

## **Perceived determinants of campus prostitution among female students at University of Ilorin, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

Prostitution among university female students has been generating attention of scholars worldwide in recent times particularly in Nigerian universities. Studies have shown factors responsible for this phenomenon but little relate it with influence of the economic status of the perpetrators' parents and peer group. This study therefore examines determinants of campus prostitution among female students as perceived by female students in university of Ilorin, Nigeria. Four hundred and seventy-three respondents took part in this research by filling out questionnaires. Regression analysis showed that parents' economic status and peer group, among other factors, are major determinants of campus prostitution in university of Ilorin, Nigeria. The study was limited because only the perception of students was measured, rather than investigating the perpetrators themselves. This study therefore intends to serve as addition to the available literature on campus prostitution in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** campus, prostitution, determinants, peer group, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

Prostitution has been identified by scholars as a global social and urban problem which has pervaded every dimension of human survival (Cockayne, 2001; Dworkin, 1992; Hughes, 2004; Farley & Kelly, 2000; Raymond, 1998). Across the globe, it has become a prominent social problem. Strong, Devault, Sayad and Yarber (2005) defined prostitution as the exchange of sexual behaviours such as intercourse, *fellatio* (the sexual stimulation of a man's genitals using the tongue and lips), anal intercourse,

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and obscene insults, for money and/or goods. While scholars have diverse opinions on what constitutes prostitution, they have come out with a considerable number of closely related factors influencing prostitution. With the internet survey conducted by Ausbeth-Ajagun (2005), such factors as poverty, parental attitude, laziness, greed and avarice, broken home, poor parental upbringing, deceptive media appeal, godlessness, distorted value system and ignorance were identified as influencing prostitution. Adesina (2006) also identifies poverty, inadequate job opportunities and greed as important factors especially in Nigeria.

The outburst of prostitution in Nigeria, in a way, is comparable to western societies, where sex trade has posed a moral challenge. The 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, 2006). 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 & Anierobi, 2011). Izugbara (2010) 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.

### **Statement of the problem**

The phenomenal increase in social problems across the globe and especially in developing countries is worrisome. The situation becomes serious when the problem is multi-dimensional in nature. In Nigeria, prostitution as in other parts of the world has continued to flourish in tertiary institutions. A number of factors have been held accountable for prostitution tendency in university campuses. This profession is associated with social problems as marital instability, sexual assault, divorce, alcoholism, fighting, drug addiction, violence crime and delinquency, unplanned pregnancy, unsafe abortion and transmission of sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS, gonorrhoea and syphilis. The prevalence of campus 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 prostitutes are considered to be the main source of sexually transmitted diseases. 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 and school dropout. Many prostitutes have been victims of ritual murders, violent rape, and other physical injuries. The objective of the study is to examine the perception of female students on the influence of parental financial status and peer group on campus prostitution at the University of Ilorin.

### **Literature review**

As prostitution evolved and began to consume young females, people chose to ignore it as mere fad that would quickly go away. However, it is gradually becoming a way of life in Nigeria's citadels of advanced learning. In the beginning some of the students may have loathed the strange life style, but as they watched their peers return to campus night after night, with wads of cash, glitzy clothes and other ephemeral paraphernalia, their resistance began to wear thin. Some factors such as broken homes, child rearing practices, peer group influence, male child preference, among others, have been held accountable for prostitution tendency in University. Prostitution tendency is seen as readiness to engage in or practice prostitution. Uzokwe, (2008) puts the blame for the proliferation of prostitution in the University campuses squarely on parents as a result of the child-rearing practice they adopt. According to Uzokwe, some parents of young girls see them come home with multiple and expensive cell phones they did not buy, flashy and expensive clothes they did not purchase and even cars. Such parents never ask any questions. Some of these parents gladly take gifts from their daughters knowing fully well that they do not work. Some never bother to visit the campuses to see where their children live and study. Even if they did, rather than marvel at the expensive furnishings, some parents see it as badge of honour. In essence, because of the lackadaisical attitude of some parents, prostitution is on the increase in campuses.

Studies by Gurmesa, Fessahaye and Sisay, (2012), and Unasho and Tadesse (2013), show lack of parental control, being in the youth age group (immaturity), living on or off campus, substance use, peer pressure, campus and outside environment and low income level are the predisposing factors for risky sexual behaviors among university students. There are some female students, who actually compete with the regular prostitutes. They dress to the hilt and go out in the night to line up along the streets looking for customers. Sometimes girls are hired to attend parties and functions where they are paid for services rendered including sex. There are other female students who do not operate in the vicinity of their campuses. They travel out either single or in groups to engage in commercial sex activities and return to their campuses with huge

sums of money and with flashy clothes and jewelries. Lastly, some female students trade sex for high academic grades.

Jean (2010) reported that campus prostitution was born out of a need to meet up with ostentatious living of some female students from wealthy homes. This situation, he asserted is because most campus prostitutes are from the low-socio-economic status; though most women that practice prostitution are independent, old enough to make decisions and willing to bear the consequences, young female undergraduates are naïve of the consequences.

The *modus operandi* of campus prostitution varies from campus to campus and from one individual to another. Some female students travel to nearby cities at night to meet sugar daddies who are ready to pay large amounts of money for sexual pleasure. While other students parade the streets for customers, others as well visit beer parlours and hair-dressing salons to meet pimps who connect them to their customers (Oko, 2007).

### **Parents' economic background**

It is pertinent to note that the socio-economic background of the families also has influence on predisposition to engage in campus prostitution. Johnson (2007) reports that prostitution is widespread in campuses. In a study of more than ten university campuses, he concluded that prostitution is a big menace in universities and something needs to be done to check it. This made John (2003) to be of the opinion that economic hardship is one of the major problems most Nigerian parents are facing. According to the author, some parents no longer have money to further their children's education. As a result, some girls have been forced to use prostitution to further their education. It is very common these days in many Nigerian cities to see some young girls roaming the streets and hotels seeking for clients when they are supposed to be in schools or at home.

Some parents of young girls see them come home with multiple and expensive cell phones which they did not buy, flashy and expensive clothes they did not purchase, and even cars. Such parents do not seem to ask any questions. Some of these parents gladly receive gifts from their daughters, fully aware that their daughters do not work. Some never bother to visit the campuses to see where their children live and study. Even if they did, rather than marvel at the expensive furnishings, some parents see it as badge of honour. In addition, typical working class parents do not appear to have time to train their children.

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, 2010; James & Meyerding, 1978; Macleod, 2006; Otite & Ogionwo, 2006). Studies have shown that students of tertiary institutions (universities, polytechnics, colleges of education) in Nigeria engage in the business of campus prostitution because they need extra money to fund their education (Orubuloye, Caldwell & Caldwell, 1994; Pickering & Wilkins, 1993).

There is reduction in the role of family as a unit of society and a key agent of socialization particularly in the urban areas. The quest for wealth by parents in the modern day often makes it difficult to pay much attention to children upbringing. This degenerates into lack of discipline, lack of supervision and inadequate monitoring of their children. Therefore, there is a tendency towards development of behavioral pattern of the children that are different from their parental expectation. Lack of discipline, lack of discipline, lack of supervision and inadequate monitoring due to busy or light schedule or neglectful attitude of parents may encourage children adoption of delinquency or criminal behavior, campus prostitution inclusive. The influence of home environment on the development of children is not in any way doubtful (Omede & Odiba, 2000). The home is every child's first window to the outside world.

What the parents do with the child at this level in terms of training and orientation go a long way to deterring what the child becomes tomorrow. Children live or die, thrive or wither, due to the decision of their parents. It is from the parents that the child learns about values, beliefs and other forms of behavior acceptable to the community. The child is taught these through instructions, observations and practices from parents and other siblings, particularly the senior ones. The implication of this is that parents must be seen to be morally exemplary.

### **Peer group influence**

Studies have shown that university, polytechnic and colleges of education students needing extra money to support their education are into this business (Orubuloye, Caldwell & Caldwell, 1994). The desire to belong and the fear of rejection have led many youths into evil for fear of being isolated. Apart from isolation, peer conformity could be the result of faulty foundational home training. A child with a healthy home training should be able to quickly resolve and identify crises distilling between rights and wrongs no matter how the wrongs are colored and then maintaining his/her integrity and the good name of the family.

In their study, Evan, Oates & Schwab (1992) found that peer group had effect on whether teenage pregnancy will occur or not. Peer group can have positive as well as negative influence on children. For instance, peer groups, according to Ryan (2001)

have effect on the way young people think. In other cases, the knowledge may be about the adolescent tastes in dress, dances, music and behaviour. Elechi and Ogbondan (2006) reported that the peer group teaches the child sex rules which are not learnt in the home. Otite and Ogionwo (2006) observed that peer group influence has a bearing on prostitution, cultism along with the militarization of the society and loss of cultural value for dignity of human life. Peer pressure is everywhere. On campus, everyone wants to be like the other. The girls that willingly embrace prostitution because of their insatiable need for the good things in life may gradually influence the other ones who see the extravagant lives they live.

## **Methods**

The University of Ilorin, established in 1975, is located in the ancient city of Ilorin, about 500 kilometers from Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory. Ilorin, the Capital of Kwara State, is strategically located at the geographical and cultural confluence of the North and South. The university carries out its academic programmes, including faculties of Arts, Science, Education, Social Sciences, Management Science and Agricultural Science.

Final year female students from the Faculty of Social Sciences constituted the population of this study. The total population of female students in their final year from this faculty was 1,236. The students were informed of the research while taking a general studies class which involved attendance of the entire faculty. A total of 600 (49%) female students offered to participate in this study and were given questionnaires to fill out and only 473 (38%) were returned valid. Focus group discussions were carried out in three groups involving 33 females (11 in each group). Focus group discussions were analyzed using Content analysis to identify running themes and patterns. Data from the coded questionnaires were analyzed using regression analysis.

## Results and Discussion

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by perceived factors determining female students' involvement in campus prostitution

Parents' economic background of campus prostitutes	Frequency	Percentage
Low Income Earners	204	43.1
Average Income Earners	209	44.2
High Income Earners	60	12.7
TOTAL	473	100.0
Peer influence	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	188	39.7
Agree	253	53.5
Don't Know	16	3.4
Disagree	8	1.7
Strongly Disagree	8	1.7
TOTAL	473	100.0
Other perceived factors contributing to campus prostitution	Frequency	Percentage
Watching pornography	84	17.8
Desire to obtain high academic grades	189	40.0
To be able to purchase expensive clothing and gadgets (phones, tablets, etc)	74	15.6
Sexual abuse experience	94	19.9
To obtain sexual experience	32	6.8
TOTAL	473	100.0

Source: Researchers' survey

Table 1 shows majority (87.3%) of the respondents being of the view that female students who are involved in campus prostitution came from homes where parents were not high income earners. These included occupations such as artisans (motor mechanics, tailors, furniture makers, etc), petty traders, retired workers, as well low-level income civil servants. Also, 93.2% of the respondents agreed that female campus prostitutes were influenced by their peers. Other factors determining involvement of female campus students in campus prostitution included 17.8% being of the view that female students' habit of watching pornography was a contributing factor. A total of

40% were of the opinion that the desire of the female students to obtain high academic grades made them succumb to such deviant behaviours, while 15.6% believed the desire to have expensive clothes and gadgets such as laptops, mobile phones and iPads contributed to the propensity to engage in campus prostitution. However, respondents indicated that having experienced sexual abuse (19.9%) as well as well the urge to have some sexual experience (6.8%) predisposed such female students to involvement in campus prostitution.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by place of residence of campus female students as perceived contributor to campus prostitution involvement

Place of residence	Frequency	Percentage
Off-campus (and far away from parents)	282	63.8
On campus	171	36.2
Total	473	100.0

Source: Researchers' survey

Table 2 showed the distribution of respondents by their perception of the place of residence of female students as a determining factor of involvement in campus prostitution. It showed that 63.8% of the respondents believed that female students who stayed off campus were more likely to indulge in campus prostitution.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by perception of level of campus prostitution at University

No. of Session	Frequency	Percentage
Very high	198	41.9
Not so high	130	27.5
Not high at all	93	19.6
Don't know	52	11.0
TOTAL	473	100.0

Source: Researchers' survey

Table 3 was presentation of respondents by their perception of the level of campus prostitution in their university. A total of 41.9% claimed the level was rather high, 27.5% believed it was not so high, while 19.3% stated it was not high at all and 11% claimed they had no idea what the level was like.



Regression analysis

Table 4: Model summary of regression analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.372 <sup>a</sup>	.139	.135	.731

- a. Predictors: (Constant), parents’ economic background, peer group influence.
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Parents’ economic background, peer group influence

Dependent Variable: Perception of Campus Prostitution.

Significant: (< 0.05)

Table 5: Regression Coefficients of Parents’ Economic Background and Peer Group Influence on Perception of Campus Prostitution in Nigerian universities

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Calculated t-table	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)		
1 (Constant)	1.148	.123		9.352	.000
Parents’ Economic Background	-.096	.049	-.083	-1.934	.050
Peer Group	.369	.045	.356	8.294	.000

Source: Researchers’ analysis

The analysis from the regression table reveals a multiple of R of 0.372 and an R square of 0.135 for parents’ economic background and peer group. The Multiple Regression (R) of 0.372 represents the degree of association among measured variables. It showed that R= .372 means that for every one percent increase in parental economic status and peer influence will have an effect of 37.2% effect on prostitution. In other words, 37.2% of female students’ involvement in campus prostitution was influenced by parental economic status and peer influence, while the remaining was influenced by other factors. The analysis further revealed that parental economic status and peer influence among other factors are determinants of campus prostitution among undergraduate students is proved where the R square is .139. This shows that

economic status of parents and peer influence has 13.9% effect on campus prostitution. From the coefficient analysis (Table 5), parental economic status has little effect on campus prostitution ( $\beta = -.083$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ) while peer influence has more effects on campus prostitution ( $\beta = .356$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This analysis also suggests that parents' economic background and peer group pressure are predictors of campus prostitution among female students as perceived by final year female students of the Faculty of Social Sciences in University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

From the focus group discussions, conversations were analyzed thematically, which bordered largely on factors contributing to campus prostitution as follows.

Awareness of level of campus prostitution

I may not know of them specifically but I hear when my friends and other students talk generally about it (campus prostitution) and from all I hear, I think it really is on the high side (Sociology Major).

I had nearly been introduced into campus prostitution by some girls....I just had to let them know I was different from them. I had no interest. But I know many girls are involved in it (Geography Major).

Factors majorly responsible for campus prostitution

Some of the girls do it because they lack financial resources. Some are into it because they see it as a good source of money (Sociology Major).

I think they are into it just because their friends also do it. You know how friends can influence you into doing something you would not normally do. Some want to have a feel of belonging... (Political Science Major).

I have heard how some are into prostitution having had some form of sexual abuse, either by close relation or boyfriend. They feel worthless and end up prostituting their bodies ... (Economics Major).

For me, I think it is because such girls simply don't want to read but prefer to give themselves to some lecturers who will now pass them with high grades in their examinations. Some have seen it as the easy way to success and so they keep doing it... (Economics Major).

I think where students live affect them a lot. Those that stay off campus in rented apartments, and far from their parents do have the opportunity more because they do not have hostel restrictions. Also, it is easier for the men to even reach them, rather than come all the way into campus... (Sociology Major).

The findings of this study go in line with Bamgbose (2002), who was of the opinion that economic hardship, being one of the major problems most Nigerian parents are facing, seems to be compelling some girls to resort prostitution to further their education. Oyeoku et al. (2014) had pointed out that socio-economic background of the family may be one of the reasons why undergraduate students engage in prostitution. Studies have shown that campus prostitutes are not always below average in educational attainment (Orubuloye, Caldwell & Caldwell, 1994; Pickering & Wilkins, 1993). Students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria are into campus prostitution because they require extra money to support their education. Oniya (2002) had also observed that while a family of high socio-economic background will provide necessary recommended books and equipment for their children, families with low socio-economic background are not adequately equipped financially to supply such for their children. Consequently, these children are compelled into prostitution as a way of augmenting the necessary income for their needs. In the same vein, Bullough and Bullough (1987), Okujagu (2003), and Oniya (2002) believed that factors such as poverty, socio-economic status of an individual, and a family of low economic status contributed to the involvement of university students in prostitution. Janssen (2007) posited that they start by wanting to raise just enough money to take cash starts rolling in they become so enamored by their newly found status that they take it several steps farther. Parents are not financially equipped to handle costs of bringing up children, particularly with the current economic situation of the country. Young female students therefore often find themselves in precarious situations and positions, which could force them into prostitution.

Peer pressure is a force that gravitate friends together and most times for evil or negative tendencies. The desire to belong and the fear of rejection have led youths into evil for fear of being isolated. Apart from isolation, peer conformity could be the result of faulty foundational home training. It is believed that peer groups expose the child to the knowledge to which he or she has no access in the family, thereby providing a way in which children can become less dependent on family authority. Vitaro, Brendgen, and Tremblay, (2002) support the theory that spending time with deviant friends exerts a great deal of pressure on a young person to adopt the same behaviors. Furthermore, the excitement of the nightlife and the freedom from supervision attract some women and men to prostitution.

## Conclusion

Campus prostitution in Nigerian universities is fast becoming an issue of concern. It is clear that the problem seems to be increasing and this calls for meaningful and lasting techniques to tackle the menace. This study has discussed the importance which the roles of parents' economic status and peer groups have on defining characters of individuals.

The study has a number of limitations, however. Firstly, the study focused on only two factors, such as parents' economic status and peer group, among others, which could have a clear and direct influence on the behaviours of students as regards campus prostitution. Secondly, the study concentrated only on one university out of well over fifty universities in the country. Thirdly, rather than study students that engage in campus prostitution, the study focused on the perception of students. Finally, very little literature was found to solidify the findings of this study particularly from Nigeria. Much of what is available are from social media platforms and not empirical research works. It is therefore hoped, that this study will provoke further research particularly on campus prostitution.

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