

Perceived Factors Influencing the Practice of Prostitution among Female Undergraduates of Tertiary Institutions in Owerri Municipal, Imo State

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Abstract: Background: The Practice of prostitution is on increase in most of Nigerian Universities among female students. Such sexual practices among female students usually result to unwanted pregnancies, STI (HIV/AIDS) and substance abuse. The study aimed to determine the perceived factors influencing the practice of prostitution among female undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Owerri Municipal, Imo state. **Materials and Methods:** The study adopted a descriptive survey design and random sampling procedure was used to select 400 female undergraduates from two tertiary institutions in Owerri Municipal. A well structured and validated questionnaire was used for data collection. The completed and collected questionnaire was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20.0. The results were presented in frequency tables and percentages in line with the research objectives. A chi-square (χ^2) statistics was used to test the hypothesis at 5% (0.05) level of significance. **Results:** The findings of study showed that poverty had 318(79.5%) as influencing factor, peer pressure recorded 310(77.6%), uncontrolled liberty and freedom from school recorded 272(68%) while academic favours from male lecturers recoded 228 (68.5%) and all these had a strong influence in the practice of prostitution. For the level of practicing prostitution, 60% of the female students reported high prostitution practice while 30% said moderate practice. Out of 400 respondents, 382(92.5%) knew that prostitution results to unwanted pregnancies and abortion, 367(91.8%) knew that it causes STI's such as HIV/AIDS. **In conclusion,** the base line information from the study showed a significant relationship between perceived risk factors such as poverty, peer pressure, dereliction of parental role and uncontrolled liberty and freedom in school and academic favour and practices of prostitution among female undergraduates. The level of practices of prostitution among female students was high and most of them have good perception of health implications of prostitutions. Therefore, the female undergraduate, should be counseled on the effect of poverty and bad friends which leads to female prostitution and subsequent poor academic performance.

Key Words: Factors, poverty, peer pressure, prostitution

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I. Introduction

Prostitution is a form of violence against women and a violation of human rights which may be regarded as an evil wind that blows no good to the human society. Every society sets out some norms which are expected of the citizens to faithfully follow for the welfare of the people and any conduct that violates these norms is referred as deviancy. These norms, values and conducts varies from society to society for example, gay marriage is liberalize in most western countries but is criminalize in most African countries. The practice of prostitution has gained prominence in various nations across the globe even though some nations especially in the Arab countries condemn the act in totality but in sub-Sahara Africa, the prevalence ranges between 0.7% and 4.3% [1].

The world prostitution is the act of practice of providing sexual services to another person in return for payment. The person who receives payment for sexual services is called a prostitute. Globally, there are about 40 millions prostitutes at work in different places as this given moment and 80% of the world population of prostitutes is female and age range is 13-35 years, 1 in 10 men in the world have purchased a prostitute, men between 35-44 years are the most common demographic customer. The murder rate for an American prostitute is 204 for every 100,000 [2].

From literatures female prostitutes are more likely to get murdered because they move out with unknown clients who might be ritual killers and kidnapers. Furthermore, for the fact that the prostitute has collected money for sex, she has conferred on the man's authority and power to decide the kind of sex he will have. Such act could be expected to endure brutality, rape and other crime against the female behind closed door

[3]. Prostitutes have an increase incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as, gonorrhoea, syphilis, Candida, herpes vaginalis etc. A study in Minneapolis, Minnesota revealed that 15% of prostitutes who had prostituted for at least six months have STD [4]. Prostitutes are at greater risk of cervical cancer caused by human papilloma virus contracted through sex. They are prone to have unwanted pregnancies which make them to indulge in unsafe abortion that result to pelvic inflammatory diseases (PID). PID causes secondary infertility which leads to broken families and its consequences. Some prostitutes suffer trauma and pelvic pains which subject them to drug, alcohol and smoking addition to ease off pains and these habits could cause cancer which put their lives to more jeopardy and increase mortality rate of the country [3]. The local and international concern over the problem of prostitution calls for urgent and practical measure. Therefore, it is based on this ugly situation and its negative consequences that are fast spreading in the society that prompted this study which seeks to determine the factors influencing practice of prostitution among female undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Owerri metropolis, Imo State Nigeria.

II. Material and methods

The study design adopted a descriptive survey which elicited information from the respondents on issues related to perceived factors influencing practice of prostitution, the practices that lead to prostitution among female students and its attendant health implications. It is also an urban based study.

The study population consists of female undergraduate of tertiary institutions in Owerri Municipal. The estimated number of female undergraduate in Alvan Ikoku College of Education is ten thousand three hundred and eighty (10,380) and that of Imo State University Owerri is fourteen thousand (14,000). Then, the total study population for both institutions is twenty four thousand, three hundred and eighty (24,380).

This study employed a multi stage sampling techniques in the studied schools. The studies were first stratified according to their schools/faculties in Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri (AIFCE) and Imo State University, Owerri (IMSU). A simple random method was employed in FCE to select three schools/faculties (school of social science and school of vocational studies) and three (3) faculties in IMSU (Faculty of Sciences, Health Sciences and Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine). Random sampling was also used to select (2) department from each making it ten (10) departments. Proportional sampling method was used to select equal number of students (40 students) from each of the ten (10) departments selected. The students were selected inside the school premises through random process and they had equal chance of being selected. Informed consent of the respondents was sought and the purpose of the study was explained to them.

The completed questionnaire was sorted out and entered into Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20.0 for analysis. The analysis was done using descriptive statistics and results were presented in frequency tables and charts were used for graphical presentation of variables in the objectives of the study. The inferential statistics such as chi-square (χ^2) was used to test the relationship between dependent and independent variables at confidence interval of 0.05.

III. Results

The result of Table I presented socio-demographic information of the respondents; where their ages were as follows: 108 (27%) were below 20 years, 112 (28%) were between 20-29 years, 96 (24%) were between 30-39 and 84(21%) were 40 years and above. The highest percentage (70%) of students was single followed by married ones with 26.2% and only 3.8% were divorced/separated women. On students' level of study, 82 (20.5%) were on 100 level followed by 98(24.5%) on 200 level, majority 124 (31%) were on 300 level while 96 (24%) were in 400 level.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Information of the Participants

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age of the respondents		
Below 20 years	108	27.0
20-29 years	112	28.0
30-39 years	96	24.0
40 years and above	84	21.0
Total	400	100.0
Marital Status of the respondents		
Single	280	70.0
Married	105	26.2
Divorced/Separated	15	3.8
Total	400	100.0
Level of study of the respondents		
100 level	82	20.5
200 level	98	24.5
300 level	124	31.0
400 level	96	24.0
Total	400	100.0

Table 2 presents the perceived predisposing factors influencing practice of prostitution among female students where majority 318(79.5%) of the students said that poverty predisposed students to prostitution and the causes of poverty in regards to prostitution were reported as follows; laziness to do job had 147(46.2%), unemployment 96(30.2%) while 75(23.6%) said inadequate payment of salary.

Also, 310(77.5%) agreed that prostitution influence by peer group. From the number who supported the influence of peer pressure; 174(56.1%) of the female student yield to peer pressure because of poor upbringing; 44(14.2%) said poor spiritual growth and 92(29.7%) said lack of self control. Dereliction of parental role on their children leads to prostitution; 276(69%) supported the idea and they gave the aspects of parental role dereliction; 69(25%) said poor financial support, 115(41.7%) said poor counseling and 92(33.3%) said inadequate monitoring of children.

Uncontrolled liberty and freedom from school makes female students to exhibit unacceptable behaviour; out of 400 participants, 272(68%) agreed with the idea. Also, the causes of uncontrolled liberty are stated as follows; 73(26.8%) reported poor security services in the school, 121(44.5%) said students allowed to live off-campus and 78(28.7%) said inefficient school disciplinary committee. To obtain academic favour can lead female students to prostitution, 278(68.5%) said yes and 122(30.5%) said no to the idea.

Table 2: Perceived predisposing factors influencing practice of prostitution among female students

Statements	Responses	
Poverty predisposes female students to prostitution	Yes	318(79.5%)
	No	80(20.5%)
	Total	400(100%)
If yes, What causes poverty that predisposes students to prostitution.	Laziness to do job	147(46.2%)
	Unemployment	96(30.2%)
	Inadequate payment of salary	75(23.6%)
	Total	318(100%)
Prostitution is influenced by Peer pressure	Yes	310(77.5%)
	No	90(22%)
	Total	400(100%)
If yes, why do students yield to peer pressure	Due poor upbringing	174(56.1%)
	Poor spiritual growth	44(14.2%)
	Lack of self control	92(29.7%)
	Total	310(100%)
Dereliction of parental role on their children leads to prostitution	Yes	276(69%)
	No	124(31%)
	Total	400(100%)
If yes, this could be inform of:	Poor financial support	69(25%)
	Poor counseling	115(41.7%)
	Inadequate monitoring	92(33.3%)
	Total	276(100%)
Uncontrolled liberty and freedom from school makes female students to exhibit unacceptable behavior	Yes	272(68%)
	No	128(32%)
	Total	400(100%)
If yes, what caused the uncontrolled liberty?	Poor security services in the school	73(26.8%)
	Students allowed to live off-campus	121(44.5%)
	Inefficient school disciplinary committee	78(28.7%)
	Total	272(100%)
To obtain academic favour can lead female students to prostitution	Yes	278(68.5%)
	No	122(30.5%)
	Total	400(400%)

Figure 1 presented the initiator of the use of sex between female students and male lecturers for academic favour; 43.9% said male lecturers intimidates the female student because of academic favour, 21.6% said female students lures/seduces the male lecturers while 34.5% said both of them.

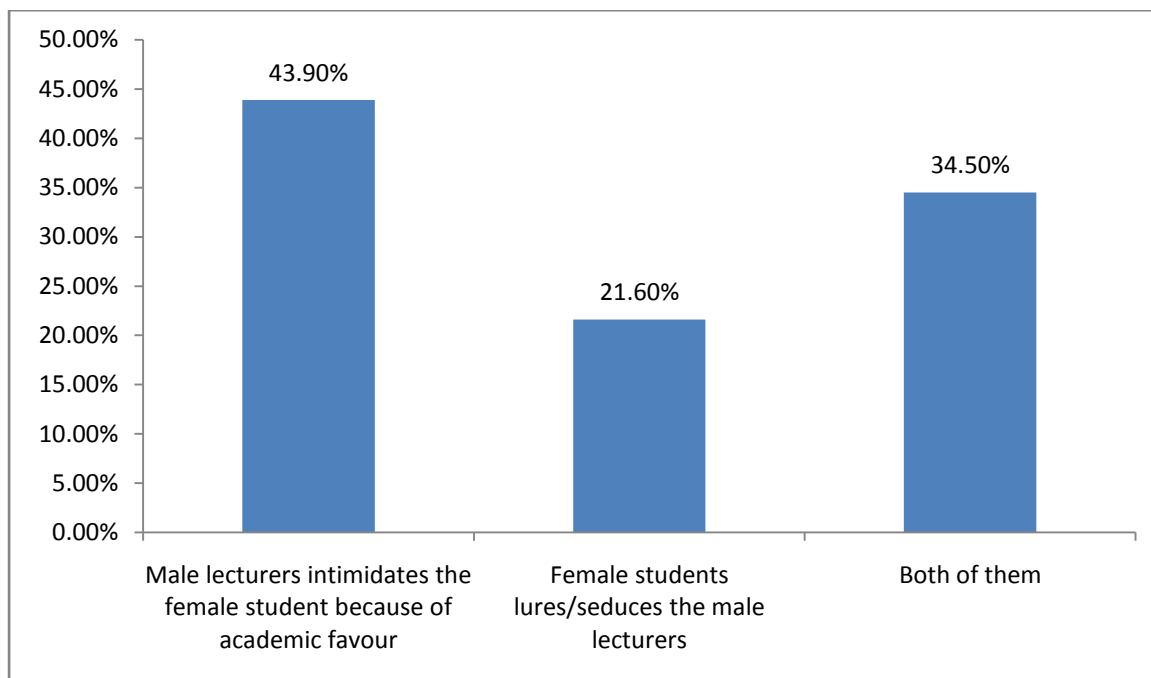


Figure 1: Initiator of the use of sex by female students for academic favour

Table 3 showed the influence of poverty among female students and practice of sexual intercourse outside marriage; majority (184) of them agreed and Pearson Chi-Square (X^2) test showed significant relationship ($X^2 = 87.86$; $df = 1$ at P-value of 0.001).

Table 3: Poverty causes prostitution among female students * Practice of sexual intercourse with opposite sex outside marriage

Poverty causes prostitution among female students		Practice of sexual intercourse with opposite sex outside marriage		Total	
		Yes	No		
Poverty causes prostitution among female students	Yes	Count	184	134	318
		Expected Count	146.3	171.7	318.0
	No	Count	0	82	82
		Expected Count	37.7	44.3	82.0
Total	Count	184	216	400	
	Expected Count	184.0	216.0	400.0	

Pearson Chi-Square (X^2) = 87.86; $df = 1$ at P-value of 0.001

Table 4 depicts the rate of perceived practice that leads to prostitution among female students; 184(46%) agreed that student engage in sexual intercourse with opposite in return for payment and reported the form of payment they received; 127(69%) said payment for inform consent, inform of material gifts had 51(27.7%) while only 6 (3.3%) said oral promises.

Students exhibit maximum body exposure at night in order to lure men into sex for favour; 329(82.3%) agreed with the idea and 71(17.8%) disagreed. Out of 329 that agreed with the idea; 51(15.5%) said student exhibit such outside the school hostel, 72(22.9%) said they go to nearby cities and 206(62.6%) said at hot spots. Female students sleep with male lecturers, 324(81%) said yes and gave their reasons as; 280(84.4%) said because of academic success, 20(6.2%) said for protection in the school and 24(7.4%) said because of other reasons.

Table 4: Perceived Practices that leads to Prostitution among Female Students

Statements	Responses	
Female student engage in sexual intercourse with opposite sex in return for payment /favour.	Yes	184(46%)
	No	216(54%)
	Total	400(100%)
If yes, what form of payment do they receive?	Money	127(69%)
	Material gifts	51(27.7%)
	Oral promises	6(3.3%)
	Total	184(100%)
Students exhibit maximum body exposure at night in order to lure men into sex	Yes	329(82.3%)

for favour	No	71(17.8%)
	Total	400(100%)
If yes, Where do the students exhibit such practices	Outside the school	51(15.5%)
	hostel	
	They go to nearby cities	72(22.9%)
	They go to hot spots	206(62.6%)
	Total	329(100%)
Female students sleep with male lecturers	Yes	324(81%)
	No	76(19%)
	Total	400(100%)
If yes, what is the reason?	For academic success	280(84.4%)
	For protection in the school	20(6.2%)
	For other reasons	24(7.4%)
	Total	324(100%)

Figure 2 presented the level of practice of prostitution; 60% said high among students, 30% said moderate while 10% reported low level of practice of prostitution.

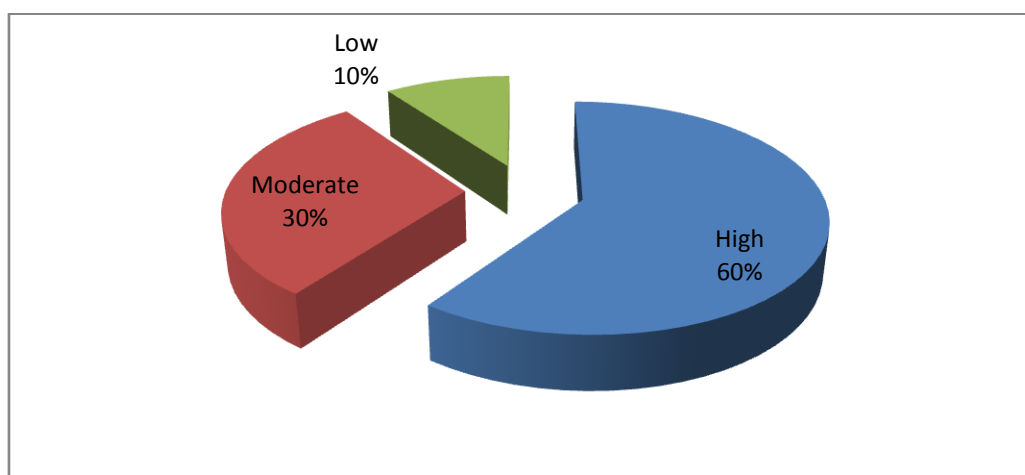


Figure 2: Level of practice of prostitution

Table 5 depicts the knowledge of health implications of practice of prostitution; 382(95.5%) said prostitution results to unwanted pregnancy and abortion. Based on their knowledge; 181(47.4%) reported that unwanted pregnancy and abortion were caused by lack of knowledge of family planning and 201(52.6%) said non use of family planning devices.

Prostitution causes STIs such as HIV/AIDS, Gonorrhoea, Syphilis etc; 367(91.8%) agreed with the idea and only 33(8.3%) disagreed. Out of 382 that agreed with the idea; 302(82.3%) said student practice unprotected sex and 65(17.7%) said they engaged in frequent sexual contact with multiple clients.

Prostitution leads to cancer due to excessive intake of alcohol, smoking and drug abuse, 378(94.5%) said yes to the idea and gave their reasons as; 127(33.6%) said they do that to be relief from sexual pains and 251(66.4%) said they do that to be high and bold during sex.

Prostitution exposes students to assault, ritual killings, kidnapping etc; out 400 participants 378(100%) agreed with the idea. They gave reasons as follows; 181(56.7%) said because they move out with unknown clients and 138(43.3%) said they accept money and offer their body to be use anyhow by clients.

Table 5: Perception of Health Implications of Practice of Prostitution

Statements	Responses	
Prostitution results to unwanted pregnancy and abortion	Yes	382(95.5%)
	No	18(4.5%)
	Total	400(100%)
If yes, what could cause it?	Lack of knowledge of family planning	181(47.4%)
	Non use of family planning devices	201(52.6%)
	Other reasons	0(0%)
	Total	382(100%)
Prostitution causes STIs such as HIV/AIDS, Gonorrhoea, Syphilis etc	Yes	367(91.8%)
	No	33(8.3%)
	Total	400(100%)
If yes, what cause the disease occurrence?	Unprotected sex	302(82.3%)
	Frequent sexual contact with multiple clients	65(17.7%)
	Other reasons	0(0%)
	Total	367(100%)
Prostitution leads to cancer due to excessive intake of alcohol, smoking and drug abuse	Yes	378(94.5%)
	No	22(5.5%)
	Total	400(100%)
If yes, what might be the reason for intake of these substances	To be relief from sexual pains	127(33.6%)
	To be high and bold during sex	251(66.4%)
	Other reasons	0(0%)
	Total	378(100%)
Prostitution exposes students to assault, ritual killings, kidnapping etc	Yes	319(79.7%)
	No	81(20.3%)
	Total	400(100%)
If yes, what are the reasons?	Because they move out with unknown clients	181(56.7%)
	They accept money and offer their body to be use anyhow by clients	138(43.3%)
	Other reasons	-
	Total	319(100%)

IV. Discussion

The findings from a descriptive survey design on the perceived factors influencing the practice of prostitution among female undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Owerri Municipal, Imo State. It showed that such factors as poverty, peer pressure, uncontrolled liberty and freedom from school are highly responsible for the prostitution among female students. This agreed with Ahufohai, [5], who said that incidence of prostitutions are increasing globally, mostly in Nigeria as researchers say it is largely caused by some factors such as poverty, peer pressure, uncontrolled liberty and freedom of movement.

With regards to the poverty which is one of the major reasons that cause prostitution business. Poverty is the system that communizes and dehumanizes the bodies and person of women and children of both sexes for the use and profit of men. Prostitution in Nigeria is a serious social problem and its solution has been rendered difficult by the problem of poverty.

Prostitution has become rampant in our society today among female undergraduate students mainly because they see selling of their bodies as the fastest way of getting income for their keeps. According to Misi [6], prostitution is the use of one's body for the purpose of remuneration or consideration of any form. It could also be addressed as sexual promiscuity.

From the results, the influence of poverty among female students showed a significant relationship with practice of sexual intercourse in returns of payment. It was observed that poverty which predisposes female students to practice of prostitution could be caused by unemployment, laziness to work and inadequate payment. These students cannot find part time jobs to sustain themselves. More so, even when there are menial jobs, some students are lazy to work and some that do part time jobs are inadequately paid.

From the findings of the research, it showed that prostitution is influenced by peer pressure (77.5%). These students mingle with bad peers and succumb to their pressure because they had poor family upbringing and lack self control. As indicated in the result, parents derailed in the role of counseling, adequate monitoring of their children in the school and financial support. Also, the university authority failed to strike the right balance between ensuring students liberty and enforcement of existing campus students code of conduct with was similar to what was observed in the studies tertiary institutions in Municipal [7]

Female students use practice of sexual intercourse with male lecturers to obtain academic favours as strongly shown in the result (68.5%). This agrees with Alufohai [5] who stressed that sex consumers including lecturers pleasure in exploring the lower classes by offering mouth watering opportunities in exchanging for sex.

Certain practices such as, female students engaging sexual intercourse with opposite sexing return for payment, Students exhibiting maximum body exposure at night in order to lure men into sex for favour and female students sleeping with male lecturers for academic favour were perceived bad practices that leads to prostitution among students. Nigerian youth today see prostitution as an easy business that generates fast money. The kind of payment, students prefer for engaging in sexual intercourse with opposite sex is money. This agrees with [8] who defines prostitution as the grating of sexual intercourse to men in return for money.

Female student exhibit maximum exposure at night in order to lure men into sex for favour and they could be seen outside hostel or at hot sports or at nearby cities. This agrees with [7], who opined that sexual promiscuity is very rampant in Nigeria Universities and the average campus has several networks. Most of these students stand outside their hostels and halls to solicit for business. The hardened ones who see their campuses as too boring do not operate inside the University campuses. They brazenly take their trade directly to their customers at night to nearby cities, clubs or hot spots that would give them maximum exposure to men who will like to patronize them.

The rate of increase in practice of prostitution could be that the university authorities have failed to strike the right balance between ensuring students' liberty and enforcement of existing campus codes of conduct which was similar to what was observed in the studies tertiary institutions in metropolis [7]

According to Janet and Okon [9], young female undergraduates of tertiary institution mainly between the ages of 18-25 years, take advantage of the proximity of their school to the major cities, leave their campuses dorms on Fridays, pretending to be going home for the weekend, but to their actual destination at high brow brothels, night clubs and streets in different cities. Janet and Okon further reported that, in most cases the female undergraduates return back to the school after the weekend with large sum of money.

On the aspect of perception of students on health implications of practice prostitution, the findings showed that they have a good knowledge of health implications of practice of prostitution. Highest percentage (91.8%) of them stated Prostitution is associated with the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as gonorrhea, syphilis, candida, herpes virginalis and worst of all HIV/AIDS [10]

Poroma et al [11], opined that most cases of infertility are caused by being promiscuous thereby infected by numerous infected customers or acquaintances. Most female or male infertility, he added, can be attributed to husbands and wives who patronize sex hawkers and bring home infections and sexually transmitted diseases. In all prostitutes are at risk and are also sometime the target of serial killers who may consider them easy targets, or use the religious and social stigma associated with prostitutes as justification for their murder [12]

Also, drugs like cocaine, marijuana and alcohol are used most frequently by these girls at the expense of their health. They are also mostly under the influence of "psychotropic drugs" that put them in a state of fearlessness and shamelessness (Janice, 2008).

V. Conclusion

The base line information got from the study was collated and analyzed and it showed that there are significant ($P < 0.05$) relationship between perceived predisposing factors such as poverty, peer pressure, uncontrolled liberty and freedom from school, obtain academic favour, and the practice of prostitution among female students. Some practices exhibited by undergraduate students as engaging in sex with opposite sex for payment, maximum body exposure at night to lure men into sex to favour and sleep with male lecturers lead to practice of prostitution. However, most of the students have good perception of health implications of practice of prostitution. They know that prostitution is associated with spread of sexually transmitted infection (STIs) such as gonorrhea, syphilis, Candida, herpes virginals and worst of all, HIV/AIDS.

VI. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were necessary such as;

1. Government should endeavour to provide jobs, (full time, and part time or holiday jobs) for students to enable them get money for their up keeps and student should be encourage to work and learn to avoid poverty and it consequences.
2. Parents should not neglect their role of financial support, continuous counseling and monitoring of their children while in University.
3. The school should empower their disciplinary committee and security services to strike balance between students' liberty and enforcement of campus code of conduct.
4. There should be continuous sexual health education to students because prostitution is associated with the spread of sexually transmitted infection (STIs) such as gonorrhea, syphilis, Candida, herpes virginals and worst of all HIV/AIDS. Also if prostitution is not arrested, it will affect the health of the family, destroy the moral standard of the society and, destroy the quality of education in Nigeria.

5. Government should empower law enforcement agencies at local, state and national levels on seeing prostitutions as a criminal offence because it contributes immensely to the depletion of human resources which is a key factor in national development as infection rate of HIV and other deadly sexually transmitted diseases among prostitutes.

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Conflict of interest

All authors of this article report no conflicts of interest throughout the work.

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