

THE CONSEQUENCES OF PROMISCUITY AND THE BUSINESS OF SEX IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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***Abstract:** The business of sex has recorded a global increase due to social and economic challenges like the high rate of poverty and unemployment among the youths and their unbridled quest for a sexual freedom which brings with it, dire threats and grave consequences. The aim of this paper is to examine the situational and social factors which are responsible for the immoral behaviour and sexual mercantilism of our youths in the digital age. The immorality of our youths and their acquisition of foreign values and indecent social habits have turned them into objects of universal derision. This paper is underpinned by the sociological theory which offers explanations for the nature and development of society and for social behaviour which reflects the economic, social and political influences of society on a group of people. The conclusion of this paper is that the business of sex (otherwise known as prostitution) legitimizes the brutalization of women. It also re-enforces male domination; especially when women are used as sex machines or are treated as sexual slaves for the suppression of men's sexual urges.*

Keywords: Brutalization of Women, Business of Sex, Digital Age, Economic Challenges, Male Domination, Sexual Slaves.

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INTRODUCTION

We live in the digital age where censorship of the internet is virtually non-existent. As a result, our youths are exposed to hard-core pornography, x-

rated films, indecent dressing and books on sex on a regular basis. This worrisome fact encourages a serious malaise among our adolescents and young adults. According to James Zirin (2014) 'what once was X has become R; R has become PG 13; the really dirty films have become NR – not even rated at all (np)'. No one is exempted from the social networking and micro-blogging services such as **Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram** and many other online communities or communication networks which provide subscribers with a potpourri of entertainment portal, among others. Via the aforementioned sites, the youths are exposed to limitless pornography, inappropriate sexual behaviour and vulgar language or content (Azuike, 4-5). The resultant effect is an extreme waywardness on the part of our youths and their obsession with sex or with the sexual toys that are unceremoniously peddled by perverts on the mentioned sites. Sex and sexual acts are readily commercialized on social networking sites for the derivation of vicarious gratification in our youths. As a matter of fact, there is a global increase in the business of sex and this is due to socio-economic challenges which include the high rate of global poverty and unemployment.

Sex is currently a 'multi-billion dollar industry' and serves as a very lucrative business across the world; a business estimated to yield over \$100 billion each year. James Zirin has opined that:

Erotic ideas find expression in books, movies, television, tabloid newspapers, supermarket magazines, and on internet videos...and interest in erotica pervades the current digital age (np). Sex is displayed virtually everywhere we look! More alarming are the degrading and purportedly sinful urges in our youths to engage in masturbatory practices with the help of sex toys which are googled and purchased online by the frivolous and promiscuous ones. The social effects and the challenges of the business of sex are largely the focus of discussion in this paper.

DISCUSSION

There is an unbridled quest in our youths (and in the adolescents) for a sexual freedom which allows them to explore sex. This behavioural habit encourages the rise in the global business of sex otherwise termed as prostitution in this paper. The word 'prostitute' is derived from the Latin word 'prostituere' of which 'pro' means up-front and 'situere' means to offer for sale (Tyoanande & Samson). The Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary

has also defined a prostitute as one who engages in the sexual act in exchange for money. Prostitutes are called by many names in the global world which include the following:

- slut
- hooker
- call-girl
- courtesan
- easy woman
- commercial sex worker

Prostitution among the youths in Nigeria is perpetrated for the motives of receiving monetary gains or for sexual pleasure. The women tend to experience more disadvantages like sexual and financial exploitation and physical abuse than their male counterparts when they engage in the business of sex. As a matter of fact, the dehumanizing effects of women's experiences in many parts of the world are often exposed through their sexual habits or preferences. However, the boundaries of good conduct have become even more eroded by the obscene behaviour of our youths. Many literature books, magazines and video films have perennially portrayed young men and women who are 'guilty of glamorizing sexual misconduct (Azuike, 3), thereby creating what Azuike (30) has termed a 'sexually promiscuous and monstrous generation'. Let us briefly examine how sexual promiscuity plays out on our television screens, for instance, and in the world of mass media and culture.

Women's Sexual Promiscuity in the World of Mass Media

The common belief in the world of mass media is that 'sex sells', especially in the area of advertising. Advertising is generally said to provide information on a product or to promote it for the purpose of sales. However, 'critics see advertising as void of useful information about the product itself (Williams 2002, 17). Advertising is, particularly, the focus of criticism when it is done to sexually debase or demean women like often does and also promotes sexual immorality on television screens. According to industry critics:

Problems arise when important aspects of human existence are reduced to the consumption of brand-name consumer products...a culture in which personal worth and identity reside not in us but in the products with which we surround ourselves (Baran, 384-5). A worrisome aspect of advertising is in its use of the female gender to sell products in a highly derogatory

manner. Advertisers are largely mercantile and are usually perceived as sexualizing female bodies in a bid to promote sales. When a woman in a commercial to promote the sale of a 'dress', for instance, willingly appears half naked, she makes the viewing audience to wonder what product she advertises onscreen- her nakedness or her dress. There are justifiable fears concerning the media and its corrupting influences on the youths as well, particularly in relation to sex (O'Shaughnessy, 16). This has led to the following, as observed by O'Shaughnessy: Moral panics and campaigns against too much sex and violence on television....It has been suggested that the cumulative effects of consuming media that contains violent and or sexualised contents [are] particularly harmful for young viewers due in part to the tendency of young people to learn by mimesis (mimicking or imitating what they see and hear.) [There] is the prevalence of high levels of gratuitous sex and violence in the media.... (16).

From the excerpt above, it is suggested that the media is directly or inadvertently responsible for the unacceptable behaviour and the sexual misconduct of the younger generation. The media also tends to encourage the business of sex in this digital age and this is best illustrated in the immoral texts, magazines, x-rated films and vulgar language it allows the youths to access. Women in the world of mass media and culture are portrayed as a people who have acquiesced to using their beauty as a tool for self-debasement or for selfish sexual satisfaction (Conde, 151). The consumer mentality has also continually presented the woman as sexually egoistic and must be used to 'sell pleasure' (Conde, 152). Conde reiterates that: The sexual revolution and current moral relativism have brought about an 'anti-culture' that has converted woman into a sex symbol...and an 'object of pleasure' (152). The ways in which women are made to appear on T.V screens and on social media are far from decent or appealing. Sadly, women have gratuitously contributed to their own derision just so they can attract the attention of the men or to make paltry sums.

Harmful Socio-Cultural Practices, Dress Code and the Promotion of the Business of Sex

In the tertiary institutions across the globe, especially in Nigeria, there is an insistence on a decent dress culture among the youths which can be used to showcase our national identity (Owolabi, 151). 'Indecent dressing is a facet in

cultural endangerment (Dada, 134)', and there is a strong link between it, sexual promiscuity and the business of sex. It cannot be over emphasized that the business of sex is transacted through illegal means; through language usage, through indecent dressing and through harmful socio-cultural practices. The youths tend to readily imbibe 'foreign cultures and vulgar languages (Dada, 138)' which in turn lead them into a process of socialization which is detrimental to their wellbeing. Many young females 'pop up in revealing dresses that keep jumping up at every attempt they make to sit down or pick up something from the ground (Owolabi qtd in Bakare & Ayakoroma, 145)', and African societies regard such females as immoral. Indecent dressing is a national plague which holds the youths in derision. Likewise, an individual's use of language or body language can communicate his or her inner emotions and feelings which, again, can attract negative behavioural patterns. It certainly will turn the indecent dresser into an object of ridicule. Ultimately, rape serves as an index of a mode of dressing or a manner of expression that has sent a wrong signal to its audience. For example, one knows a prostitute from afar, not only by what she says but largely by what she wears. Therefore, a sex hawker is easily identified by her appearance.

Poverty and unemployment are sociological constraints which promote the business of sex. 'Poverty makes young people who fend for their keeps to go into an illicit trade which indecent dressing also promotes (Owolabi qtd in Bakare & Ayakoroma, 148)'. Many young people in the world are said to live below the poverty line. This is one major reason for the prevalence of promiscuity and the high levels of gratuitous sex as O'shaughnessy (16) has aptly observed. This is also a major contributory factor to the business of sex which the youths engage in for a paltry sum. In the light of this observation, Sunday Ododo (2011: 158) explains that: Poverty is the core reason why there is a prevalence of indecent dressing in our society. For those who make their bodies bare as economic strategy, what is important (to them) is how much returns it brings and not the remorse that their actions ought to elicit. For those involved, these obscene dresses are mainly conceived for self advertisement because it is a business of being noticed.

The growing rate of unemployment in the world, especially in Nigeria, has also encouraged the increase in local and intercontinental prostitution. Sadly,

the practice of sexual autonomy by the Nigerian youths, a practice which has made them to dabble into degrading and dehumanizing acts of sexual merchandizing with volition, has continued to bring them a global condemnation and a loss of dignity, social status and a true identity in life (Azuike, 31-43). Many literary texts, video films and social media sites are replete with female characters adjudged as 'free prostitutes' and are treated as objects of universal derision. This is due to their sexual preferences. The greatest disadvantage of the business of sex lies in its destructive tendency. This is in terms of its high rate of sexually transmitted diseases, especially HIV and AIDS. The erosion of moral values among our youth has led to an increase in sexually transmitted diseases, especially worldwide. The following diseases contracted from the business of sex have taken a huge toll on human lives: genital herpes, human papilloma virus, Chlamydia, bacteria vaginitis, hepatitis B and C, syphilis and gonorrhoea among others. In addition, prostitution leads to unwanted pregnancies and high rates of abortion, especially among the unmarried, young women. In many campuses across tertiary institutions in Nigeria, the illicit business of sex takes the form of sexual slavery. Young women are enslaved to men and to their lecturers for the financial rewards they get or for promised high grades. As Jeffreys (1987) has opined, 'women's redemption from sex slavery can only be achieved through man's redemption from sexual obsession (30)'.

Many cases of deaths have arisen from the trafficking of Nigerian youths to foreign lands where they are coerced into illicit sexual acts or are used as sex machines or as tools for giving pleasure to depraved men. The young adults who are transported abroad are made to partake in intercontinental prostitution for paltry sums. And because African societies are made up of extremely loose individuals who lead debased and morally promiscuous lives, contemporary African literature (indeed world literature), video films etc are replete with the desperate attempts made by the youths to eke out a living through acts of sexual debasement. In such texts and films, the youths, particularly the female protagonists tend to transcend their sexual boundaries (Azuike, 2015) and degenerate into self annihilation. Their series of uncontrolled sexual escapades are captured as sickening and utterly condemnable.

It cannot be over emphasized that the business of prostitution has eaten too deeply into the fabrics of our socio-economic and cultural lives. It cannot be over emphasized, too, that the business of sex anywhere in the world brings great disrepute to its practitioners who slowly but surely will lose their pride and self worth and their moral values.

The Reasons for Prostitution among our Youths in the Digital Age

Promiscuity, pornography and illicit sex have become the norm in our generation and are exhibited on social media networks, in books and on T.V screens across the globe. In Nigeria, for instance, the business of sex has grown with a worrisome rate; especially on our campuses. As a matter of fact, 'no tertiary institution in Nigeria is immune to the prostitution virus and its drastic consequences,' one of which is the crippling effects it has on its practitioners and on developmental strategies. The business of sex is considered an illicit one in Nigeria yet many young adults still engage in it.

In many Nigerian cultures, young women and wives are coerced into having sex with visiting guests or with politicians in order to appease them. This behaviour is utterly despicable! However, out of sheer depravity or sinful lust, the big shots in society tend to highly patronize prostitutes in designated brothels across the country in order to quell their libidinous urges. And despite the fact that the business of sex legitimizes the brutalization of women, re-enforces male dominance over women and undermines all attempts to combat sexual immorality among the youths, the illicit trade has recorded a greater boom in the current recession. The reason for the aforementioned is best captured in the following excerpt:

Our educational system...is neither tele-guided towards self-reliance nor self-employment for the youths. There is also no self-actualization of what has been taught the youths in school. All these, the young ones soon discover to be their reality after leaving school. Another reason for the consistent rise in prostitution is that those who partake in the business or patronize sex workers do not see the illicit trade as a social evil (John, Ken 2005 qtd in IJPCS: 29). Social and economic challenges which include the high rate of poverty and unemployment among the youths have, however, remained the major reasons for the unwholesome increase in the business of sex. Lastly, the liberalization of homosexuality and gay marriages in the many parts of the globe has also promoted the illicit trade of prostitution.

CONCLUSION

The growing rate of unemployment and the high rate of poverty in the world remain the major reasons for the increase in local and transcontinental prostitution. The aforementioned reasons, therefore, must be tackled by government and with effective measures in order to deal with the continual increase in the business of sex. Prostitution is a social menace that promotes deadly diseases and human trafficking. Therefore, the current recession in our country is not enough reason for the Nigerian youths to trade their bodies for paltry sums. In the global world, there is an erosion of sound moral values in the youths; making the business of prostitution to thrive mostly on mercantilism. Perhaps more worrisome is the fact that those who patronize or partake in the illicit trade of prostitution all over the world, do not see the business as a social evil which brutalizes women or debases womanhood.

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