support of source of income. Prostitution is perceived by most commercial sex workers as a “job” and not just as a means of self-gratification. Through prostitution, sex workers are able to provide for themselves and their families with income. Although, prostitution performs certain functions that society seems to need, functionalist do not make judgment that prostitution is a desirable or legitimate form of a social behavior but seek to explain how an aspect of society that is so frequently attached and condemned can nevertheless manage to survive (Davis,1937).

On the other hand, feminist sociologists’ explanation of prostitution is a Sharp contrast to the functionalist view. Though, on different approaches, feminist have unambiguously demonstrated that prostitution is a consequence of male domination of women. Feminist expressed their views using four different and contradictory approaches while radical feminism opposes prostitution ostensibly because it degrades women and further the power politics of male gender, socialists’ feminism illustrates the intersection of patriarchy and capitalism as well as commoditization of sex. They oppose the sex trader’s livelihood being controlled by pimp in a controlled sex industry.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW.**

Prostitution in Nigeria is a serious social problem and its solution has been rendered difficult by the problem of poverty. Poverty is the menace that communizes and dehumanizes the bodies and person of women and children of both sexes for the use and profit of men. Poverty drives the trading in prostitution and wealth increases the buying power of the patrons while at the same time raising the allure for more players. This means that inequitable distribution of income which is reinforced by corruption and high rate of unemployment are among the major drivers of prostitution. Towns grew where both goods and sex would be more easily bought. Discriminatory practices against women who are driven out of their home, is another cause of prostitution Stephen, (2010). If there is no employment, women particularly may resort to prostitution as a means of occupation in order to earn a living. Also, most girls whose parents are unemployed go into prostitution to train them in higher institution while some girls do so because of greed for money.

Alobo & Rita (2014) observed that many ladies turn themselves to prostitutes just for the sake of purchasing power and they have uncountable ways of seducing those they perceived as rich people, meaning that most ladies today do not believe the philosophy of hard work but rather prefer selling themselves instead of working to get what they want. Barnes (1959) observed that some females take to prostitution due to sheer destitution. The Jehovah Witnesses Monthly publications in 2003 reported that some street children resort to prostitution because they see it as their only means of survival. He further related an experience of a mother of a 14 year old girl who lured her daughter into this ignominious trade, the woman said about her daughter ***“she was beautiful and that men would like her very much besides, she would earn a lot of money”*** In the evenings, the woman takes her daughter to a motel where they make contacts. The mother stays nearby to receive the payment, each night this girl had sex with three or four men.

Human trafficking is another evil leading to prostitution. Nigeria is a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking, in particular the trafficking of human and children both within the country and to other countries in Europe, Middle East, West Central and North Africa. Although precise data and statistics are difficult to obtain for transnational crimes such as woman trafficking because of its clandestine nature, the magnitude of the incident of the trafficking in women and children especially in Nigeria could be deduced from certain indicators and predominant evidence within and outside the country. This is buttressed from various evidence found since the 90's that over 10,000, Nigerian women and girls were involved in prostitution Italy alone and about 50,000 spread in cities across Europe. Nigeria trafficked women and girls in fact constitute over 60% of prostitutes in Italy (UNODC, 2006).

According to Uzokwe (2008), one of the causes is dereliction of parental responsibilities. Many years ago, families in Nigeria put a lot of premium on morality, honor and character. Parents took time to bequeath same to their ward during their formative years. There were injunctions and periodic denial of basic necessities for doing things that impinge the family name. Vices like promiscuity, stealing and the like when displayed by a member of the family are capable of soiling the family image. No family will want to be backlisted or blackmailed so parents paid serious attention to moral and social welfare of their children, at times taking corrective actions when bad behaviors are detected. Compare this day to the ages past, certain behaviors that would repulse people no longer do the reverse seems to be the case. The culture of fostering within the extended family system designed to step the cycle of poverty in the family through the fostering of children of poor family members by wealthier family members in the cities is the order of the day. The culture has since been corrupted with total strangers in the guise of helping poor families have trafficked children from their villages internally to cities across borders under exploitative conditions and lure them into prostitution (Olateru-Olagbegi & Ikpeme, 2006).

Eventually, those who find their ways into tertiary institutions end up continuing on a larger scale what they started in secondary schools. Again, Olugbile (2008) wrote that peer influence is everywhere in campus where everyone wants to be like others and end up prostituting. The bad girls that embrace prostitution gradually corrupt the more conservative ones. Furthermore, some institutions are not helping matters their fees are so much that it is hard to understand where they expect the students to get the money from. Being in a precarious condition they turn to prostitution based on the fact that they are looking for money to settle their school bills. Misi (2008) also pointed out that the politicians and government officials are not left out in the cause of female students "sexual promiscuity". According to him, anytime these politicians and government officials visit the higher institution or its environs they take interested girls there for relaxation and entertainment, at the end of which they settle them with huge sum of ill-gotten money.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The functionalist theory is rooted in the work of Davis (1971), assert that there are two reasons why prostitution exists. The first is the system of sexual morality that ostensibly condemns prostitution, but has the unintended consequence of encouraging it. This creates advantage for prostitution in two ways; dividing sex into "*meaningful*" (with

one's spouse) and *"meaningless"* (with a prostitute). This has the effect of encouraging men to go to a prostitute if they want to have *"meaningless"* sex. Secondly by defining certain sex act like anal or oral sex as immoral, not to be indulged in with one's moral spouse, the moral order encourages men to turn to immoral women for these sex acts. The moral system in effect create a demand for prostitution.

The second reason for the existence of prostitution is also ironic, prostitution functions to strengthen sexual morality. This act as a contrast or counterpoint that keeps the wives as the daughters or the respectable citizenry pure. The sex industry encourages men to go to prostitutes for premarital sex, extramarital sex or other immoral sex so that they don't have to pressure or persuade respectable women to engage in the same immoral sex. By thus preserving the sexual morality of conventional women, constituting nearly half of human kind, the level of society's morality should be higher than if any woman engages in the same sexual immoralities. Hence, Davis theory suggests that prostitution exists because the moral system paradoxically encourage it, and in turn serves the important function of preserving feminine virtue.

On the other part, The Feminist theory argued that the society maintain a sexist view that only promiscuous women are a threat to the moral order, and this is why prostitutes are far more likely to be arrested than their male customers. Why such men aren't considered a threat? Because the moral system reflects the larger, patriarchal gender stratified system in which dominate and exploit women. Feminist theorist asserts that the patriarchal system encourages prostitution by creating both demand and supply for it. On the demand side, boys are socialized to be dominant over girls and when adults, to desire sexual domination of women which can be easily realized through sex with him. On the supply side, girls are socialized to be submissive to boys and later as adults to men in work, play and sex. Simultaneously, women are relegated to predominantly low status employment including prostitution. All this explains why prostitution is usually more prevalent in traditional societies marked by great gender inequality, when compare to more modern societies with less gender inequality.

Feminists asserts that the patriarchal system encourages prostitution, while prostitution reinforces patriarchy. This is by perpetuating beliefs that women are coarse in many domains of their lives. Hence, by selling their body as a commodity, prostitutes convey the message that women can be bought or used as an object-reinforcing the prevailing patriarchal notion that "all women have price". Hence, women continue to support the patriarchal structure of gender inequality, which in turn encourages prostitution.

Liberal feminism focuses on autonomy to choose sex work unimpeded by the state. The liberal feminist argue that sex work not freely chosen reflects wage gap, sexual division of labor, inadequate child care and economic dependency on pimps and escort agencies. The post-modern feminism fractures the category "prostitute" and challenges the idea that is a homogenous group. Post-modern feminists frown at sex workers being marked by diversity such as sex, race, class, sexual orientation. The different views notwithstanding, the point of convergent of feminist's schools of thought is that prostitution is the reflection and consequence of male domination of women. This is expressed in their various views in prostitution. Above all, state bodies and non-governmental organizations

should understand that prostitution is a demand market created by men who buy and sell women's sexuality for their own profit and pleasure (Hughes, 1999)

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, it is only by going to the root cause of prostitution which is the factors that make up the demand in a way to curtail it, reduce the practices and a way to monitor it. All level of governments, NGO's and religious communities are urge to focus more on the activities of prostitution most especially in the area of victimization of sex workers. All components involved in such victimization are to be penalized i.e. the trafficker of sex acts, the exploiters and the pimps who profit from the sale of women and children for sex are to be brought to books.

On a final note, prostitution can only be reduced, curtailed and regulated for both the sex workers and for those who are patronizing the industry, this in a way will reduce bad activities that characterizes the industry and also protect all the participants.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

In a Global patriarchal society where there are no laws that goes against prostitution it is not possible to successfully combat prostitution. To express outrage and call for an end to prostitution is contradictory and incoherent where we do not first put a stop to commercialization of human bodies. Except the causes of prostitution are looked into and solutions are provided prostitution can hardly be eradicated.

As previously stated, the leading causes of prostitution are poverty, human trafficking, poor parental upbringing (parents overlooking their children) etc. it could however be curbed or reduced based on the discovery of this work. Holding to the effects of prostitution in Nigeria, some of the potential recommendation will be discussed below. There is a need to consider that there can never be 'consent' in prostitution because no woman has ever "chosen" where she has valid alternative to prostitution. There should be a fully functional law or laws that go against human trafficking in and there should be punishment for whoever goes against the law.

There should be diverse job opportunities and people should be trained and retrained on how to be self-reliant by having diverse entrepreneurial skills because not everyone can be provided with white collar job.

In the case of parental upbringing, parents who are fond of neglecting their children should be cautious and there should be penance for such parents under the law i.e. there are some parents who try to dodge their responsibilities by not catering for their children financial needs, this could result to the child involving herself in prostitution. In other words, such parents need to adjust.

Health sectors should educate people involved in the business already on the kind of pills to use in order not to contract Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) through having sexual intercourse with different men and if possible, the pills should be either subsidized or free. And apart, there should be revival of solid cultural and social values which the so called modernity and urban civilization has eroded in both developed and developing countries.

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