

Transactional sex at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka campus: Implications for school social work in Nigeria

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Abstract

Transactional sex has remained one of the determinants that influence the increasing spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), particularly in Nigerian tertiary institutions. This behavior is associated with significant health-risks and said to be caused by a power imbalance in sexual relationships. This study investigates the prevalence and perceived determinants of transactional sex among students and staff in a tertiary institution. Results were presented from a qualitative analysis using Focus Group Discussion (FGD) from 54 participants made up of 30 undergraduate students and 24 staff of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka campus. Data was collected, transcribed, and categorized into themes. Major findings indicate that some demographic variables like gender, place of residence, and family structure have a relationship with the perceived involvement of students in sexual behaviors in tertiary institutions. Other findings indicated that academic grades and finance had a relationship with involvement in health-risk sexual behaviours. The study thus recommends the need for social workers in school settings and their collaboration with other health professionals should be considered in the provision of support services on reproductive health care for students. This may help increase awareness of STIs and reduce the rate of transactional sex in tertiary institutions.

Keywords: social workers, transactional sex, tertiary institutions, young adults

Introduction

Young adults experience a critical phase in life when developing from childhood to adolescence. During this phase in life, most of these adolescents engage in health-risk sexual behaviors which could jeopardize their long term physical and mental well-being (National Health Demographic Survey, 2009). One such behavior is transactional sex. Contextually, transactional sex is generally defined as the trading (buying and selling) of sex for material benefits [that is exchanging money, food, academic grades, drugs, shelter, or other items for sex] (Vergenia, 2012). The prevalence of this behavior to a large extent has led to the global burden of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) to remain high with millions of new infections yearly (WHO, 2014). This behavior if unprotected is prone to result in unwanted pregnancy, abortion, maternal and neonatal death among other related health mishaps including the spread of sexually transmitted infections and diseases like gonorrhoea, syphilis, Human Immuno Virus (HIV), and other diseases.

Efforts have been put in place to increase knowledge on various sexually transmitted infections and diseases which could be associated with transactional sex practice

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particularly in tertiary institutions (Ajayi and Somefun, 2019; Erinosh, Isiugo-Abanihe, Joseph and Dike, 2012; Mashau, Tshitangano and Ntsiem, 2012; Shefer, Clowes and Vergani, 2012). Nigeria as a nation has an estimated population of over 193.3 million as of 2016 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2017); with approximately 31.6% adolescents. Also, the country still ranks second in the world in terms of the number of persons living with HIV/AIDS; with national HIV prevalence dropping from 2.9% in 2017 to 1.4% in 2019 among adults aged 15-49 years; with more of the deaths occurring in females accounting for 58.6% and 41.4% in males in 2015 (Bamgboye, Badru and Bamgboye, 2017; UNAIDS, 2019). Above all, an estimated 1.25 million induced abortions occurred in Nigeria in 2012 accounting for about 56% of unintended pregnancies and about 212,000 women treated for complicated unsafe abortion (Bankole, et al., 2016). These pieces of evidence are associated with the fact that most young adults lack sufficient knowledge of human sexuality which reflects on their sexual behavior. It then becomes imperative to note that these pieces of evidence could stem from the fact that Nigeria as a low-income country still lacks social support services when compared to other high-income nations. This could further be attributed to the high socio-economic living standard with little or insufficient provision of social services and programmes for the enormous adult population.

Various scholars have reported that varying levels of transactional sex are prevalent among young adults in tertiary institutions (Adefalu and Ayodele, 2019; Ajayi and Okeke, 2019; Austrian, Solar-Hampejsek, DUBY and Heweth, 2019; Gukurume, 2011). The justification for this attestation could be associated with various factors including family system influence, financial status, place of residence, gender influence, and other socio-economic factors. Gender of the young adult is perceived as an influencing factor in transactional sex practice particularly considering puberty age (Adefalu and Ayodele, 2019; Masvawure, 2010). This could be related to the fact that sexual maturity/initiation occurs earlier among females compared to males; though males are more likely to have multiple sexual patterns (Bamgboye, et al., 2017; Folayan, Odetoyinbo and Brown, 2014; Shefer, Clowes and Vergani, 2012). In terms of place of residence, studies show that undergraduate students who reside outside the school environment were more likely to engage in transactional sex than those who reside within the school environment (Micheal, 2012; Austrian, et al., 2019).

Ajayi and Somefu (2019) reported that the family system is one factor that has made transactional sex practice to remain persistent in tertiary institutions. Ajayi and Okeke (2019) were of the view that traditional polygenous family system structure coupled with the high level of poverty promotes transactional sex. This according to these authors is evident when most parents induce their daughters to engage in transactional sex to help with providing for their family needs. Many studies have attributed the practice of transactional sex to women's poverty; thus, sex is used as a means to earn income (Ajayi and Somefun, 2019; Gukurume, 2011; Okonkwo, 2018; Wamoyi, 2019). Therefore, to satisfy their material needs, young women from poor families engage in transactional sex sometimes without condoms especially if the pay is high. Although there is overwhelming evidence of the adverse outcomes associated with transactional sex especially many known health-risks, many of them are still motivated to engage.

This research is mainly informed by the structuration thesis of Anthony Giddens. Giddens (1987) is of the view that people act as a result of stimulus from external forces. In the process, they begin to possess the ability to change, influence, and manipulate structures that hinder their livelihoods. Therefore parents' socioeconomic conditions are constraining young people especially girls from getting basic needs and wants such as food, tuition fees, and modern gadgets respectively. To overcome this problem, they engage in transactional sex which is a form of manipulating constraining structures. Giddens (1987) has also argued that there is a duality and dialectical relationship between structure and agency, that is, while there are structural constraints that impose themselves over individuals; those very same individuals are capable of manipulating structures to get what they want. According to him, people are not passive victims of poverty, but they strategize to overcome such limitations posed by the societal structure. It is important to note however that those young persons engage in transactional sex for a multiplicity of reasons and only through talking with them can one establish the reasons why they have entered into such relationships.

In Nigeria, families with low economic status often are unable to provide material and financial educational assistance to young adults (Kazeem, Jensen and Slokes, 2010). This is even more challenging when poor families have to support the educational programme of their wards in tertiary institutions with little or no form of financial support from the private or public organizations. There is little or insufficient assistance from the government in the form of soft loans, scholarship opportunities, academic and moral awards among other assistance they could benefit (Odia and Omofonmwan, 2007). Some scholars hold the view that support for families could pose a threat in transactional sex practice (Adefalu and Ayodele, 2019; Ajayi and Okeke, 2019). This will be possible if appropriate support services are available and provided to indigent families to avoid inducement for transactional sex as a means for survival by young adults. Aside provision of support services to families, intensifying services on reproductive health awareness by government agencies could curb transactional sex practice in tertiary institutions.

While there is little effort by the government in intensifying awareness on challenges of curbing transactional sex in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, local and international agencies and organizations have made efforts in stemming the tide of transactional sex using various projects. For instance, Decker, Berglas, and Brindis (2015) revealed that in recent years, the international, local and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with small scale and time-limited projects have effected a national level application of innovative efforts. These projects are developed so that they will address the practice of health-risk sexual behavior in tertiary institutions. These innovative projects include Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and the Family Life HIV Education (FLHE) curriculum implementation which are powered by UNESCO, UNICEF, and UNFPA (Huaynoca, Chandra-Mouli, Yaqub and Denno, 2014). It also aims to increase access to contraceptives and other sexual health services, create a tailored intervention for the young people, and a supportive policy environment. All these can be effectively achieved through strengthening and promoting future strategies that enhance the sexual well-being of young adults through the assistance of health professionals including social workers.

Social work as a profession is concerned with the welfare of the public as they offer services to individuals, groups, and families with the purpose of helping them overcome their challenges and enhance their well-being (International Association of Social Workers (IASSW) & International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), 2014). As agents of change and human empowerment, social workers play a direct service role with young adults in tertiary institutions to effect change (Openshaw, 2008). However, most tertiary institutions in Nigeria are yet to integrate social work just like other professional courses in the tertiary school system in the federation and as well adopt school social work services as an integral part of the school system (Okah, Onalu and Okoye, 2017). This has shortchanged the growth, development, and academic competence of Nigerian undergraduates. There is then the need for the integration of school social workers to work collaboratively with the families, institutions, and individuals who relate closely with young undergraduates. They can help create awareness among undergraduates on the need to shy away from health-risk sexual behaviour as these can lead to HIV/AIDS, STIs, and other STDs (Dupper, 2007).

Previous studies have indicated that tertiary institutions are places devoid of parental monitoring and supervision, hence allowing young adults to live a life of learning and imitating certain negative behavior including transactional sex practice (Ajayi and Somefu, 2019; Gukurume, 2011; Masvawure, 2010; Tade, et al., 2012; Erinoshio et al 2012).). To date, numerous existing and emerging sexually transmitted infections and diseases among other health-related mishaps have partly been associated with transactional sex practice (WHO, 2013). This study, therefore, is timely as it seeks to contribute to the narrative on transactional sex in tertiary institutions by presenting the professional roles social workers can bring to bear in stemming current practice in Nigeria. Given that there is still a dearth of social work knowledge and intervention in school settings particularly in Nigeria tertiary institutions, it is thus imperative to place the findings of this study in the public domain to increase knowledge and visibility of social work practice in Nigeria. This study aims at investigating the prevalence and major determinants of transactional sex practice among young adults and the intervention social workers can provide in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It is believed that findings from this study will not only ensure the integration of social work professionals with other health care professionals but will expose the importance of school social work services as an integral part of the school system in the federation.

Materials and Method

Study area

The study was conducted at the University of Nigeria Nsukka which is located in Enugu State, Nigeria. The choice of the state is because the state has numerous academic institutions and colleges located therein including a pioneer university. The University of Nigeria, Nigeria which is a pioneer university was purposively selected for the study because it is the first full-fledged indigenous university after independence (1960) with the main campus in Nsukka Local Government Area. It is located on approximately 871 hectares of hilly savannah in the town of Nsukka, about eighty kilometers north of Enugu. The institution has ten faculties with an approximated population of about 33,441 undergraduate students and 14,000 staff (UNN Academic Planning Unit, 2017).

Participants and recruitment

A total of 54 study participants were selected for this study to participate in focus group discussion (FGD) using purposive and availability sampling techniques. Study participants were categorized into two groups; students and staff. This technique according to Correa-Torres, Conroy, Rundle-Kahn and Ogilvie (2018) can also be useful when attempting to identify a small number with some characteristics and experiences. Simple random sampling was adopted to select five faculties from the ten faculties on the main campus. They include the Faculty of Agriculture, Arts, Education, Engineering, and Social Sciences. The first group (FGD 01) comprised of thirty (30) undergraduates (six from each faculty comprising of three males and females). The rationale for the selection of the number of participants was to ensure equal representation of selected faculties and gender. The second group (FGD 02) comprised of 24 (teaching and non-teaching) staff. For this group, the selection was made from different academic faculties and administrative units. The selection of this group of participants was based on the purposive and convenient sampling procedure and frequent student contact. This was to ensure that particular types of individuals or persons displaying certain attributes were included in the study (Lune and Berg, 2017). Administrative units such as Student Affairs Department, Medical center, and Library, where staff relate frequently with undergraduate students were selected. The location for the FGD discussion was selected based on the convenience of the participants. However, in some cases, we used the vacant classrooms and available offices. Participants were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and the right of refusal. Tape recorder and notes were used to document all that was discussed.

Study Procedures

Data was collected using the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) schedule designed by two of the researchers. According to Berg (2001), meanings and answers arising during FGD discussions are socially constructed rather than individually created. Discussions were conducted in Igbo and English languages, based on the preferences of study participants. They were also done at their convenience. Given ethical implications, informed oral consent was obtained from the participants after informing them of the objective of the study. The study participants were also informed that they are free to withdraw at any point during the FGD. The discussion was recorded with our audiotape having obtained permission to record the conversation in all, six FGDs (three for undergraduates and three for staff). Each session was made up of 8-10 participants. This lasted for four weeks (June- July 2019). Each FGD session lasted for about 90 minutes. The team leader moderated the discussion and the other two research members assisted. While one research member acted as the timekeeper during the discussions, the other took the field notes. Focus group discussion was conducted in four different locations for male and female study participants. The locations were based on availability and convenience.

Data analysis

All the FGDs were transcribed in English Language. This was done with the assistance of an expert in the Mass Communication department of the institution. The transcribed discussions were compared with the recorded discussions by the researchers to ensure that the original meaning of what the participants said was retained. This enabled the researcher to ensure that no information was lost during the translation. It was also meant to validate views as well as make the data more reliable (Kalof, Dan and Dietz, 2008).

Analytical themes developed from the transcripts were guided by the literature reviewed and patterns noted in participants' responses. The themes include views on gender influence, age, family structure, financial assistance, and place of residence of undergraduate students. Quotations that are in line with the research objective were included within the text using an interpretative approach with FGD (01) representing views from student participants and FGD (02) representing views from staff participants. This is to allow our readers to have a greater understanding of the persons or groups being described. This approach was considered suitable as it allows social action and human activities as quotes and text rather than figures.

Results

Relevant socio-demographic characteristics of the student participants were analyzed by their sex using percentages and are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of FGD (01) participants (undergraduate students) by sex

<i>Socio-demographic characteristics</i>	<i>Sex of participants</i>		<i>Total=30</i>
	<i>Male=15</i>	<i>Female=15</i>	
Age of participants			
15-17	1 (3%)	6 (20%)	7 (23%)
18-20	5 (17%)	4 (13%)	9 (30%)
21-23	6 (20%)	3 (10%)	9 (30%)
24-26	3 (10%)	2 (7%)	5 (17%)
Year of study			
1 st year	6 (20%)	5 (17%)	11 (37%)
2 nd year	4 (13%)	7 (23%)	11 (37%)
3 rd year	3 (10%)	2 (6.6%)	5 (16.6%)
4 th year and above	2 (7%)	1 (3%)	3 (10%)
Monthly allowance by parent/self			
0-10,000 naira	2 (6.6%)	2 (6.6%)	4 (13%)
11,000-20,000 naira	3 (10%)	5 (17%)	8 (27%)
21,000-30,000 naira	4 (13%)	3 (10%)	7 (23%)
31,000-40,000 naira	3 (10%)	2 (7%)	5 (17%)
41,000-50,000	1 (3%)	2 (7%)	3 (10%)
51,000 and above	2 (7%)	1 (3%)	3 (10%)
Family system structure			
Nuclear family	9 (30%)	8 (27%)	17 (57%)
Extended family	5 (17%)	4 (13%)	9 (30%)
No family (orphans)	1 (3%)	3 (10%)	4 (13%)
Place of residence			
Alone in school hostel	5 (17%)	7 (23%)	12 (40%)
Alone off-campus	9 (30%)	6 (20%)	15 (50%)
With parents/guardian off-campus	1 (3%)	2 (7%)	3 (10%)

Source: Fieldwork survey, 2019

Table 2: Socio-demographic characteristics of FGD (02) staff participants

<i>Socio-demographic characteristics</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Gender		
Male	06	25
Female	18	75
Age of participants		
30-40 years	10	42
41-50 years	8	33
51-60 years	4	17
61-70 years	2	8
Completed educational status		
Primary completed	2	8
Secondary completed	5	21
Tertiary completed	17	71
Monthly income		
21,000- 40,000 naira	2	8
41,000-60,000 naira	5	21
61,000-80,000 naira	7	29
81,000 and above	10	42
Place of residence		
University quarters	9	37.5
Off-campus	15	62.5

Source: Fieldwork survey 2019

Table 1 summarizes the socio-demographic characteristics of the undergraduate participants. The participants are all students at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka campus; between the ages of 15 to 26 years. A good number (74%) are in the first and second years of study. The highest percentage of the participants (27%) received 11,000-20,000 naira (\$65) as monthly upkeep from parents/guardians while slightly above half (57%) are from nuclear families and half of the student participants (50%) reside off-campus.

Table 2 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of staff participants who have direct contact with undergraduate students. From the table, it can be deduced that a larger percentage of the participants (75%) are females, and close to half of them (42%) are aged 30-40 years. Also, the majority of the participants (71%) completed their tertiary education; with close to half (42%) earning above 80,000 Naira (\$250) monthly income while a good number (62.5%) reside off-campus.

Socio-demographic factors influencing transactional sex

Under this theme, we present data that explain some demographic variables our participants believe that influence transactional sex. Both staff and students of the institution selected for the study had something to share which we have categorized under the sub-themes below.

Gender influence and transactional sex prevalence

Most of the participants were of the view that transactional sex practice was predominant in tertiary institutions and was mainly practiced by female undergraduates. Concerning this view, we inquired from the participants the influence of gender on transactional sex practice. Two female participants chorused that the attitude of the female undergraduate students on campus is a call for concern. One of the female participants noted:

Many female students are fond of wearing expensive things and using expensive phones which their parents cannot afford and so they are forced to engage in transactional sex practice to get money (FGD 01, 21 years, 2nd year).

In the words of a male participant:

I believe that there is a need for a dress code on campus. Many girls wear very expensive clothes and dresses for lectures. They even wear very expensive wigs. A boy can wear one pair of jeans trouser for one month and will not mind but the girls will keep changing clothes. So they need money to do all these things and so they engage in transactional sex to get it (FGD 01, 23 years, 3rd year).

In the FGD (02) discussions, similar views were raised with respect to female undergraduates and transactional sex prevalence. Two female participants lamented the increasing rate of health-risk sex practices on campus with one voicing out as she explained them:

Honestly, the attitude of female undergraduate students encourages the prevalence of health-risk sexual behavior. For instance, I learnt that if a girl sleeps with some men without condoms, they will get more money. This can result in someone getting HIV but they still go ahead to do it because they want money to maintain their high profile life (FGD 02, 42 years, staff).

Another female participant noted:

They kind of hairstyles the female students go with are really intimidating and very expensive. They need money to wear expensive hairstyles and so they engage in transactional sex. To some extent it may influence their academic performance because they will not have time to read. Also, if not checkmated other students may see it as “positive” influence and may emulate the negative trend (FGD 02, 38 years, staff).

Most of the participants in both FGD (01) and FGD (02) sessions expressed worry about the rate at which female students engage in transactional sex to obtain material things and money. Study participants felt that the extent of moral decadence has come to a stage that undergraduate students should be checkmated. A male FGD (02) participant suggested instructing the students through pamphlets, manuals, and posters. This according to this participant may help reduce the trend.

Age influence on transactional sex practice

Most of the FGD participants from the two groups disagree with the view that the age of undergraduate students can influence transactional sex practice. According to one of the female FGD (01) participants, “young undergraduate students practice health-risk sexual behaviors more than the older ones”. Her rationale is that “the older students may be

busy trying to complete their academic programmes in the institution and so may not have time for with health-risk sexual relationships”. However a narrative from one of the FGD (02) participants noted that “older male staff also indulge in transactional sex practice with these young female undergraduates whereby they provide them with money and high academic grades. This was referred to by some study participants as sex for financial assistance or sex for grades”. The point of agreement on age as factor influencing transactional sex was based on the fact that most participants from both FGD groups agree that both young and old undergraduate students indulge in transactional sex for various reasons. It was also observed that staff also indulges in transactional sex with both old and young undergraduates in exchange for financial assistance or academic grades. As such age of participants is not a predisposing factor for engaging in health-risk sexual behavior.

Family structure influence on transactional sex

During the FGD sessions, both male and female participants agreed that the type of family structure has an influence on one engaging in transactional sex. Elaborating on this view, one of the male FGD (01) participants stated that the smaller the family the more their financial demands will be satisfied by their parents than those from extended family structure. According to one of the female participants:

In my family, we are only four members; my parents and my brother. Though my father is the sole source of income in my family, he is able to satisfy our needs. This is because of the small family size but if we are up to 8, that will be too much for my father and so some people may have to fend for themselves if they are in the university (FGD 01, 1ST year, 19 years).

Another male FGD (02) participant stated that when the number of the family members are moderate, the attitude of the young adults in the family can be guided. In his views, he noted that:

The type of family structure can influence students’ attitude on transactional sex. This is because when the family size is smaller the parents not only satisfy their children’s need but will be able to monitor and checkmate the attitude of their young adults even as a student on campus or off-campus. This they can do through contact with friends and relations in the institution who are familiar with their adult child. Hence, with a smaller family structure one will provide the best for the family but if there are so many children, you cannot monitor all and so some will misbehave (FGD 02, staff, 45 years).

In all these discussions, the participants acknowledged that the type and size of the family can influence the prevalence of transactional sex practice in tertiary institutions. The rationale is that parents will be able to provide substantial financial assistance and allocate time to satisfy the needs and monitor the behavior of their undergraduate children if they are just one or two but if they are many in the family and with competing needs, some of the children will just have to fend for themselves.

Financial assistance and transactional sex

We inquired from FGD (01) participants their view on the provision of financial assistance and transactional sex. Few participants agree on the view that the provision of financial assistance can influence transactional sex practice. For instance, a female

participant aged 25 years in final year noted that “most parents do not provide substantial financial assistance to their wards particularly female students. This gives them no option than to use what they have and get what they need”.

A male participant narrated that “my female girlfriend is currently residing in my apartment because she cannot fend for herself and her parents are late. With the little money given to me by my parents, I can provide our needs”.

Another male participant stated:

As a student on campus, I sustain myself through menial jobs and labor outside my lecture hours. My father is a retiree while my mother is a trader. But many girls cannot indulge in menial jobs and so they go into transactional sex in order to survive in school (FGD 01, 26 years, 3rd year).

Some student participants however refuted the claim that lack of financial assistance can influence transactional sex. Some female participants noted that in spite of the family economic situation, most female students willingly indulge in transactional sex on campus neither for grade nor financial assistance but because of greed to acquire material things that are not needed.

In the FDG (02) sessions, many of the participants agreed that most parents do not provide their wards with adequate financial assistance. A male participant stated that “in our own school days, the government provided assistance through bursary payment and student loans for educational assistance. However, this is no longer obtainable”.

Another female participant explained:

These days the Nigerian economy is extremely poor. Parents’ income can no longer sustain the family members’ needs. Adult undergraduate must provide their needs through any means. Most male students indulge in menial jobs while the female extols money through transactional sex practice without adopting protective measures. Some parents do not care how their children survive in school all they know is that their wards are in tertiary institutions (FGD 02, 47 years, staff).

Narratives from the two groups indicate a strong perception that the lack of financial assistance greatly influences the prevalence of transactional sex practice in tertiary institutions.

Place of residence

In respect to this view, there was a slight disagreement on the responses by the participants. Some of the FGD (01) participants agree with the view that place of residence can influence transactional sex practice while others disagree. One of the female participants has this to say:

I strongly disagree that place of residence can influence transactional sex practice. The reason is that we all know our mission in this institution. For me, I am here to study, graduate and leave when its time. The fact that I live on or off-campus will not make me indulge in health-risk sexual behavior. It is simply a matter of choice (FGD 01, 19 years, 2nd year).

Another male participant stated that “there are good and bad students in institutions. If you happen to reside with bad students, they can influence you negatively”. Views obtain from the FGD (02) participants indicated that place of residence has a strong influence on transactional sex practice in tertiary institutions. A male participant has this to say:

If all the students can be accommodated on campus hostels, transactional sex practice can be reduced to some extent with the assistance of the hall porters. But go to off-campus, they behave anyhow; some are living like married couples without protection. The females are used like prostitutes and the males exhaust their money and energy using them. Some are too young to be on campus while others perceive it as an opportunity to live a free life without parents’ involvement. Even some University staff takes advantage of this promiscuous behavior simply because there are no individuals or groups that will guide and direct these young adults (FGD 02, 51 years, staff).

Roles of individuals, groups, and organizations in reducing transactional sex in tertiary institutions

We also inquired from them the roles of individuals, groups, and organizations in curbing transactional sex behavior in tertiary institutions. Generally, most of the participants agreed that there is a need for individuals, groups, and organization in the tertiary institutions to guide and direct these young adults on the dangers of transactional sex practice. Views obtained from the FGD (01) participants support the idea of inviting resource persons, groups, and organizations that will organize programmes, rallies, and religious activities for the students to inculcate positive behavior.

Additionally, the FGD (02) participants also agree to this view. In the words of one of the male participants, he stated:

Some of these undergraduate students are too young to be in tertiary institutions and can be easily influenced while others perceive it as an opportunity to live a free life without parent involvement. However, there should be groups (like social workers) or religious organizations, that can educated and enlighten these young ones who are the future leaders on dangers associated with health-risk sexual behaviors (FGD 02, 62 years, staff).

Majority of the participants agreed that social workers can work as counselors, academic advisers, resource persons that can help provide extra-curriculum activities and also direct them to resource centers where they can get (financial) assistance when needed

Social workers roles and intervention to prevent transactional sex practice in tertiary institutions

Social work is often seen as a multi-faceted profession, usually carried out in both public and private agencies. Dubois and Miley (1996) stated that the profession provides opportunities to people whose problems, issues, and needs are diverse and in many different settings including schools. School social work is a specialty within the broad field of social work profession that brings unique knowledge and skill to the school system and student service. It is aimed at arresting the psycho-social and economic problems of the students, their families, staff, and all other action and target systems that could influence their academic capacity and general growth (Okah, Onalu and Okoye,

2017). These psycho-social/economic problems could manifest in poor academic performance, poor self-esteem, poor adjustment outside the home environment, truancy, conflict with constituted authority, and other behavioral problems including acts of deviance and transactional sex. Given these precedents, Dupper (2007) pointed out that school social work enhances the educational sector through providing services like counseling, mediating, advocating, programming, educating, and the likes.

Thus, social workers are expected to deliver these services based on the peculiar relationship they find between client, action, and target systems within schools. For instance, the roles of school social workers in tertiary institutions might differ from those played in other school levels. To this end, some of the roles include advocacy, facilitator, and therapeutic roles among others. Specifically, they could advocate for the need for more hostel accommodation on campus. As a facilitator, the school social worker can suggest, guide, and expedite the way for young adult clients during group experiences. He can follow up project establishment promises of government and institutions until they are fulfilled. The school social worker equally provides therapeutic roles through crisis management skills, behavior modification, and counseling skills that will help in developing therapeutic and learning programmes for interested students. All these services and roles are projected to ensure that students are in their best condition while learning.

Discussion

The prevalence of transactional sex practice at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka was assessed in this article. A unique finding in this study that is not common in other studies is the role of school social workers in curbing the incidence of transaction sex in tertiary institutions. Though most of the study participants neither understood the roles of social workers nor their mission in schools, few participants were able to mention some of the roles social workers play though they associated those roles with those of religious organizations. For instance, a female participant suggested the need for groups like social workers or religious organization that can enlighten undergraduates on the dangers associated with health-risk sexual behaviors and also provide them with information on extra curriculum activities or link them to the available resource system. Some female FGD (01) participants noted that the help of social workers and other professional counsellors are needed in tertiary institution to help most students with low self-esteem regain their integrity and desist from health-risk behavior. In the view of a participant with regards to social worker's involvement in providing counselling services, "They are also expected to provide services and certain roles including advocacy, facilitator and therapeutic roles to institutions for young adults and their families". The majority of study participants felt that social workers in tertiary institutions can function as hall porters, warden, counsellors, academic advisers, and resource persons among others.

Generally, there is the knowledge of the prevalence of some health-risk sexual behavior including transactional sex in most institutions of higher learning. Socio-demographic variable such as gender, age, place of residence, and family structure was found to be factors influencing the motivation to engage in transactional sex. Various studies on transactional sex in tertiary institutions have discussed factors including gender, age, and family structure as determinants influencing undergraduate drive for transaction sex (Adefalu and Ayodele, 2019; Austrian, et al., 2019; Ajayi and Somefu, 2019). However,

based on the information deduced from the participants, they were of the view that health-risk sexual behaviors are predominant among female than male undergraduates. However, stretching the debate, our finding contradicts the view that males are more likely to have multiple sexual patterns (Austrian, et al., 2019; Masvawure, 2010; Tade and Adekoya, 2012). This can also be obtained among the female gender as stated by one of the female participants “most of these female students have multiple sex patterns inside and outside the campus encouraging the spread of STIs, STDs, and other health mishaps. This finding also corresponds with the report of Bankole, et al., (2016) and UNAIDS (2019) which states that more HIV/AIDS occur in female and with about 56% of unintended pregnancy. This finding is associated with the fact that the extent of moral decadence is high in tertiary institutions.

Findings from this present study acknowledged the fact that students’ family structure can influence transactional sex practice in tertiary institutions. From Table 1, slightly above half (57%) of the FGD (01) participants are from the nuclear family. This relates to the view by one of the FGD (02) male participants who noted that when the family size is small, parents can afford to provide and as well monitor the activities of their wards in higher institutions. This finding corresponds with the views of Ajayi and Okeke (2019) and Ajayi and Somefu (2019) which states that family system is one factor that has made transactional sex practice remain persistent in tertiary institutions. Similarly to this finding, financial assistance has been perceived as an influence on the prevalence of transactional sex practice. The reason is partly that given the socio-economic condition in most families and the quest to support the educational development of their children; many families create opportunities for their young adults to engage in transactional sex. For instance, large family size (or polygamous) was viewed by most participants as a major influencing factor in the transactional sex of undergraduates (Kazeem, Jensen & Slokes, 2010). One of the FGD (01) participants also noted that most parents do not provide sufficient financial assistance for their adult children and this gives them no option than to use what they have to get what they need. This finding also corresponds with the view of Masvawure (2010) and Micheal (2012) that large and small family system has some positive and negative effect on students in terms of availability of resources to meet basic needs. This supports the structuration thesis of Giddens (1987) which stated that individuals engage in transactional sex as a way of getting out of poor financial provisions. According to him, people are not passive victims of poverty, but they strategize to overcome such limitations posed by the societal structure and one such strategy by young persons is to engage in transactional sex

Concerning the place of residence, the students and staff have acknowledged the prevalence of transactional sex practice outside the campus. This is reflected in Table 1 which indicates that half of the students (50%) and more than half (62.5%) reside off-campus. Similarly, the response by one of the (FGD 01) participants noted that when a good student resides with bad students, there is the possibility that they can influence his/her behavior. Another participant also stated that if all the students can reside on campus, health-risk sexual behavior can be controlled to some extent with the assistance of the school administration (hall potters), resource persons, and groups. Again, since half of the students live alone off-campus, there is the tendency that they could co-habitat with the opposite gender. A male FGD (02) participant had noted that most of them live like married couples without any form of pregnancy protection outside the campus. This

finding is in line with statements made in previous studies which have categorized tertiary institution as a place devoid from parental monitoring and supervision (Ajayi and Somefun, 2019; Mashau, et al., 2012). Given this finding, it becomes imperative that organizations and groups such as social workers (who work in a variety of settings) are encouraged to guide, enlighten, and educate these young undergraduate students.

The benefits of social workers in tertiary institutions cannot be overemphasized. One of the FGD (02) staff participants in the study also thought so when he noted that groups (like social workers) or religious organization, can enlighten these young adults who are the nation future leaders on the dangers associated with health-risk sexual behaviors and also provide them with information on extra curriculum activities or link them to the available resource system. They are also expected to provide services and certain roles including advocacy, facilitator, and therapeutic roles to institutions, young adults, and their families (Dupper, 2007; Openshaw, 2008). Social workers in tertiary institutions can function as hall potters, counselors, academic advisers, and resource persons among others. This could influence students' academic capacity and their general human well-being (Okah, et al., 2017).

Conclusion

Based on the result of the study, it can be deduced that transactional sex is prevalent in tertiary institutions despite efforts that have been put in place to increase knowledge on various health-risk sexual behaviors. This implies that health-risk sexual behavior including transactional sex practice is partly known to be the leading course of some sexually transmitted infections and diseases particularly in tertiary institutions. The prevalence of this behavior is largely associated with female undergraduates; family structure in terms of their economic status and place of residence of the students in the tertiary institutions. It then becomes needful to integrate medical social workers in the health care setting to provide support services on reproductive health care and as well adopt school social work services as an integral part of all the levels of the school system in the country. This study has some limitations, one of which is that it based its analysis on data obtained from purposively selected small number of male and female undergraduate students (30) and staff (24) all from only one institution. Perhaps, a more representative sample that will ensure data from different tertiary institutions may allow for a bigger and more generalised picture of transactional sex practice in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

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