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Public Perception and Socio-Economic Factors Sustaining Commercial Sex Work in Enugu State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Commercial sex work addresses some socioeconomic issues, such as self-employment, sexual satisfaction, and a lower societal rape rate. On the contrary, the majority of people believe it is a social problem, particularly in many African countries. However, amid the debate over whether commercial sex work will be legalized in Nigeria, it is unclear what the public perception of the practice is. Hence, this study wants to investigate public perception and socio-economic factors sustaining commercial sex work in Enugu State, Nigeria. A mixed cross-sectional survey design was adopted for this study. A total of 578 respondents were used for analysis. A simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents for quantitative data, while a purposive sampling technique was used to select twelve respondents for qualitative data. A structured questionnaire and an in-depth interview guide were the two instruments used for data collection. Quantitative data was collected, presented, analyzed, and interpreted using descriptive statistical analysis, while qualitative data were gathered, transcribed, coded, and analyzed in the content thematically using narrative quotes extracted from the discussions. The study shows that the public perception of commercial sex workers is that they are vulnerable women or girls trapped by poverty. Also, the study revealed that most respondents oppose the view that commercial sex work should be legalized in Enugu State. Public awareness of the disadvantages of commercial sex work and empowerment opportunities for commercial workers were recommended as viable solutions to reduce the activities of commercial sex work in the state.

Keywords: *Commercial Sex Work, Nigeria, Public Perception, Socio-economic Factors*

Introduction

Commercial sex work has been documented in most societies throughout history, from brothels in Greece in the fourth century BC to native of Ishter, the Mesopotamian goddess of fertility, who was associated with prostitution (Bullough & Bullough, 1987; Hamel, 2003). Commercial sex work is one of the oldest and most enduring professions (Berry, 1995). It is not restricted to any culture, it is global and it transcends all race barriers and gender. According to the National Behaviour Survey of the Society for Family Health (2004), commercial sex work has indeed become complex in different ways, as there are male sex workers who sell sex to both men and women for commercial reasons.

According to Izuagbara (2005), prostitution has become so prominent in Nigeria that it is referred to as “the Italian Connection”, “sex working”, or “Ashawo business”. Research has shown that there are more than one million commercial sex workers in major urban cities in Nigeria like Lagos, Kano, Abuja, Enugu, Port Harcourt, Ibadan, and Owerri (Raymond, 2003). 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 increase in prostitution rings in the rural communities of Nigeria (Ladipo et al., 2001).

Commercial sex work addresses some socio-economic challenges, such as self-employment, sexual satisfaction and a decrease in the rate of rape in society (Timothy-Tyoanande, & Joel-Samson, 2014). Although commercial sex work has been positioned differently over time and across cultures, the predominant view is that it constitutes a social problem, especially in many African nations (Chattopadhyay et al, 1994). In other words, commercial sex work has continued to evoke negative societal perceptions. Negative perception or attitude towards sex work stems from the fact that it offends public morality and it is adjudged a significant contributor to the spread of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS (Ediomo-Ubong & Aniefiok, 2010). Studies have shown that the public's perception and attitude towards commercial sex work are influenced mainly by the legality, morality, gender and socio-economic status of the respondents (Jakobsson & Kotsadam, 2009; Vanderstok, 2010).

The legal status of prostitution varies from country to country, from being legal and considered a profession to being punishable by death. In a few jurisdictions, prostitution is legal and regulated (Charts Bin Statistics Collector Team, 2010). Such countries are Netherlands, Australia, Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy etc. Asian countries like Hong Kong, Israel, Bangladesh and African countries like Madagascar and Côte d'Ivoire have also legalized prostitution (Charts Bin Statistics Collector Team, 2010). The goal of legalizing prostitution is to separate harmful, violent, and other illegal activities that occur in prostitution from the "normal" forms of prostitution (Vanderstok, 2010). In Australia, the government's goal for legalizing prostitution was for women to set up their businesses, thus making the sex industry safer, legal, and regulated (Trifiolis, 2014). In Nigeria, sex work is illegal, and sex workers experience many harmful treatments. They are easily the targets of harassment and exploitation by clients and law enforcement agents (Aral et al., 2003). Moreover, apart from the legal question that may support or fault the justification of commercial sex work, the Christian and Moslem faiths condemn the act in its totality (Timothy-Tyoanande, & Joel-Samson, 2014). Although commercial sex work is not legalized in Nigeria, its practice is widespread (Alobo, & Ndifon, 2014). However, some legislators in Nigeria have tried to legalize commercial sex work, but it was resisted based on moral reasons (Okwara, 2011). Similarly, the Nigerian chapter of African Sex Workers Alliance (ASWA), with other Civil Society Organizations, has protested, demanding that government should stop criminalizing sex work and respect for their human rights (Ameh, 2014). Thus, this variation in the public perception of commercial sex needs to be investigated.

Also, apart from the legalization of commercial sex work in Nigeria, socio-economic factors sustaining the practice remain unclear. Commercial sex work is not seen as a convenient or preferred vocational option for those engaged in it probably because of the risks associated with the lifestyle. The study has shown that contemporary sex workers were coerced into their particular type of work by poverty, illiteracy, divorce/widowhood and lack of capital for income generation (Izugbara, 2007). The gender dimension of commercial sex work appears

that women are the victims (Mbonye, et al, 2012). The socio-economic problems that have afflicted Nigeria in the last two decades have had a very adverse effect on the livelihood of women (Ediomo-Ubong & Aniefiok, 2010). Many of them bear a heavy burden of unremunerated work in food production and ensuring the survival of their households. Since most Nigerian women are not educated and do not have the financial capital to trade, selling sex becomes their only means of escaping from the vicious trap of hardship, marginality and deprivation (Ediomo-Ubong and Aniefiok, 2010). Inequities in gender and power relations reduce economic and social opportunities for better lives among women and increase risky sexual behaviour such as commercial sex work (Mbonye et al, 2012). Hence, commercial sex work may serve as a source of income for women sex workers, their dependents and associates.

As the commercial sex business continues to boom in Nigeria, Enugu state is one of the states where the trade has become rampant. This is because the coal city has an increasing number of schools, hotels and eating joints (Okpara, 2015). Studies have shown that most commercial sex workers in Enugu urban are university undergraduates (Olugbile, Abu and Adalakun, 2008; Uzokwe, 2008 and Johnson, 2007). One school of thought perceives that students indulge in this trade because of the need to pay their fees and have enough money to take care of their needs. On the contrary, another school of thought disagrees with the poverty thesis and proposes greed and moral latitude as the primary reason young women have been attracted to prostitution (Okafor & Duru, 2010). Many factors have been attributed as the determinants of commercial sex work (Essien et al, 2022; Olayiwola et al.,2022). However, little or no study has investigated the public perception of commercial sex workers and socioeconomic factors sustaining the practice in Enugu State, Nigeria. It has become imperative to ascertain the perception of commercial sex work and investigate the dynamics of socio-economic factors sustaining the practice in Enugu, Nigeria. Thus, it is against this background that this study is situated to investigate the public perception and socio-economic factors sustaining commercial sex work in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Functionalism

The major proponents of functional theory are Emile Durkheim (1858 – 1917), and Talcott Parsons (1902 – 1972). Functionalism views society as a system, that is, a set of interconnected parts that together form a whole. The basic unit of analysis is society, and its various parts are understood primarily in terms of their relationship to the whole. According to Igbo and Anugwom (2002), the theory is hinged on the contributions of sub-units to the maintenance and growth of the larger unit as well as the nature of the interaction or functional dependence between these units. According to functional theorists, these sub-units are interdependent and interconnected. The functional theory is related to the present study because Davis (1937), in his explanation of the functional theory, emphasized that prostitution as a safety-valve helps to maintain the respectability of marriage. For instance, in Britain during the Victoria period of rigid sexual activity, prostitution flourished. It was seen as an avenue for men to vent their sexual desire and leave their wives alone, especially if such a person is expecting or nursing a baby. Therefore, prostitution stabilises the function of stabilizing the marriage institution since

the husband will make lesser sexual demands on the wife. One may also argue that prostitution may also serve the purpose of curtailing the incidence of rape since a sexually incited person has an avenue for venting such sexual urges in a prostitute. Also, the functional aspect of commercial sex is that it can contribute to the economic gains of society through tax payment and regulations.

Anomie Theory

This theory was propounded by Robert Merton in 1968. In other words, this theory proposes that all members of society share the same values. However, since members of the society are placed in different positions in the social structure (for example, they differ in terms of class position), they do not have the same opportunity of realizing the shared values. This situation can generate deviance. For instance, because of the position of individuals in the social structure of the society, some people or individuals are unable or incapacitated to act in accordance with the norms and values that guide the society; but the culture states some type of behaviour that the social structure prevents or stops from occurring (Ritzer, 2008). Anomie theory is appropriate and related to the study because, in a society where there is an accepted social and cultural structure, members of the society who cannot cope with the institutionalized means and norms of that society tend to deviate from perceiving alternative or more accessible means of achieving success. Some may find commercial sex work, fraud, robbery and other anti-social activities as alternatives to hard work and ways of fending for their livelihood. The desire to achieve success and climb the social ladder may be the driving force propelling such individuals into seeking easier means of survival, like commercial sex work.

Methods

The mixed cross sectional survey design was adopted for this study. The study area is Enugu North Local Government Area. Enugu North Local Government Area is one of the 17 Local Government Areas of Enugu State. Enugu North LGA is the home town of the Ogui communities. The LGA is highly urbanized. Trading is the dominant occupation because of the presence of the big Ogbete market, and most civil service workers live there. There are also a large number of schools such as Queens Secondary School, Urban Girls Secondary, Market Road Secondary, Spring of Life Secondary, Pin Crest Secondary School, University of Nigeria Enugu Campus, Institute of Management and Technology (IMT), Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) (temporary site). The LGA hosts most of the red spots in the state like Otigba roundabout, CUBANA Night club, 8 HOURS night club, Artisan market, New Berry Park etc. The researcher purposively chose the study area because of the presence of many schools, red spots and commercial activities in the LGA that serve as a pool for commercial sex work activities. The target population of the study is adults in Enugu North LGA. According to NPC (2006), adults ages 18 years and above in Enugu North LGA were projected at an annual population growth rate of 3.5%. which total 226,494. Taro Yamane's formula for determining sample size used was to get a sample size of 578 respondents. A Simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents for quantitative data, while a purposive sampling technique was used to select twelve respondents for qualitative data. Respondents were included in the study if they were adults and resided in Enugu North LGA at the time of this study. A Structured questionnaire and an In-depth Interview guide were

the two instruments used for data collection. Two research assistants were recruited, trained and used in data collection. The instruments were pre-tested to ensure their suitability for the realization of the study objectives and the questions among the field assistants who administered them. Also, the instruments were sent to a measurement and evaluation expert in the faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities ESUT, who fine-tuned them. Oral and verbal consent was obtained from the respondents before administering the instruments. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to process and analyze the questionnaire data collected. Quantitative data was collected, presented, analyzed and interpreted using descriptive statistical analysis. With the aid of NVIVO software, qualitative data gathered through IDI was transcribed, coded and analyzed in content thematically using narrative quotes extracted from the discussions.

Results and Discussion

Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The findings revealed that a majority of the respondents 67.3% are females, while 32.6% of them are males. This is expected in a household survey where more women may be available at the homes than men at the time of data collection. Furthermore, the study showed that a majority of the respondents were 35 -44 years, constituting 51.3% of the entire sample. This is followed by 25.2% of them between 25 -34 years of age while only 7.4% are between 45 years and above. The mean age among respondents was 31years. On religious affiliation, a majority of the respondents, 49.6% are Roman Catholic, followed by 27.5% who are Anglicans, while only 2.0% practice African Traditional Religion. It has been observed that Roman Catholic worshippers are the majority, in the study area. Among the 578 respondents, 53.9% were married while 44.6% were never married and 0.3% was cohabiting. The majority of the respondents, 51.3% indicated B.sc as their highest level of education completed, whilst 23.0% have attained OND/Diploma and 3.9% had completed their M.Sc./PhD during the time of the survey. This result is expected because Enugu North LGA is at the heart of the Enugu metropolis and accommodates a lot of tertiary institutions. However, Unemployment was found to be very high among the respondents, with 34.2% of them not employed, this is closely followed by 24.9% who are businessman/ Traders while 20.9% are civil servants. On average monthly income, the majority of the respondents, 69.7% earned between less than ₦50,000 – ₦99,999, while only 0.6% earned between ₦300,000& above.

Analysis of Study Objectives

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Awareness of the activities of the Commercial Sex Workers

Awareness of the activities of the commercial sex workers	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	396	68.4
No	182	31.4
Total	578	100

Source: Field survey, 2020

Table 1 shows that a majority of the respondent. 396 (68.4%) were aware of the activities of commercial sex workers in the studied area while a good of number respondents 182 (31.4%) said that they were not aware. This result is expected because commercial sex work has become a big business, and it is trendy in many cities in Nigeria. The study area accommodates a large number of young people studying in many tertiary institutions across the LGA. Hence the commercial sex workers' activities in that area have been reported to be very high which may have necessitated the high level of respondents' awareness of commercial sex workers' activities. Moreover, commercial sex work is perceived to be increasing, and Nigeria's economic problems are expected to lead to the continuation of that trend.

This finding is supported by responses from the IDI respondents. One of the IDI respondents said

Every grown-up adult in this area should be aware of the activities of commercial sex workers. They are everywhere. I don't mean patronizing them, and I mean knowing that they exist. It is rampant these days [IDI, Men Trader, 45 years].

Another IDI respondent said that:

Yes, I am aware that prostitutes exist in this city. The prostitution business is increasing in this city every day. Many girls have seen it as fashionable things to it. It is one of the fastest growing businesses in Enugu now [IDI, Women Civil Servant, 39 years].

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Feeling towards Commercial Sex Workers

Feeling towards commercial sex workers	Frequency	Percentage
They are criminals	91	15.7%
They are agents of devil	68	11.7%
They are vulnerable women/girls	228	39.4%
They are desperate/greedy women/girls	191	33.0%
Total	578	100

Source: Field survey, 2020

From Table 2, the finding shows that a majority of the respondents (228), 39.4% feel that commercial sex workers are vulnerable women/girls. This is closely followed by (191) 33.0% of the respondents who said they are desperate/greedy women/girls. Only less than twenty percent of the respondents (91) 15.7% felt that they are criminals. The vulnerability of commercial sex workers has been reported to be more of a structural problem than an individual problem (Amnesty International, 2016). Thus, the finding may be because many people see commercial sex workers are victims of a cartel of pimps and sex traffickers whom they believe are sexually exploiting and enslaving them. Also, globally women who frequently face discrimination and inequality; and bear a disproportionate burden of poverty account for most commercial sex workers, including Nigeria (Amnesty International, 2016). This points to the argument that commercial sex work is a gender-based issue which has objectified women's sexuality as sex toys used by men for their pleasure and business (Mbonye, et al., 2012). Thus, commercial sex work is perceived as a multibillion-dollar industry, built on the greed and desperation of vulnerable women and organized criminal gangs.

Many of the respondents from the IDI session have mixed feelings towards commercial sex workers.

There are many graduates in Enugu that are into prostitution. Are you telling me if these girls have meaningful things they are doing, they will have the time to go into full-time prostitution? My feeling is that they are vulnerable due to circumstance beyond their control. It is not that I support prostitution but I understand better that there is a structural solution to it [IDI, Men Lecturer, 45 years].

Another participant said:

It is very easy to call people name without understanding the plight they are passing through. Some of these girls into prostitution are being used to make money by the high and mighty in the society. More often than not we paint these girls black in order to take advantage of them. They are just one of the disadvantaged groups that society is profiting from their abuse. To be honest, I see them as helpless ones enjoying men's weakness [IDI, Men Civil Servant 34 years].

On contrary views:

I stand to be corrected. I will not subscribe to the sentiment that these girls are exonerated because of societal bigger problems. There are many girls in the same environment who are subjected in the same challenges, yet they have on their own made out positive in their own lives. Also, there are many girls from rich homes with all the opportunities to become anything positive they want to be. yet they are into prostitution. I think it is an individual decision and demonic [IDI, Men Civil Servant 51 years].

Another participant supported the view:

It is obvious that it is greed and bad company that push these girls into prostitution. If any girl wants to work, there are small jobs that can put food on their tables on daily bases, but many of them want it big and large through the easier way; they enter the prostitution business. [IDI Woman Self-employed, 33 years].

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Whether Discrimination against commercial Sex Workers is right or wrong

Discriminate against commercial sex workers	Frequency	Percentage
Very right	31	5.3%
Absolutely right	12	2.0%
Very wrong	340	58.8%
Absolutely Wrong	161	27.8%
No idea	34	5.8%
Total	578	100

Source: Field survey, 2020

Table 3 seeks to know the respondents' perception of whether the discrimination against commercial sex workers is right or wrong. The finding shows that a majority of the respondents (340) 58.8% see it as wrong, while less than 10 percent of the respondents (31), 5.3% see it as very suitable. The findings showed that contrary to popular belief, many people in Enugu North LGA now think it is wrong to discriminate against commercial sex workers. This may be

attributed to the fact that many people that reside in Enugu North LGA are educated, and their perspective of commercial sex workers may be seen as a socially vulnerable group than an individual weakness. Also, the majority of the respondents in this study are women. Hence, they may have a biased opinion, and view discrimination against commercial sex workers are not unacceptable from their gender perspective and level of education.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by Form of Commercial Sex Workers mainly operate in your area

Form of commercial sex workers mostly operate in your area	Frequency	Percentage
Streetwalkers Prostitutes	156	26.9
Brothels Prostitutes	57	9.8
Masseuses/Massage Parlors Prostitutes	34	5.8
Call Girls Prostitutes	45	7.7
Beer Parlour Girls Prostitutes	286	49.4
Total	578	100

Source: Field survey, 2020

From table 4, the results show that a majority of the respondents (286) 49.4% said that beer parlours girl prostitutes are the most seen commercial sex workers. This is closely followed by (156) 26.9% street walkers' prostitutes, while only (57) 9.8% said brothels prostitutes. This may be linked to the unprecedented number of beer parlours in Enugu North LGA. Famous among them is "CUBANA RED SPOT", where commercial sex workers gather daily for business. This finding collaborates with the opinion of one of the IDI respondents:

In Enugu today, for every three houses, there exist bars, where people 'wine' away time with chilled bottles of beer every evening. Enugu Men like to relax after work and most of the times; they do it at the Beer Parlour. Seating on a round table with friends and 'gisting' over some bottles of beer and pepper soup is an ideal evening setting for most them. This behaviour has made many prostitutes leave their brothels to the beer parlours where they will get these men. The trend is changing now, some of the girls you see at the beer parlours are not all sale girls but commercial sex workers waiting for men [IDI, Women Student 31 years].

In the views of another respondent:

It's a normal thing in Enugu now to go to a beer parlour and gat a girl to go home with. I think it is the same street girls who now flock around beer parlour with the intention of seducing men to buy sex. You know when men are drunk the next thing is sex. So these girls understand it

now, they no longer wait for the men at their brothels; they come to joints to catch customers [IDI Men Trader 46 years].

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Local Language or Names are mainly used to depict Commercial Sex Workers

Local language or names are mainly used to depict commercial sex workers	Frequency	Percentage
Ashawo (prostitute)	310	53.6
Agwuna (loose girl)	176	30.4
Nkinta (dog)	92	15.9
Total	578	100

Source: Field survey, 2020

Table 4 vividly shows that a majority of the respondents (310) 53.6% said that the local name for commercial sex workers is Ashawo in the study area. (176) 30.4% said they are called Agwuna while (92) 15.9% said Nkinta. The result agreed with the popular name the commercial sex workers are recognized in Nigeria. Prostitutes in Nigeria are popularly referred to as “Ashawo” and they are mostly close to popular junctions at night. However, Ashawo is not an Igbo name but has become popular with laymen in Nigeria as commercial sex workers. The derogatory names used to describe commercial sex workers clearly indicate the public's negative perception toward them in Enugu State.

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by whether Male Sex Workers Exist in the Study Area

Do you think that male prostitutes exist in your area?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	108	18.6
No	256	45.8
I don't know	214	37.0
Total	578	100

Source: Field survey, 2020

Table 5 shows that a majority of the respondents (256) 45.8% disagreed that male sex workers exist in Enugu North LGA while less than twenty percent (108) 18.6% affirmed that they exist. However, significant number of the respondents (214) 37.0% said they don't know whether they exist or not. Male commercial sex workers are not popular in this part of the whole; hence this finding may have expressed the views of what is obtainable.

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents by People Most Likely to Patronize Commercial Sex Workers

People most likely to patronize commercial sex workers	Frequency	Percentage
Married men/ sugar daddies	388	67.1
Young men	174	30.1
Married women/ sugar mummy	12	2.0
Young girls	3	0.5
Total	578	100

Source: Field survey, 2020

Table 6 reveals that a majority of respondents (388) 67.1% think that married men/ sugar daddies are the people most likely to patronize commercial sex workers, (174) 30.1% said young men while insignificant few said married women/sugar mummy (12) 2.0% and young girls (3) 0.5% respectively. This finding agrees with general perception that most married men feel a sense of adventure when they get down with a strange woman who is not their wife. The same feeling is what they crave for what drives them to meet prostitutes because that is the only time they try out many sexual fantasies and fetishes they have been dreaming of and too scared to try with their wives. The IDI respondents supported this finding as follows:

Some married men do have an excessive sexual libido and no matter how hard the wife tries to satisfy him, he still seeks that extra pleasure elsewhere. And where is he likely to have it? With a prostitute of course. So instead of pestering the wife, only to be met with rejection or complaints, they prefer to go for a prostitute who will not ask any question [IDI, Men Civil Servant 51 years].

In another IDI respondent view:

This may sound quite sarcastic but some men are promiscuous and love the variety in everything they do. These set of men are quick to tell you that it would be abnormal to eat the same kind of soup every day of the year, so the best thing for them is to patronize commercial sex workers to get something different from what they get at home. When it comes to sex, a prostitute is willing to try anything and the sex style the madam at home abhors could be the one that gives the man the most pleasure. And if the prostitute can give it to him the way he wants, why not try her, he would always reason [IDI, Women Self-employed, 33 years].

A male respondent opined that:

Prostitutes are in the business for money and as long as you can pay what you have negotiated with her, she will not give you any hassle or stress. Unlike a wife or girlfriend who wants to be courted, given a treat, dinner, cinemas and all that stuff, a prostitute does not care for these because for her, a man is just another client and therefore, there is no room for unnecessary demands Prostitutes are everywhere in Enugu now, they are many here [IDI, Men Trader, 45 years].

Table 7: Distribution of respondents by Factors that contribute to high rate of commercial sex work activities in your area

Factor contributes to high rate of commercial sex work activities in your area	Frequency	Percentage
Unemployment	109	18.8
Poverty and other economic needs	207	35.8
Urge for Sexual satisfaction	49	8.4
Broken home/ parental death, separation or neglect	162	28.0
No enforcement of legislation against the practice	51	8.8
Total	578	100

Source: Field survey, 2020

From the data on Table 7, reveals that a majority of the respondents (207) 35.8% said that poverty and other economic needs are the factors that contribute to high rate of commercial sex work activities in your area. This is closely followed by (162) 28.0% who said it is broken home/ parental death, separation or neglect while (109) 18.8% said unemployment. The finding supported that the driving force behind commercial sex work is economic gain. Poverty and deprivation of opportunity and social-economic inequality and oppression can lead people into sex work, or play a role in sex workers' decisions to remain in sex work. Several factors have been implicated in literature fueling and sustaining commercial sex work in many climes. According to Oyeoku (2012), factors such as poverty, unemployment, family breakdown, lack of parental upbringing, peer pressure group among others have been adduced for this phenomenon in Nigeria. Also, Ayalew and Berhane (2000), in the examination of child prostitution, magnitude and related problems in Ethiopia, revealed that poverty, disagreement with family, and peer influence were the major reasons for prostitution in Ethiopia. Among the factors associated as sustaining commercial sex work, poverty has been very significant. Many of the IDI respondents were of the opinion that the high rate of unemployment is the factor that mostly expose girls to prostitution. The responses can be seen below:

We cannot take it away that an idle mind is the devil biggest workshop. Not only of prostitution, but also for most crime we see today in our society especially in Nigeria are being fuelled by unemployment. Like I said before, some of these girls are graduates without work, so they created works for themselves although it is terrible. Our government is so irresponsible that they prefer buying cars and houses with our stolen money than creating industries that will absolve these graduates. It is unfortunate, to say the least [IDI, Men Lecturer, 45 years].

Another viewpoint from a respondent:

For me, it is not only about unemployment because unemployment is for those looking for jobs. Generally, things are hard in this country now. The economy is down, and people are suffering yet the government is not sensitive to the plight of the people. When people are pushed to the wall, they tend to find a way to make ends meet. Don't be deceived by only those girls you see on road or clubs, there are many home based prostitutes operating independently. Even married women these days sell sex for money. That is what our politician like. They have the money so they call all the shot. Basically, bad economic satiation created by politician is causing the increase in commercial sex activities in this state [IDI, Men Civil Servant 42 years].

Table 8: Distribution of respondents by whether Commercial Sex Work should be legalized

Legalize Commercial Sex work	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	48	8.3
No	530	91.6
Total	578	100

Source: Field survey, 2020

Table 8 shows that a majority of the respondents (530) 91.6% disagreed that commercial sex work should be legalized in Enugu North LGA, while (48) 8.3% of the respondents agreed that it should be legalized. This finding of this study is not in agreement with another conducted among commercial sex workers in Abuja Nigeria which showed that majority of the respondents support the legalization of commercial sex work (Chukwuedozie et al., 2019). This variation from the studies may be because many still hold a revered or moral opinion about accepting commercial sex work as a legitimate occupation in this part of the world. Also, the disparity of the findings could be because this current study was conducted among the public not exclusively commercial sex workers. From the IDI sessions there are mixed feelings toward the issues of legalizing commercial sex work in Nigeria.

I am strongly against the legalization of prostitution in Nigeria for various reasons. First, it is a sin against God; secondly, it is the normalization of the abnormal and the legalization of an intrinsically evil act. Prostitution debases the human person created in the image and likeness of God. It profoundly violates the human body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit. It corrodes the human body that is redeemed by the precious Blood of Jesus Christ [IDI, Women Teacher, 43 years].

Another respondent supported the view:

Prostitution legalization could potentially pose the greatest assault on the Nigerian family and the society at large. Presently, prostitution is illegal in Nigeria; as a result, those who indulge in it do so with "extreme caution." But if it is legalized in a country like Nigeria which

is already bedeviled and burdened with unemployment crisis, a teeming number of unemployed young women in Nigeria, could easily consider it as a choice of trade and means of survival, after all, it is legally allowed. Again, legalizing prostitution can seriously weaken the war against the spread of HIV/AIDS [IDI, Women Student 31 years].

A contrary view:

Since it has become impossible to stop prostitution in the land, the Senate should consider regulating the act in the country. We need to regulate prostitution in this country so that if anyone wants to indulge in prostitution, the person should be registered and issued with a license. If we say we want to stop it, it would be difficult. It is done in other countries; let us regulate it by issuing license [IDI, Men Civil Servant 42 years].

Reports have shown that countries where prostitution is not illegal, had lower cases of sexually transmitted diseases, while Nigeria, where it is illegal, had one of the highest rates of HIV in the world. The police take advantage of commercial sex workers because it is illegal. When they arrest these prostitutes, if the law enforcer does not want to use a condom, the sex worker has to agree, and this is why HIV is on the increase. Sex work should be made legal, and government should then saddle sex workers with the responsibility of paying tax [IDI, Women Self-employed 33 years].

Table 9: Distribution of Respondents by whether Legalizing commercial sex will remove the negative perception against them

Legalizing commercial sex will remove the negative perception against them	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	56	9.6
No	288	49.8
I don't know	234	40.4
Total	578	100

Source: Field survey, 2020

Table 9 reveals that a majority of respondents 288 (49.8%), disagreed that legalizing commercial sex would remove the negative perception of them, while less than (56)10% agreed. This may not be unconnected with a negative attitude towards commercial sex workers because of the cultural and religious widespread beliefs against the practice in the study area. Nigeria is a religious nation, and the two dominant religious affiliations in Nigeria are Christianity and Muslim. The teachings of these religious groups portray commercial sex work as an unacceptable practice among its members. Also, it is strongly resisted among some traditional communities as taboo. This strong sentiment against commercial sex work in Nigeria may make it difficult for a majority of the public to openly accept the practice as an occupation even if it is legalized. This differs from what is obtainable in other nations where commercial sex work has been legalized.

Table 10: Distribution of Respondents by Ways to make commercial sex workers to quit their job

Ways you think that will make commercial sex workers to quit the job	Frequency	Percentage
Meaningful Employment	312	53.9
Acquire entrepreneurship skills	134	23.1
Qualitative Education	87	15.0
Sex Education	45	7.7
Total	578	100

Source: Field survey, 2018

Table 10 shows that a majority of the respondents (312), 53.9%, think providing meaningful employment will help commercial sex workers quit their job, while (134) 23.1% said acquiring entrepreneurship skills. Others think qualitative education (87) 15.0% and sex education (45) 7.7% are ways to make commercial sex workers quit their job. This finding agrees with the widespread view that it is not every prostitute that is lazy or just willing to sell herself for money. Some of them go into it because there are no jobs for them to do to take care of their needs. Some of them are well educated, but with no job readily available for them to do, they decide to sell themselves for money.

Table 11: Distribution of Respondents by Ways commercial sex work can be eradicated in your area

Ways commercial sex work can be eradicated in your area	Frequency	Percentage
Severe sanctions or punishment against prostitution	99	17.1
Expulsion/outlawing or closing prostitutes' houses	76	13.1
Sexual Education of illiterate and unskilled prostitutes	63	10.8
Establishment of Institution for the Rehabilitation & Reformation of prostitutes	124	21.4
Economically empowering to prostitutes	216	37.3
Total	578	100

Source: Field survey, 2018

Table 11 reveals that most respondents believed that economically empowering prostitutes is a way commercial sex work can be eradicated. This is closely followed by (124) 21.4% who

indicated that the establishment of institutions for the rehabilitation & reformation of prostitutes can help to eradicate the trade.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made. They include:

1. Government should organize workshops and seminars for commercial sex workers to understand the health implication of their activities.
2. There is a need for public awareness on the activities of commercial sex work and how interventions can change the behaviour of the public towards commercial sex work
3. The relevant agency should provide an empowerment programme for commercial sex workers through education, entrepreneurship and vocational trainings.

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