

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Prostitution as a Social Phenomenon in Present Day Nigeria

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Abstract:

This paper critically examines prostitution as a social phenomenon in present day Nigeria. It examines many factors like unemployment, poverty, family and peer influences as the factors responsible for it in the society. There is the need to control it because of the devastating effects it has on individuals and the society in general. The paper concludes that apart from the need to enact more stringent laws to curb the menace, there is equally the need for combined efforts by the government and non-governmental agencies alike to control it by creating more employment opportunities and enlightening the people of the danger

Keywords: prostitution, sexual, government, poverty

1. Introduction

Prostitution is one of the social problems confronting human existence in the world today. It is a moral wrongdoing which has an unpleasant consequence on individuals, social institutions and the society at large. Prostitution is an act which involves consent as opposed to forced sexual activity, economic and public nature forms the basis of the offence and it is generally regarded with disapproval. Prostitutes are commonly described as whores or tarts, words generally used as insults to women. Yet, sex is sold widely and illegally in what is often called the sex industry (McKeganey and Bernard, 1966).

In the past, although prostitutes were widely patronized, the act was regarded mainly as sinful. Today, things seem different, life is never the same again especially with the new trend of development which renders norms much liberal with regard to marital, pre-marital and extramarital sex. Generally, prostitutes are still considered disreputable, immoral and unhealthy because they engage in sex to make a living without an iota of affection or feeling (Perry and Perry, 1976 p.....). Many factors are responsible for this ugly trend. Among these factors are poverty, unemployment, family disorganization and peer influences. The phenomenon is widely spread in our urban centres and has dominated the society and also manifested itself across the demographic composition of male and female, old members of the society. A lot of control measures have been put in place by the government to curb the profession, yet the scourge still triumphs like a wide spread fire spread fire as a result of poor implementation of some government policies.

In this paper, our emphases shall be on the issue of prostitution as it pertains to present-day Nigeria. To achieve this lofty task, the paper is divided into four arts. The first part deals with the meaning and nature of prostitution, causes and effects of prostitution, methods adopted to curb the scourge. Finally, recommendations are made on the ways to minimize or eradicate it.

2. Meaning and Nature of Prostitution

The concept, "prostitution" is used by various people of different, socio-cultural backgrounds to mean different things. To some, it means any Female person who lives in a brothel or stay around hostels or popular roadside soliciting for men. However, the definition of prostitution is quite beyond that as it encompasses the granting of sexual favour for gratification.

According to Giddens (1994) prostitution is the granting of "sexual favours for monetary gain. Perry (1984) defined it as "exchange of sex for money or other objects of value". The word "prostitute" came into common usage in the late 18th century. In the ancient world, most conveyors of sexuality for economic reward were courtesans, concubines or slaves. Giddens (1994) emphasized that:

- "A key aspect of model prostitutes is that women and their clients are generally unknown to one another. Although men may become regular customers, the relationship is not initially established on the basis of personal acquaintance. This was not true of most forms of the dispersing of sexual favours for material gain in early times. Prostitution is directly connected to the break-up of small-scale and the, commercialising of social relations. In small-scale traditional communities, sexual relations were controlled by the very visibility in new developed urban area, more anonymous social connection were easily established [p.202].

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Paul J. Goldstein classified prostitution into two terms: occupational commitment and occupational context. According to him, occupational commitment refers to the frequency which a woman is involved in prostitution. Many women are involved only temporarily, selling sex a few times before abandoning it for a long time or forever. Occasional prostitutes are those who often accept money for sex, but irregularly to supplement -income from other sources. Others are continually involved in prostitution, deriving their main source of income from it.

Occupational context means the type of work environment and interaction process in which a woman is involved. A street-walker 'solicits business on the street. A 'call-girl calls clients over the phone, men either come to her home or being visited by her. A 'house prostitute' is a woman who works in a private club or brothel. A 'massage-parlour; prostitute' provides sexual services in an establishment supposedly offering only legitimate massage and health facilities. Many women also engage in barter (payment in goods or other services rather than money) for sexual services. Most of the call girls Goldstein studied regularly engaged in sexual battering such as sex-exchange for television, repair of cars and electrical goods, clothes, legal and dental services (Goldstein, 1995).

According to Perry and Perry classification of prostitutes, the highest status belongs to the call girl. who is often a would-be actress log model trying to obtain an occasional or frequent — several money. This category of call girls is generally educated and very attractive, and their contacts are made by referral and over the telephone. Their clients tend to be middle or upper -class men and their rendezvous are seldom hasty affairs. The girls that belong to this category normally dress well and sometimes make periodic trips to see their clients. They are working class ladies or ladies of high status. The second category is the hustlers. This category dress very well, they go to night clubs and stay around popular hotels. The money chargeable are much lower than that of the call-girls. The lowest status on this ladder are the street walkers. They go around some popular places and solicit passers-by for patronage. According to Winick and Gray (1973) these category of prostitutes is predominantly from lower class and minority groups.

3. Causes and Effects of Prostitution

Many factors are responsible for the causes of prostitution in the society, among which is what Clinnard and Abbot (1973) economic and social insecurity. It is fashionable to suggest that our economic system "at fault for the persistence of prostitution, for if everyone were receiving a -good wage, there would be no need for women to enter the profession.

Our universities and other tertiary institutions turn out graduates yearly. These graduates are not able to secure jobs after their youth service, even though they are given jobs, their take home pay is not enough to cater for their needs, the quest to find prostitution as an alternative becomes paramount. The ladies who are into prostitution as a result of unemployment are mostly the streetwalker and Hustlers.

Poverty is another motivating factor. It can be expressed as individual's inability to satisfy basic needs of human due to lack of income or property, a lack of opportunity to generate income or property, and a lack of means to challenge this situation (Repink 1994). Any poor person, lacks adequate access to basic necessity to human life which includes such things as food, clothing, decent shelter, education, health care, etc. Even though the economic determinism of Maxis not bought in its entirety, criminology has not failed to see unemployment and poverty as consisting the foremost crimogenic milieu. Therefore, the problem of prostitution and criminal activities in Nigeria areas a result of the country's basically crimogenic capitalist social order (Odekunle, 1982 p 71).

Apart from unemployment and poverty, parental influence is another factor. One finding is that young people from unhappy homes where parents show little interest in their children and use harsh physical punishment that are more apt to crime than youngsters from happier home situations (Baer and Coirado. 1974).

The girls brought up under this situation sometimes broke up relationship with their parents, they feel friendless and isolated and act out of rebellion to confirm their parent worst expectation. In most homes children are engaged by their parents to watch pornographic movies on television and internet. Some parents go as far as exposing their children to richmen who are ready to use their influence them into illicit sexuality. Most parents particularly expose their children to hawking of wares with the instruction that they could permit sex to anyone who cares to pay for it. Of course, this is the cheapest avenue for marriage in modern Nigerian society. As prostitution is the fastest way of 'making hard currency -not minding the risk involved, many parents proudly sell their houses and beg practitioners of sex trade and their sponsors to send their children abroad for the unwholesome act (Newswatch, 2000 P:18)

Drugs and alcohol directly stimulate the central nervous system. Synthetic stimulants like, cocaine, heroin, amphetamine, cannabis and other narcotics are more potent and more readily abused. These, according to Adesinacan produce an elevation of mood, a sense of euphoria and a sense of increased muscular strength. Females who are addicted are easily propelled by the influence of these drugs to prostitution, Addicted person always run in short of money in order to meet up with the demand of intakes. In quest for this demand, they commit various types of deviant behaviours which include prostitution to support their drug -habit (Sanchez, 1992) Another import factor to note here as one of the reasons responsible for this act is what Igbo {1999} referred 'to as demons evil spiritinfluence. To him, demons or evil spirit can take possession of the individual there by making him or her act in an undesirable manner against his or her will.

Many women drift into prostitution as a result of peer group influences. To D'neill (1996), many Women are introduced to it by friends and a supporter network, or subculture tricks of the trade. In line with the above" is differential association which is essentially a theory of contamination by exposure (Sutherland, 1959). Basically, criminal behaviour is learned interaction with persons in a pattern of communication, and the specific direction of another drives rationalizes attitudes. People do not jump into the trade anyhow but are introduced into it by people who are-already in it. The code of the game like the method of dressing, soliciting and the method of operation generally are taught rough. The intended women learn all the intricacies before going into the profession. Sutherland

(1970) asserts that crime is a learned process and that criminal behaviour is developed by normal social process common to all living, like all behaviours, prostitution is learned from friends and associates. Many ladies work for pimps. The pimps are a kind of manager for one or more prostitutes. Frequently, pimps are the lure into prostitution "for girls _who come to the city alone, hoping to break into some kind of glamorous career. The pimps overwhelm, status-conscious girls with their flashy cars and clothes, thereby enticing them into the ignoble act (Perry and Peny, 1976).

4. Effects of Prostitution

A lot of people see prostitution as an act against the normative structure in the society. The act has caused some devastating and unpleasant effects on individuals and the society at large. Among these effects are: Reduction in marriages and birth rate; those involved in prostitution find it difficult to withdraw from the lucrative business because of its high financial returns. This has not only rendered so many people unmarried but has led to a gross reduction in birth rate.

5. Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Prostitution is a channel for the spread of sexually transmitted diseases like Gonorrhoea, syphilis, staphylococcus and the most dreaded HIV/AIDS. These diseases are being transmitted from one person 'to another when one has unprotected sexual contact with a victim. It was reported by Newswatch that out of forty million people that are living with HIV/AIDS today, 1.8. Millions of them are young people between the ages of 15 to 24 years. HIV/AIDS has increased the numbers of orphans globally UNAIDS estimated 13.2 million children under the ages of 15 years as at 1999. The implication of this geometric increase in sexually transmitted diseases is that sexually active youths are the ones' mostly affected, because these are the category of people who patronize prostitutes or engage in the act. According to Omorogbe (2001) this category of people do not believe that HIV/AIDS exists.

Prostitution is a stigma on womanhood. It is a property of moral degradation which Ocho (1992) referred to as unhealthy attitudes leading to a lack of a viable moral integrity. No woman wants to be associated' with it or labeled prostitute. Nigerian women are being ridiculed and brought into disrepute in diplomatic circle because of the involvement of some, female Nigerians in internal and international prostitution. In diplomatic circle initially, any black woman is seen as a Nigerian prostitute. Many respectable women including wives of diplomatic personnel have been propositioned and embarrassed in this manner (Newswatch, 2002). Through international blackmail many reputable women who are not into the profession consider it as a great embarrassment to the dignity of womanhood, because it is unhealthy, immoral and ungodly for a woman to use the temple of God for unholy act. Apart from sexual transmitted diseases, 57 Nigerian girls were reported to have died on their way, to Italy for prostitution when the vessels conveying them capsized mid-sea between North Africa and Europe {Vanguard, 2001:7}

Brothels or any place where prostitutes stay to transact their acts serve as hide-out to criminals. Sometimes armed robbers often stay in these places to map out strategies on the method of operation they want to adopt.

6. Methods Adopted to Curb the Scourge

Various methods have been adopted by the government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), like churches/mosques and spirited individuals to curb the scourge of prostitution. Some of these methods are:

The enactment of laws: Some state government in Nigeria have come out with laws which make prostitution an offence. For example, in Zamfara State, Sharia was passed into law banning prostitution in the state, in Edo State. Lucky Igbinedion, the governor of the State on September, 11 2000 signed prostitution bill into law. The law cited as the code (Amendment) law 2000-amended some of the provisions of the criminal code law cap 48 laws of Bendel State 1976 as applicable to Edo State. The new law States that:

- any female person who knowingly offers herself or the purpose of prostitution or carry out any immoral act within or outside Nigeria shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to an imprisonment for two years or pay fine of ₦20,000. Similarly, any man 'who ' patronizes any woman in an act capable of being called prostitution is guilty of an offence and liable on A conviction to two years' imprisonment or a fine of ₦10,000, (Newswatch, 2013)"

The law which is as a result of the passing of the executive sponsored bill by the State House of Assembly is the climax of a two-year campaign by both international, local pressure 'groups and concerned private individuals who continuously raised alarm on the upsurge of prostitution in the state, since the enactment, prostitution has decline considerably in the state.

Enlightenment Campaign: Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) such as private individuals and churches/mosques have not been left out of the "campaign against prostitution in 'the country." The establishment of tell' Renaissance" by Eki Igbinedion wife of Edo State 1 governor to tackle the unwholesome act is yielding dividends in this direction. Many NGOs have their campaigns spread to schools, offices etc. to alert people of the dreaded HIV/AIDS being spread through sexual contacts, while Churches/Mosques preach daily in their respective places of worship against prostitution the need to be morally upright.

Arrest and Prosecution: In the past years, the police have constantly raided parade themselves for men to patronize. Some of those arrested by the police were arraigned before the court for prosecution and those convicted were sentenced to some terms of imprisonment accordingly. Arrest made by the police and the various conviction of culprit have gone a long way-in reducing the infiltration of others into the act.

Poverty alleviation: In order to meet the basic needs of the poor in the area of food, nutrition, health care, shelter, education, clothing, transport 'and employment, Government has made efforts through a variety of development programmes and policies like:

- The National Directorate of Employment (NDE)

- The Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI)
- Poverty Alleviation Programmes (PAP) and a host of others.

The reason for this strategy is that the direct provision of such goods/services is likely to affect the living condition of the poor more directly than the growth process (Attah, 2001).

To complement the efforts made by the government, the wife to the Edo State Governor, Mrs. Eki Igbiniedion established *idea Renaissance* and the Under Privileged Scholarship Fund to disabuse the minds of majority of Edo Youths from prostitution, (Newswatch, 2000).

7. Summary and Conclusion

In the preceding sections of this paper, efforts have been made at analyzing critically the meaning and nature of prostitution, the effects it has in the society and the, various methods adduced in curbing scourge either by the government and non-governmental agencies alike. Yet the profession still flourishes in many parts of the 'countries. We therefore, call for the intensification of government efforts and other agencies to ensure that prostitution is discontinued in the society by more stringent laws to revigorate the police to be alert to their responsibilities.

Government should set up skill acquisition scheme, create industries and conducive atmosphere for investment, there should also be establishment of micro-credit loan 'scheme to give loans to graduates in skill acquisition centres so as to enable them start their business. Since vocationalization can be regarded as panacea for unemployment and propellant of natural techno economic development, vocational education should be fully incorporated -into the school curricular. These will reduce the unemployment and poverty problems in the country.

A campaign on the dreaded HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases should be carried out to all nooks and crannies of the society.

Churches/Mosques should as a matter of urgency discourage people byway of preaching to those who are already in the business or intend to join the profession that prostitution is dangerous, shameful, immoral, unhealthy andungodly.

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