

## **ADDRESSING PREVALENCE OF PROSTITUTION IN NIGERIA THROUGH NON-FORMAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The prevalence of prostitution in Nigeria has called for concern of governments, NGOs, scholars and professionals including adult educators. This paper examined the prevalence of prostitution in Nigeria, its causes, as well as its effects on the prostitutes, their patrons and the larger society with a view to exploring how adult and non-formal education provisions can be used to address the menace. The paper concludes that non-formal education provisions such as vocational skill acquisition, moral education, literacy education, public enlightenment, anti-trafficking campaign and rehabilitation education can go a long way in addressing the prevalence of prostitution in Nigeria.*

**KEYWORDS:** Prevalence, Prostitution, Non-formal Education, Provisions

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Prostitution is seen an 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. In addition, Yusuf (2013) submitted that there is an increase in young female prostitution and sex related activities among young people. In African countries including Nigeria, where many cultures speak against sex work, the presence of large number of commercial sex workers has now become a major social issue (Ogunkan, Omoruan, & Fawole, 2010).

The alarming dimension of this menace can be seen not only through the proliferation of brothels and hotels for sex workers in most urban centres but also in the increasing number of prostitution rings in the continent (Adesina, 2001 cited in Ogunkan, Omoruan, & Fawole, 2010). It is so prominent that Nigerians refer to it as “the Italian Connection”, “sex working”, “Ashawo business” (Obinna, 2009). The 2004 NAPTIP/UNICEF Situation Assessment of Youth Trafficking in Southern Nigerian State showed that 46% of repatriated victims of external trafficking in Nigeria are children, with a female to male ratio of 7:3. They are engaged mainly in prostitution (46%), domestic labour (21%), forced labour (15%) and entertainment (8%). Internal trafficking of youths in Nigeria was also reported to be for the purpose of forced labour (32%), domestic labour (31%) and prostitution (30%) (UNICEF, 2007).

Prostitution according to James (2007) is a 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 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. There is no doubt that the act of prostitution puts the prostitutes, their patrons and the larger society in a number of risks. These risks are described by Wickham (2009) as physical, emotional, psychological and behavioural. For example, many sex workers lack adequate sleeping conditions and often sleep and provide sexual services in the same bed. As a result, commercial sex workers can suffer from a range of health conditions such as frequent headaches, stomach pain, lower abdomen pain, skin disease, body itching, and fatigue (Crawford & Kaufman, 2008). Engaging in sexual activity with numerous partners, especially without protection, results in a high probability of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, young adolescent girls experience a higher risk of infection and long-term damage because their immature reproductive tracts are more sensitive (Chatterjee, Chakraborty, Srivastava, & Deb, 2006). Also the presence of commercial sex workers, pimps and patrons in an area tends to attract crime, illegal substance use, and violent activities, all of which negatively impact businesses and create an unsafe and unhealthy environment for children and families (Nokomis Foundation, 2002). Despite these risks, most of commercial sex workers still continue to indulge in the trade. This situation calls for worry among social workers including adult and non-formal educators. The focus of this paper therefore, is to examine reasons why prostitutes engage in sex work with a view to understanding how non-formal education can be used to address the menace.

### **Prostitution in Nigeria**

In African society prostitution is dated back to stone-age where female slaves were used by their masters as sex toys. Prostitutes apart from female slaves were seen as social outcast and hardly women with nobility were involved (Yusuf, 2013). Naanen (1991) traced the rise of commercial sex activities during the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century in West African countries particularly in Nigeria to the colonialism and the sexual habits of the colonialists. There was, in fact, only a very small colonial population in Nigeria. Because of polygamy, most Nigerian men had always married late and sought female sexual companions in the meantime. In earlier times much of this companionship was found within the extended family. In addition, polygamy implied that men were unlikely to be satisfied by a single woman so even married men sought sex elsewhere if only on the pretext of finding another wife. Missionaries condemned sexual activity within the family as being close to incest, and colonization led to an increasingly monetized economy where sex could be bought. Towns grew where both goods and sex could be more easily bought. The earlier evidence was that most prostitutes were young widows, separated wives or wives thrown out of marriage because they were sterile. There is evidence from that this position has changed and that the sex industry now recruit young single women (Peil, 1981).

The sexual behaviour of married men and women in Nigeria in form of extra-marital affairs between married men and women on one hand and married men and single ladies on other hand has also shown the trend of prostitution in Nigerian society. Orubuloye, Caldwell and Caldwell (1991) report on sexual networking in the Ekiti District of Nigeria showed that there was a fairly high level of premarital and extramarital sexual relations, with most men exhibiting higher levels

than the majority of women, and with such relationships being somewhat more frequent in urban than rural areas. Most men sought sex for enjoyment but a substantial proportion of women who had extramarital sexual relations did so with a semi-permanent partner in order to augment the support for themselves and their children. The majority of Nigerian men, even in the cities, do not have their non-marital sexual relations with prostitutes: that is, with women who usually charge for each sexual episode, have quite a large number of different partners and are often attached to an institution like a brothel, hotel or bar.

Prostitution is not strange in Nigeria as prostitutes are found in many towns, cities and villages. It takes different forms such as female for male, male for male, female for female. Though, female for male is the most common practice of prostitution in Nigeria (PM News, 1994). In a survey conducted by the PM News (1994) in Abuja, Nigeria revealed that all tribes are found in prostitution business in Abuja. Its investigations, which is based on random sampling and may be termed controversial, revealed that ladies from Enugu State constitute the highest number of sex workers in Abuja. Enugu is followed by Abia, Benue, Edo, Oyo, Kwara, Hausa and Delta states in that order. Akwa Ibom state seems to have the least number of sex workers. Also, at another popular red light district called Lagos Street, over 40 percent of the prostitutes are of the Hausa/Fulani stock. They are mostly divorcees or married women. This is followed by Kwara (20 percent) Enugu (30 percent) Oyo (5 percent) and Benue (5 percent).

### **Forms of Prostitution**

Prostitutes are individuals who trade sexual services for money, barter or other compensation. Prostitutes may be women, men or transgendered persons spanning a wide range of ages, backgrounds and sexual orientations. Some are self-employed while others work for others. They are of different forms. Encyclopedia Britannica (1981:75-81) identified the following forms of prostitution.

### **Brothel-based Prostitution**

Brothel is an establishment wherein the prostitutes sometimes reside and are supervised by a 'madam' with sufficient social contacts to make them viable. The supervisor takes a percentage of the prostitute's earnings. One or more males may be on the premises to deal with unruly or homosexual clients. Brothels are quite varied, some catering to particular socio-economic and ethnic groups, but they are generally confined to particular districts in a city or else regulated to its outskirts just beyond municipal authority. This category of sex workers are referred to as indoor commercial sex workers (Farley, 2007). This type of sex work is very common in most of Nigerian cities. In major cities in Nigeria like Lagos, Kano, Zaria, Pot Harcourt, Sokoto, Abuja among others, brothels are found where ladies of different tribes and ethnicities sell sex. Most of the patrons of brothel-based sex workers prefer novelty and this makes brothel sex workers frequently move from one brothel to another in a different cities.

### **Call Girls Prostitution**

A call girl is a sex worker who owns a residence (sometimes shared with another sex worker) to serve her customers. These sex workers operate independently and advertise their services through newspaper classified. The call girl is ordinarily expected to limit her clientele to persons obtained through the calling system and is discouraged from developing contacts on her own initiative since

she might not share the revenue from these. In Nigeria today many call girls are students of higher institutions of learning. In each state of Nigeria politicians have suppliers of call girls who supply girls to give them companies during political events.

### **Escort Prostitution**

Escort commercial sex work is a form of sex work where the agency provides clients with an 'escort' for a fee, with sex being a 'private' matter between the escort and client. Typically, an agency will charge its escorts either a flat fee for each client connection or a percentage of the prearranged rate (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1981).

### **Street Prostitution**

Street sex work is a form of prostitution in which a sex worker solicits customers from a public place, most commonly on a street, while waiting at street corners or walking alongside a street. They also solicit for customers from public places such as parks, beaches, clubs, officer mess, etc. The street sex worker is often dressed in a provocative manner. The sex act may be performed in the customer's car or in a nearby secluded street location, or at the prostitute's apartment or in a rented motel room (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1981). Also female students of higher institutions in Nigeria make themselves available for sexual exchange either for marks or money from their lecturers and male students. This and other forms of sex workers are the common forms of prostitutes in Nigeria. What comes to one's mind at this level is what pushes our young and innocent ladies into prostitution.

### **Reasons Why People Involve in Prostitution**

Reasons why youths get involved in prostitution are numerous. Researches and observations have shown reasons why youths especially women selling their bodies for money or for other gratifications. Some of these reasons are discussed under the following sub-headings.

#### **Poverty**

Poverty is described as inability to meet the basic necessity of life such as food; clothes; education; health; etc. Stephen (2012) submitted that the women's involvement in prostitution though can be linked to poverty is not limited to it. Also most of the money generated from prostitution is expended on the sustenance of family, education, etc. Most women and children are not freely choosing to work in prostitution, "it is a choice based purely on economics of food and shelter".

#### **Sexual Abuse**

Prostitution is frequently alluded to as one of the possible long term effects of the sexual abuse of children (Bagley & King, 1990). Sexual abuse is to regard it as inappropriate sexual involvement between a minor (under 18) and a sexually maturer person (at least 5 years older) (Louw, 1994). Such behaviour is intended to lead to sexual arousal and may range from fondling to intercourse. Truter and Bruwer (2007) also testified that sexual abuse effectively grooms people for prostitution. Based on their experience of working with prostituted people in Cape Town over the past 30 years as at 2007, they estimated that 75% of women entering prostitution as adults and 95% of women entering as children or teenagers have been sexually traumatized before entering prostitution. This results in to thinking that says I have already been used and abused; it was done to me. Now I am choosing to have it done to me and I am in control. I am getting money or some

form of compensation for it. Our society says that if somebody gives permission it is not abuse. But if the permission is given out of brokenness, it is abuse. But we believe that prostitution is by definition abusive (Truter & Bruwer, 2007).

### **Substance Abuse**

Drug abuse according to Ben-Arie (1985) is defined as "the consumption, without medical supervision, of medically useful drugs which alter mood and behaviour ... for a purpose other than that for which it is prescribed" or "the consumption of any mind changing substances which have no legitimate medical or socially acceptable use" Louw (1994) had established a strong correlation between some form of substance and prostitution on the streets in Hillbrow in his study.

### **Illiteracy**

With the high rate of illiteracy in Nigeria, many parents can neither read nor write. The youths are not left out in this illiteracy problem. This has resulted in their being deceived into believing that in big cities, milk and honey flows, only to be forced into sex work when they get to the city (Ewah, 2010). Illiteracy is a disease and a person is illiterate can easily be deceived into anything including prostitution. Meanwhile lack of literacy skills can put anyone into disadvantage of no job.

### **Peer Group pressures**

Peer group pressure has also been identified as one of the reasons why people engage in prostitution. Maria (2007) is of the view that, many young women and girls fall prey to pressure from their peers, who they perceive as having made it. The young girls and women want to make it too and be able to flaunt their influence like those people not knowing or caring how they made it.

### **Trafficking**

One of the common practices in eastern part of Nigeria is trafficking of women and young girls for prostitution in Europe particularly Italy. A number of promising young girls have been trapped into prostitution by traffickers who promised them fantastic well-paid jobs. Historically, the trafficking of Nigerian girls and women into Italy for prostitution started around the second half of the 1980s following the increasing economic difficulties caused by the structural adjustment program imposed by the then Nigerian Government on the order of the International Monetary Fund. They started leaving the country on promises of fantastic well-paying jobs in Europe, in factories, offices and farms. They arrived in Italy only to find them sold into sexual slavery and forced to prostitute themselves to pay the so called debts which they are told they incurred in being helped to come to Europe.

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prostitution or follows soon after: it can be proposed that the development of drug addiction would undoubtedly create the need for a convenient means, such as prostitution, to pay for the habit.

### **Marriage Matters**

Greamer in Mohammed (2004) has identified social reasons for young female participation in prostitution. According to him women engage in prostitution because of the absence of man to marry. In collaborating Greamer, Yabo (1999) pointed out in his research, that absence of man to marry has pushed some women in active prostitution in Hausa society. In Hausa society frustration sets in when the ladies are above twenty and still don't get man to marry. Ladies with problem of marriage can easily get convinced that prostitution is the only way out for them to have their sexual desires satisfied. Pittin (1979) also found that, the most common reason that forced women into the practice of prostitution in Hausa/Fulani society is the existence of forced marriage. He found in his study that '*Auren Dole*' was part of the reasons given by the prostitutes he studied in Katsina city. Similarly, Albert (1996) found the same result with Pittin, in his study of prostitutes in Sabon Gari and Fage in Kano. His respondents acknowledged that their entry into prostitution was due to forced marriage. Yusuf (2013) also reported that some of his respondents claimed that their involvement in prostitution was due to forced marriage.

### **Societal Effects of Prostitution**

Sex work poses a lot of danger on the sex workers, their patrons and the larger society. Sex work according to Scottish Government (2010) is devastating involves a lot of difficulties. These difficulties involve confronting memories of childhood sexual abuse, sexual violence experienced through prostitution, substance misuse, the loss of the care of children, abortions, miscarriages and the deaths of partners, family members and friends through drug abuse or violence. Generally, sex work puts sex workers in various forms of risks: emotional, social, physical, behavioural, etc. For example, young adolescent girls who involve in prostitution can experience a higher risk of infection and long-term damage because their immature reproductive tracts are more sensitive (Chatterjee, Chakraborty, Srivastava, & Deb, 2006).

It has been observed by Stephen (2010) that prostitution is becoming more dangerous in Nigeria, with the increase in crime rates. Ladies working in prostitution stand a high chance of becoming victims of rape, kidnapping and rituals. Daily trust newspaper of May 18, 2010 on page 41 reported the story of a 22 year old female undergraduate who jumped from the third floor of a hotel in Abuja to escape ritualists. She broke her waist in the process; she had been picked the previous night to sleep with a client (who happened to be an agent of a ritualist) at the rate of N4, 000 only. This story is another evidence of terrible experience of prostitutes. These experiences are what people who believe that prostitution is a job called occupational hazards of prostitutes. The experiences of these natures may last in the memories of the prostitutes as long as they live. Some of these experiences could be among risks that prostitutes encounter in their day to day activities.

There is no doubt that prostitutes take a lot of risks which prostitution involves. Prostitution has never been a "pleasant" job as many people perceive it. It is psychologically more demanding than other jobs, as women have to have sex with different men daily to cater their basic needs. They experience continual rapes, threats, narrow escapes, drug overdoses, deviant sex and evidencing close friends being killed - ordinary coping skills are relatively useless in these situations. How is the self-image of someone that has to have sex with more than 1000 men per year? - Obviously a

low and undervalued one (Masemola, 1996). Also the presence of commercial sex workers, pimps and patrons in an area tends to attract crime, illegal substance use, and violent activities, all of which negatively impact businesses and create an unsafe and unhealthy environment for children and families (Nokomis Foundation, 2002). The patrons and their family will also suffer because anyone who patronizes sex worker will suffer from depletion of money and may also contact sexually transmitted diseases which may put their lives and that of their family members in danger forever. Environment where sex is bought and sold is prone to corrupting children who live in the area as frequency of seeing the act may make them see the sex work as normal thing and the life of a sex worker as a normal life. The above scenario of negative effects of prostitution to sex workers, patrons and larger society requires attention and it must be addressed so that we can save our women and the larger society from the menace. It is a collective responsibility to restore the good morals and values of chastity and decency back to our society. Achieving this requires that all hands must be on deck and adult educators among social workers must rise to the occasion. It is on this note that provisions of adult and non-formal education can be explored.

### **Exploring Non-formal Education Provisions in Addressing Prevalence of Prostitution in Nigeria**

Adult and non-formal education has been described as important intervention educational activities that are potent for addressing problems of adults and underserved individuals including sex workers. Non-formal education in Nigeria has since colonial days been an important sector of education which places emphasis on self-improvement of individuals through acquisition of knowledge. It is seen as complementary and supplementary to formal education. It is meant to cover various socio-economic and educational needs of children, youth, and adults based on conditions prevailing in various environments, oriented to help them improve their work, earnings, health, family life, behaviour, understanding of the natural and social surroundings. Thus non-formal education is broad in character, extensive in coverage and diverse in content, methods and participants. In the National Policy on Education (NPE: 2013) the objectives of the Adult and Non-Formal Education section are: provision of functional literacy education for adults who have never had the advantage of any formal education; remedial education for those who prematurely dropped out of the formal school system; further of continuing education for different categories of completers of the formal education system in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills; in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills; and giving adult citizens necessary aesthetic, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

It is important to note that non-formal education goes beyond educational training as it takes care of welfares, social, economic, emotional, behavioural, etc needs of underserved, including commercial sex workers. In fact, it is need-based, participatory, multi-purpose, flexible, friendly, etc. This might be the reason why non-formal education is seen by Courtney (1989) as an intervention into the ordinary business of life--an intervention whose immediate goal is change, in knowledge, in attitude, behaviour, in skill or in competence.

The above description of non-formal education portrays it as a multifaceted educational and social welfare endeavour whose target is to meet the various needs of disadvantaged persons including

commercial sex workers so that they can quit the business and those aspiring can be discouraged. Consequently, the following non-formal education programmes are explored.

### **Vocational Skill Acquisition Programme**

One of the factors that drive people into prostitution is poverty. It is our responsibility as non-formal educators to tackle abject poverty in our society. One of the best ways to do this is to provide vocational skills opportunities for people. This programme will provide opportunities for sex worker to acquire occupational skills that will help them to earn legitimate livelihood. It is hope that when people have alternative means of livelihood they are likely to quit prostitution and embrace decency.

### **Moral Education**

Sexual abuse is one of the habits abhors by African society. Prostitution is frequently alluded to as one of the possible long term effects of the sexual abuse of children (Bagley & King, 1990). Sexual abuse is to regard it as inappropriate sexual involvement between a minor (under 18) and a sexually maturer person (at least 5 years older) (Louw, 1994). Morality is one of the important virtues in African society. When people embrace morality they will likely shun sexual abuse which can lead the abused to prostitution. Moral education, like intellectual education, according to Kohlberg (1980) has its basis in simulating the active thinking of people about moral issues and decisions. It teaches and instills moral reasoning ability of individuals. The hope is that when moral education is popularized and taught, people will shun act of sexual abuse and other forms of unacceptable sexual practices.

### **Literacy Education**

Lack of literacy skills has been advanced as one of the reasons why people engage in sex work (Yusuf, 2016). It is important that if we are to tackle issue of prostitution, the issues of illiteracy must be addressed. Literacy is defined as ability to read, write and do simple calculation in any language. In fact literacy skills are important skills for human survival. Therefore, opportunities should be given to those who are in sex work to enable them acquire the skills of reading, writing and numeracy in order to enable them use the skills in their daily activities including taken decision on what form of livelihood they will pursue. Basic and post literacy can benefit those sex worker who do not have any formal education. The hope is that this opportunity can provide literacy foundation for sex workers.

### **Public Enlightenment**

Public enlightenment is very important in educating and enlightening the youth about reality of life and activities they engage themselves. Youths are desperate to make money and celebrate whoever has made money without minding how the acclaimed successful persons had made their money. This orientation has actually lured a number of promising young ladies into sex industry and eventually ruined their future. It is hope that when non-formal educators explore the avenue of National Orientation Agency (NOA) to enlightening the Nigerian youths about desperation to make money and its ugly attendants our youths may shun any act capable of jeopardizing their future prostitution inclusive.



**Anti-trafficking Campaign**

One of the important non-formal education provisions is the use of campaign. Campaign is defined as a series of actions that aim to achieve one goal (Young European Federalists, n.d). Human trafficking is referred to as one of the most flourishing and profitable criminal industries of the world. It is referred to as the illegal and immoral buying and selling of human beings as commodities to meet global demands for commercial sexual slavery or forced labour (Shukla, 2011). Shukla (2011) reported that commercial sexual exploitation and sex slavery form the major chunk of demand that drives human trafficking numbers higher. The issue with trafficking is that some people have formed a cartel and a syndicate to operate human trafficking business and any attempt to stop them may resort to defence and even fight back. This is where the issue of anti-human trafficking campaign becomes relevant because the goal of any campaign is to change a specific status, which others defend. To this end, an aggressive campaign against human trafficking must be done in order to ensure that our young, promising and innocent do not fall into hands of traffickers who may pretend to better their lives. This campaign should be championed by adult educators through writings, public sensitization among others.

**Rehabilitation Education Provisions**

Rehabilitation means the process of helping a person to readapt to society or to restore someone to a former position or rank. Rehabilitation is defined as help given to people to live fully again after being injured. It is about helping people to feel good about themselves, heal in body, mind and spirit, learn to do daily activities and move around again, earn an income, and remain accepted and valued by others (Hobbs, McDonough & Callaghan, 2002). According to Danish Refugee Council (2008) rehabilitation is an intervention where one builds upon something which already exists however damaged, fragile, disorganized, scattered. The nature of sex work requires that people who are recovering from sex industry needs some assistances because of the damage done to them as a result of ex work. These assistances can best be offered through a comprehensive rehabilitation programme. It is comprehensive if the programme takes care of physical, medical, economic and social needs of sex workers. Normally, rehabilitation programme according to Yusuf (2016) can revolve around social, economic, health, psychosocial, behavioural, emotional, therapy, literacy, etc conditions. It is important to note that the intervention should reflect the true needs of the clients. This is why the client must be involved in the whole process to ensure that they get the right interventions.

**CONCLUSION**

The danger of prostitution to the prostitutes, their patrons and the larger society requires that all hands must be on deck to addressing its prevalence in Nigeria. Attempt made in this paper is that non-formal education provisions such as vocational skill acquisition, moral education, literacy education, public enlightenment, anti-trafficking campaign and rehabilitation education can go a long way in addressing the prevalence of prostitution in Nigeria. Therefore, its potentials should be explored in the fight against prostitution in Nigeria.

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