

## **SEX TRADING AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG FEMALE STUDENTS IN AKWA IBOM STATE UNIVERSITY**

**<sup>1</sup>Essien, Itoro Glory, <sup>2</sup>Effiong, Umo Umoh and Emeh, Phyllis Bassey**

Department of Sociology and Anthropology  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
Akwa Ibom State University

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### **ABSTRACT**

Sex trading, prostitution and transactional sex among female undergraduate students flourishes in most tertiary institutions, posing serious challenges on health and academic performances among female students in Nigerian Universities. This study examined the relationship between sex trading and academic performance among female students in Akwa Ibom State University. Merton's Strain Theory which sees female students as engaging in sex trading (an illegitimate means) to achieve better academic outcomes was adopted as a theoretical framework for the study. Taro Yamane sampling technique was used to obtain the sample size of 348 for data analysis across the four (4) Faculties in Obio Akpa Campus. The study adopted Survey research design with primary and secondary methods of data collection using a well structured questionnaire as its instrument. Hypotheses were tested using chi square statistical technique. The study revealed a significant relationship between sex trading and poor academic performance among female students in Akwa Ibom State University. As evidence of the findings of the study increased, awareness programmes is needed to pull female student out of this social ills in Akwa Ibom State University.

**Keywords:** Sex trading, Transactional sex, Academic Performance, Female students and Akwa Ibom State University

### **Introduction**

In Nigeria, prostitution and transactional sex among female students in Universities is alarming and has become a growing concern in recent times. Studies according to Okeke, Chukwuorji, and Nwosu, (2020), shows that various factors, such as economic status of students, parents, peer influence and the desire to maintain a certain lifestyle and material possessions contribute to this phenomenon. Uzokwe (2008) posited that with unbridled liberty and freedom, the students began to push the limits of acceptable behaviour, taking advantage of freedom bestowed on them as "adults". At this point, one would ask, what is the actual cause of sex trading or prostitution among our female undergraduates?

According to Uzokwe (2008), one of the causes is dereliction of parental responsibilities. Many years ago, families in Nigeria put a lot of premium on morality, honour and character. Parents took time to bequeath same to their wards during their formative years. There were injunctions and periodic denial of basic necessities for doing things that impinge the family name. Vices like prostitution, stealing and the like when displayed by a member of the family are capable of soiling the family image. No family would want to be blacklisted or blackmailed so parents paid serious attention to the moral and social welfare of their children, at times taking corrective actions when bad behaviours were detected

Durkheim, É. (1897). Compare this day to the ages past, certain behaviours that would repulse people no longer do. The reverse seems to be the case. On the other hand, teachers these days no longer play the invaluable traditional roles they used to. They are no longer character builders because children have grown “wings and tails”. These children, especially the female ones, feel they have the protection of their parents and or boyfriends. Consequently, young girls go through school exhibiting signs of unacceptable behaviour which metamorphose into bigger issues in future with no one to stop or correct them. Eventually, those who find their ways into the universities end up continuing on a larger scale what they started in secondary schools.

Again, Olugbile, (2008) observed that peer influence in the campus sometimes compels female students end up prostituting. This is because prostitution corrupts the more conservative ones. If for example one person had three cell phones, flashy clothes, another wants to do same or more. For those who are probably not from very rich homes they are forced to do otherwise. Furthermore, some fee hike in most Universities are another factor of being in a precarious condition, they turn to prostitution to settle their school bills.

Equally, Misi (2008), also pointed out that the politicians and government officials are not left out in the cause of female students’ sexual promiscuity. According to him, anytime these politicians and government officials visit the university town on official work, the pimps recruit for them young university girls for their relaxation and entertainment, at the end of which they settle them with huge sums of ill-gotten money, Due to this, Olubogega (2008), noted here that some girls glorify wealth, and most times do what it takes to belong by taking to sex trading.

The practice which involves female students engaging in sexual relationship in exchange for money, gifts or other material benefits has been linked to poor academic performances. Earlysexual experience, use of psychoactive drugs, alcohol consumption as well as sex with willing male lecturers in exchange for better grades, according to Oladele, Adeyemi, and Oladele, (2019), are factors that increase the likelihood of female students participating in sex trading in various Universities of learning.

Engaging in sex trading compel female students to have multiple sexual partners, which increase their vulnerability and subsequently exposing them to poor academic performance in the Universities. Several campaigns by stakeholders in academic, non-governmental organizations, student’s groups etc had been launched in most Nigerian Universities, yet the situation in Akwa Ibom State University persists, and calls for investigation.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In most developing countries of the world, prostitution has become an increase social phenomenon that continued to flourish in most tertiary institutions. The prevalence of campus prostitution poses serious challenges to academics performance amongst female students in Nigerian Universities. Studies, such as Oyeoku, Ngwoke, Eskay, and Obikwelu (2012) confirmed that their involvement in sex work poses negative implications for students’ academic achievement and future career development. A number of notable factors such as desire for high grades, peer influence and socio-economic background of female students, according to Robinson and Usman (2019), are accountable for prostitution tendency in university campuses. Studies in Oladele, Adeyemi and Oladele (2019), reveals further that female students who engaged in sex trading or what Effiong, Udoyen and Udoh ( ) describes as transactional sex, are more likely to experience decreased academic motivation, reduced self-esteem and increased stress levels, which ultimately, may lead to poor academic performance.

It is interesting to note that campus prostitution is associated with issues, such as bribery, sex for marks exchanged with male lecturers, sex assault, alcoholism, drug addiction, fighting, unplanned pregnancy, unsafe abortion, school dropout, transmission of sexually transmitted diseases etc. Sex trading, as observed in Okeke, Chukwuorji and Nwosu (2020), has its attendant risks which include

health, physical, emotional, psychological and sociological risks. Many prostitutes have been victims of ritual murders, violent rape, and other physical injuries.

It is sad to know that inspite of campaigns and advocacies on dangers posed by campus prostitution; the academic performance of most female students in Akwa Ibom State University is dwindling due to an observed consistent practice of transactional sex on campus. The practice according to Dipeolu (2018) is often fueled by economic hardship, lack of support system, increased dropout, poor time management and socio-economic factors. Literatures on sex trading among female students in tertiary institutions are replete, but none, specifically addressed the problem in Akwa Ibom State University. Therefore, given the availability of literature on the substantive issues, which so far is insufficient, this study is quite apt, to fill in the observed gap.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of the study is sex trading and academic performance among female students in Akwalbom State University while the specific objectives includes;

1. To examine the influence of sex trading on academic performance of female students in Akwa Ibom State University.
2. To examine the extent to which sex trading influences the livelihood enhancement of female students in Akwalbom State University.
3. To examine the health implications of sex trading on female students in Akwalbom State University.

### **Research Questions**

1. Does sex trading influence academic performance of female students in Akwalbom State University?
2. Does sex trading influence the livelihood enhancement of female students in Akwalbom State University?
3. Does sex trading influence the health status of female students in Akwalbom State University?

### **Research Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant relationship between sex trading and academic performance of female students in Akwalbom State University.
2. There is no significant relationship between sex trading and livelihood enhancement of female students in Akwalbom State University.
3. There is no significant relationship between sex trading and the health status of female students in Akwalbom State University.

### **Scope of the Study**

The study focuses mostly on sex trading and academic performance among female students in Akwa Ibom State University. The study may focus solely on female students, overlooking the experiences of male students or non-binary individuals engaged in sex trading.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

#### **Sex Trading**

Sex trading as observed Gungul and Audu (2014) refers to the business of engaging in sexual relations in exchange for financial reward. Aloba and Ndifon (2014), argued that sex trading is the practice or habit of engaging in sexual activity usually with individuals other than a spouse or friend in exchange for immediate payment of money or other valuables. Prostitutes may be of either sex and may engage in either heterosexual or homosexual activity. Sex trading is also the practice of engaging in sexual activities for money or its equivalent. Timothy and Joel (2014), stressed that sex trading occur in variety of ways. For instance, some engage in legitimate business in the daytime and go into prostitution at night while some indulge in it as an auxiliary service. It is the habit of offering oneself for hire to engage in sexual action for money (Tyoanande and Samson, 2014).

Nkala (2014), sees whoredom as an aspect of transaction or more generally in terms of asymmetrical relationship of exchange in which the sex worker provides sexual services and the customer supplies recompense for those services, usually in the form of money, but sometimes in the form of food, lodging, clothes or luxuries or taking care of the sex traders children. However, sex traders are highly mobile moving from one town to the other. Through associations, they develop attitudes and behaviour patterns which become part of their roles in the society. It should be noted however, Adelekan, Afghanistan, and Olugbenga, (2014), in their studies shown that Western types and characteristics of prostitution are essentially different from prostitution in Nigeria. Sex trading can involve individuals of any gender, age, or background, and may be: Voluntary (by choice), Involuntary (due to coercion, exploitation, or lack of alternatives) and Survival-based (to meet basic needs).

#### **Forms and Dimensions of Sex Trading**

**1. Prostitution:** Prostitution is the practice or occupation of engaging in sexual activities with someone for payment, often on a regular basis. It involves the exchange of sexual services for money, goods, services, and other forms of compensation. Prostitution can take various forms, including: Street prostitution, Brothel-based prostitution, escort services, onlineprostitution and indoor prostitution (e.g., massage parlors, saunas), and it is often associated with sex work, commercial sex, sex trade and sex industry etc. Cowen (2006), defines prostitution as a practice where individuals exchange sexual services for a set of price influenced the specific socio-economic and cultural context in which it occurs.

According to Sanders (2007), financial need is a leading factor driving females into prostitution, especially for those from marginalized backgrounds such as women from low-income families, migrants, or individuals with limited education or skills. A study by Shannon, Stefan, and Smitha,(2015), found that sex workers are disproportionately affected by HIV, particularly in regions where they face criminalization and are forced to work in unsafe environments. Sex workers in marginalized situations

such as street based workers, have higher rates of STIs due to inability to negotiate safer sex with clients or lack access to healthcare. In addition, they often face mental health challenges including stress, anxiety, depression, and trauma from violence or exploitation. The stigma associated with prostitution can further exacerbate mental health problems, leading to social isolation and difficulties in accessing support services. Research by Deering, Strathdee, Nguyen, Shoveller, Montaner, and Kerr, (2014), found that sex workers who operate in criminalized settings are at a higher risk of violence, as the illegal nature of their work makes it difficult to seek help or report abuse sexual with Zimmerman, Hossain, and Watts, (2008), documenting the physical and psychological harm suffered by individuals trafficked into prostitution.

**2. Survival Sex:** Survival sex refers to the exchange of sexual services or activities for basic needs such as: food, shelter, safety, clothing, and healthcare. It involves individuals engaging in sexual activities to meet their immediate survival needs, often due to: poverty, homelessness, unemployment, lack of resources and vulnerability. It is essential to note that survival sex is not a choice but a necessity for individuals in dire circumstances. It can take various forms, including: trading sex for food or shelter, engaging in prostitution to meet basic needs, exchanging sexual favors for protection or safety, participating in transactional sex for essential services. It is often associated with, vulnerability, exploitation, trauma, power imbalance and limited choices.

**3. Sugar Dating:** Sugar dating refers to a type of relationship where, a younger person (the sugar baby) receives financial support, gifts, or other benefits from an older, wealthier individual (the sugar daddy or sugar mommy). In exchange, the sugar baby provides companionship, emotional support, and often sexual favours, (Scull, 2017). Sugar dating can involve: where both parties receive what they want from the relationship i.e mutual benefits, power imbalance where the sugar daddy/mommy holds more power due to their financial control, emotional connection with some sugar relationships involve genuine emotional attachment, and transactional nature where the relationship is based on a quid pro quo arrangement.

Jackson (2019), has observed that certain factors, such as: age gap with significant age difference between partners, financial support where Sugar daddy/mommy provides financial assistance, luxury lifestyle where sugar babies enjoying luxurious gifts, travel, and experiences, discretion, where sugar relationships are often kept private, and the exotic dancing which is a form of adult entertainment involving sensual and erotic dance performances, often in strip clubs, adult venues, or private events. Exotic dancers, also known as strippers or adult entertainers, perform choreographed or improvisational dances, typically involving: seductive movements, revealing costumes or nudity and interaction with audience members. It is often associated with various styles, such as, striptease, lap dancing, table dancing, pole dancing, and burlesque. According to Wosick-Correa, (2010), exotic dancing is often linked with adult entertainment industry, sex work nightclub culture, and erotic performance art with controversies surrounding objectification and exploitation.

**3. Online Sex Work:** Jones (2015) , describes online sex work as the provision of sexual services, performances, or content via the internet which include: webcamming:(live streaming of sexual activities or performances.), adult content creation: (producing and selling explicit photos, videos, or

written content.), online escorting:(arranging in-person meetings for sex through online platforms.), cybersex:(engaging in virtual sexual activities, such as text-based or video-based sex.), phone sex:(providing sexual services via phone conversations.), sexting: (exchanging explicit messages or images via mobile devices.), online domination or fetish services:(providing services related to BDSM(B - Bondage (physical restraint), D-Discipline (training or punishment), S-Sadism (deriving pleasure from inflicting pain), M-Masochism (deriving pleasure from receiving or fetish activities) and adult streaming:(live streaming of sexual activities or performances on platforms like chaturbate or onlyfans.) Online sex work can offer greater autonomy, flexibility, and anonymity compared to traditional sex work. However, it also raises concerns about, privacy and security, exploitation and abuse, stigma and shame, legal and regulatory issues and access to support services.

### **The Concept of Academic Performance**

The academic performance of students is the key feature (Rono, Onderi&Owino, 2014). one of the important goals of education, according to Narad and Abdullah (2016), is academic performance, defined, as the knowledge gained by the student, which is assessed by marks by a teacher and/or educational goals set by students and teachers to be achieved over a specific period of time. The attainment of academic excellence of students through making them portray better academic performance is the foremost motive of academic institutions (Adeyemo, 2001). Furthermore, academic performance to Osiki, (2001), something immensely significant for anyone who has a concern with education. He reiterated that academic performance, can be understood as the nucleus, around which a whole lot of significant components of education system revolve, which is why the academic performance of students, specifically belonging to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), has been the area of interest among researchers, parents, policy framers and planners. Since a sound academic performance is considered as a pre-requisite for securing good jobs, a better career and subsequently, a quality life, significance of the students' academic performance is immense. Although it may seem to be a simple outcome of education, but the impact of academic performance of students in any nation is multi-faceted.

Narad and Abdullah (2016), mentioned further in their research, that at the basic level, the success or failure of any academic institution depends largely upon the academic performance of its students. They also reiterated the general belief that good academic performance signals better career prospects and thus, a secure future. The academic performance of students is immensely significant as the economic, as well as the social development of any country are both attributable to the academic performance of students. In the words of Ali, et al, (2009), the better the academic, the better the prospects of development of manpower, who will contribute to the economic and social development of the nation. Students performing better than the expectations and norms set by the society are mostly expected to contribute to the growth, development and sustainability of the society, (Akinleke, 2017).

Singh, Malik & Singh (2016) presented a straight and significant connect between academic performance of students and the socio-economic development of a country, because acquisition of relevant knowledge, as well as skill development become evident through students' academic performance, (Farooq, Chaudhry, Shafiq and Berhanu, 2011). This accords a great reason to educators granting the highest priority to the academic performance of their students.

### **Sex Trading and Academic Performance**

The relationship between sex trading and academic performance has been quite subject of research. It is a significant issue that intersects with academic performance, mental health and socio-economic conditions.

### **Academic Disruption and Participation**

Sex trading can significantly disrupt academic participation. According to Koffi et al, (2022), female students involved in sex trading often experience irregular attendance, reduced concentration, and low academic achievement. The financial and emotional stress associated with sex trading diverts attention away from academic responsibilities, leading to poor academic performance and higher dropout rate.

### **Socio-economic Factors**

Socio-economic status plays a crucial role in the academic challenges faced by female sex workers. Smith et al, (2020) argue that student age in sex trading as a means of financial survival. This socio-economic disadvantage often results in lower academic performance, due to limited access to educational resources and support.

### **Environmental Factors**

The environment in which sex trading occurs can also impact academic performance. Nguyen and Kim, (2023), highlight, that unstable living conditions and lack of supportive environment contribute to difficulties in maintaining academic focus.

### **Sex Trading and Livelihood Enhancement**

Sex trading among female students has been linked to livelihood enhancement, as many students engage in transactional sex to support themselves financially (Raphael, 2004; Dalla, 2006). Research has shown that female students engage in sex trading for economic necessity, financial support and job opportunities, (Kennedy, 2004). Studies have highlighted the complexities of sex trading among female students, including the interplay between economic empowerment and exploitation, (Hill, 2015). While sex trading may provide financial benefits, it also poses risks to physical and emotional well-being, as well as social stigma and marginalization, (Blevins, 2018). Some research has also explored the intersection of sex trading and livelihood enhancement among female students from diverse backgrounds, including those from low-income households, marginalized communities and international students, and noted that sex trading poses negative and positive impacts on livelihood of those involved, (Raphael, 2004; Dalla, 2006).

i. **Economic Empowerment of Women:** Economic empowerment programmes can help reduce reliance on sex trading among female students (Raphael, 2004). Such programmes can provide alternative income-generating opportunities, financial literacy training and access to microfinance initiatives. According to the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), economic empowerment is “the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognize the value of their contributions, respect their dignity, and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth” (ICRW, 2011).



One of the most significant areas of focus in the discussion of economic empowerment is the economic empowerment of women. Empowering women economically has profound effects not only on the women themselves but also on their families and communities. Women are often primary caregivers and when they are economically empowered, they tend to reinvest their income in their children's education, health, and well-being, leading to broader social benefits. According to the United Nations (2019), women's economic empowerment is a driver of sustainable development and is central to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Despite these benefits, women continue to face significant barriers to economic participation, including limited access to education, discriminatory labour practices and legal and cultural restrictions on property ownership and inheritance.

**ii. Access to Education:** Studies have found that female students who have access to education and job training are less likely to engage in sex trading (Dalla, 2006). Education and job training can improve employability and economic prospects, reducing the need for sex trading. Access to education involves the ability of individuals to engage in and benefit from educational opportunities, including primary, secondary, and higher education. Several factors affect female students access to education these includes, socio-economic barrier, as report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations.(UNESCO, 2019), that female students from disadvantaged homes, are more likely to dropout of school due to financial pressures. Geographic barriers simply has to do with the location in which most female students live and this plays a crucial role in access to education. In many rural areas, particularly in developing countries, educational facilities are scarce. The World Bank (2020), highlights that children in remote areas often face long distances to travel to schools and lack access to necessary educational infrastructure.

**iii. Access to Job Training:** Educational attainments can impact access to job training. In many advanced training programmes require a certain level of prior education which can perpetuate cycles of inequality. Organizations of Economic Corporations and Development (OECD, 2020), highlights that individuals with lower educational attainment often face challenges in accessing and benefiting from specialized training programmes.

**iv. Healthcare and Support Services:** Healthcare and support services, including counseling and STI testing, are essential for mitigating the risks associated with sex trading (Blevins, 2018). Research has shown that female students who have access to these services are more likely to report consistent condom use and fewer STIs.

**v. Stigma and Marginalization:** Stigma, according to Goffman, (1963), is a social process that labels individuals or groups as undesirable, leading to social exclusion, rejection and loss of status. Marginalization, on the other hand, is a process pushing individuals or groups to the periphery of society and denying them access to resources, rights and societal participation, (Memmi ,1965). Stigma and marginalization can exacerbate the risks associated with sex trading among female students (Raphael, 2004). Research by World Health Organization (2019), has shown that female students who experience stigma and marginalization are more likely to report poor mental health outcomes and reduced access to healthcare services. Therefore, reducing social stigma through public education and advocacy can improve access to employment and educational opportunities, facilitating better livelihood enhancement



### **Factors That Necessitates Campus Prostitution among Female Students**

- a. **Financial support:** Sex trading provides financial assistance, enabling female students to cover educational expenses, living costs, and other necessities (Stoebenau et al., 2016).
- b. **Economic empowerment:** Transactional sex can offer a sense of economic control and independence, allowing female students to make choices about their lives and education (Wamoyi et al., 2011).
- c. **Access to resources:** Sex trading may grant access to resources such as food, shelter, and clothing, which are essential for well-being and academic success (Chatterji et al., 2005).
- d. **Social status:** In some contexts, engaging in sex trading can elevate social status, as it may be perceived as a means to acquire wealth and material possessions (Luke, 2005).
- e. **Educational opportunities:** In extreme cases, sex trading may be seen as a means to access educational opportunities, such as tuition fees or scholarships, which would otherwise be unattainable (Nyanzi et al., 2001).

### **Sex Trading and Health Implications**

Pauw and Brener (2003) noted that one of the main reasons for the rapid spread of sexually transmitted diseases like gonorrhoea, syphilis and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome HIV/AIDS in the world, including Nigeria, is the massive transmission among sex workers and clients. They advocated for prevention campaigns aimed at increasing condom use by sex workers which would attribute to play a major role in restricting the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

Commercialization and reckless sexual behaviour increase the prevalence of sexual diseases. (few clients are ready to pay more for a sexual encounter if they do not have to use a condom), HIV will spread, where and to whom the carrier has visited. This deviant and filthy profession is regrettably associated with social, psychological and health consequences, such as, exposure to female trafficking, sexual violence, alcoholism, cultism, emergence of criminal gangs, drug addiction, violence, delinquency, child abuse, environmental pollution, human exploitation, unwanted pregnancies, unsafe and crude abortions and more worrisome is the vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases, like genital herpes, gonorrhoea, syphilis, chlamydial, pelvic inflammatory diseases, genital warts and human papillomavirus, Hepatitis "B" infection trichomoniasis, chancroid, cervical cancer and HIV/AIDS.

Regrettably, beyond the immediate impact of the infection itself, STIs like herpes and syphilis can increase the risk of HIV acquisition threefold or more, mother to child transmission of STIs can result to still birth, neonatal deaths, low birth weight and prematurity. It is also one of the factors responsible for anti-social behaviours which are antithetical to the peace, physical and social health of the country. Research in Nigeria according to Odebunmi et al, (2020), reveal that female sex workers have higher HIV rates than the general population, with nearly one-third showing symptoms consistent with HIV.

Studies, according to that trauma experience in sex work often exceeds that found combat situations, highlighting the severe health risks involved.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Merton's Strain Theory**

Merton's Strain Theory (1938) posits that societal pressures and expectations can lead individuals to engage in deviant behavior when they are unable to achieve goals through legitimate means. This theory can be applied to understand sex trading and academic performance among female students. According to Merton, cultural goals and legitimate means are two key components that influence individual behavior (Merton, 1938). In the context of female students, cultural goals may include achieving academic success, financial stability, and social status (Hill, 2015). Legitimate means to achieve these goals include scholarships, part-time jobs, and academic rigor, (Kerbo, 2009).

However, when female students face financial difficulties, academic pressures, and lack of resources, a discrepancy between goals and means arises, leading to strain (Merton, 1938). This strain can lead to deviant adaptations, such as sex trading, as a means to achieve financial stability and academic success (Raphael, 2004). Merton's modes of adaptation can also be applied to understand how female students respond to strain. Some may innovate by engaging in sex trading, while others may retreat from academic goals or rebel against traditional academic paths, (Merton, 1938). Similarly, Roberts, Sanders, and Myers, (2019), found that financial strain can lead to compromised academic performance and increased likelihood of engaging in sex trading.

Furthermore, academic strain can lead to sex trading as a means to achieve financial stability, (Kennedy, 2004). Research according to Buchanan,(2019), has shown that female students who experience financial strain are more likely to engage in sex trading to support themselves, financially. This can lead to a compromise in academic performance, as the time and energy devoted to sex trading takes away from academic pursuits, (Dalla, 2006). Also, according to Mutongwizo, and Takeaway,(2018), female students from marginalized communities may experience additional strain due to systemic barriers and biases . For example, female students of colour, may face discrimination and bias in the academic setting, leading to increased strain and a higher likelihood of engaging in sex trading, (Raphael, 2004).

Moreover, academic strain can also lead to sex trading as a means to achieve financial stability. Female students who experience academic pressure and lack of resources may feel that sex trading is the cheapest or easiest way to achieve financial stability to support them, while pursuing their academic goals, (Kennedy, 2004). Furthermore, the strain theory can be applied to understand the role of power dynamics in sex trading among female students. Research by Bamford, (2017), has also shown that power imbalances can contribute to the exploitation of female students in sex trading. For example, female students may feel pressured into sex trading by those in positions of power, such as professors or campus officials, (Hill, 2015).

In addition, the strain theory can be applied to understand the role of social strain in sex trading among female students. Social strain can arise from the pressure to conform to societal expectations of femininity and sexuality, (Bourdieu, 1990). Female students experiencing social strain may feel that sex trading is a way to achieve social status and recognition (Raphael, 2004). In addition, the strain theory

can be applied to understand the role of technology in sex trading among female students. Research has shown that technology can facilitate sex trading, making it easier for female students to connect with clients and arrange transactions, (Blevins, 2018). However, technology can also increase the risk of exploitation and harm, particularly for female students who may be vulnerable to online predators, (Hill, 2015).

### **Application of Strain theory to the Study**

Strain theory, introduced by Sociologist Robert K. Merton in the 1930s, seeks to explain deviant behaviour as a response to the pressure that individuals feel when they cannot achieve socially accepted goals through legitimate means. When applied to female students, strain theory suggests that economic, social, and emotional strains may push some into sex trading as a means to cope with or mitigate their challenges. This can, in turn, affect their academic performance. According to Merton, there are five modes of adaptation to this strain: **Conformity**: Adhering to societal norms despite the strain; **Innovation**: Using unconventional or illegal means to achieve societal goals; **Ritualism**: Giving up on societal goals, but continuing to follow societal norms; **Retreatism**: Rejecting both societal goals and norms; **Rebellion**: Seeking to change or replace societal goals and norms.

In the case of sex trading among female students, innovation is the most applicable mode. When students face significant financial strain, but still want to succeed academically, they may resort to unconventional means, such as, sex trading to achieve their educational goals. Sex trading, as a form of “innovation” according to Merton’s theory, becomes a way for these students to make ends meet. It offers immediate financial relief and provides a way to manage their academic and economic demands. The theory posits that the structural strain, stemming from the mismatch between the legitimate avenues available for financial support and the cultural pressure to succeed—leads to this deviant behavior. As a result, sex trading becomes an innovative strategy for coping with socioeconomic hardship.

Research by Sanders and Campbell (2007), suggests that economic strain is one of the most significant predictors of engagement in sex work among university students. Female students facing economic pressures are often more likely to turn to sex trading as a way to maintain financial stability while continuing their education. Beyond economic strain, societal expectations also play a crucial role. The societal pressure to succeed academically, achieve financial independence, and maintain certain social and material standards often creates overwhelming emotional and psychological strain. Female students may feel the burden to conform to social norms related to educational success, personal upkeep, and social status, but with limited legitimate means of achieving these goals.

This pressure can lead to feelings of frustration, anxiety, and helplessness, making students more vulnerable to alternative coping mechanisms like sex trading. In this context, sex trading not only serves as a financial solution but also as a way to navigate the intense social and academic expectations placed on students.

According to Agnew’s General Strain Theory (1992), strain that results from negative relationships or stressful life events, such as financial challenges or academic pressure, can lead to deviant behavior. The theory also emphasizes the emotional response to strain, which can manifest as anger, frustration, or depression. When students feel incapable of achieving their academic goals

through conventional means, they may turn to sex trading as a solution, even though it may come with significant risks.

Strain theory offers a compelling framework for understanding the relationship between sex trading and academic performance among female students. The financial, social, and emotional pressures that students face can create significant strain, leading some to engage in sex trading as a coping mechanism. However, this response can have serious negative consequences for academic performance and overall well-being. Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach, including financial support, mental health services, and academic assistance to alleviate the strains that lead to such risky behavior. By creating supportive environments that reduce strain, educational institutions can help female students succeed academically without resorting to sex trading.

**Methodology**

The study adopted the survey design, combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Data both from the secondary and primary sources were utilized in the study. The secondary sources of data included library/scholarly literature from books, journals, official gazettes and reports, magazines and newspaper reports, while the primary data were generated from the administration of structured questionnaire. The population for this study was drawn from female undergraduate students of Akwa Ibom State University (ObioAkpa Campus) , across Faculties of Agriculture, Arts, Management and Social Sciences which according to the statistics obtained from the Students and Record Unit during 2020/ 2021 session till 2023/ 2024 session of the University, is Four thousand , Four hundred and sixty-five (4465). The study adopted purposive sampling of the non-probability sampling technique where copies of the questionnaires were randomly administered to only students in their respective Departments.

Taro Yamane sampling were used to select a sample size of 400 repondents from the student’s population of 4,465 female students on Obio Akpa Campus of the study area. In analyzing the data, the simple percentage and chi-square ( $x^2$ ) was used in testing and analysing the research hypotheses.

**Table 3.1** Sample Size per Level

LEVELS	NO. OF STUDENTS	SAMPLE SIZE	PERCENTAGE (%)
100 level	1500	142	33.6
200 level	1100	95	24.6
300 level	938	85	21.0
400 level	600	48	13.4
500 level	326	30	7.3
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>4465</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field study, 2024*

**Results and Discussion of Findings**

The demographic factor considered for thus study comprises of Gender of the respondents, age distribution of respondents, marital Status of respondents, Faculties of respondents and levels of respondents. The simple percentage tables were used in presenting the data, while chi-square was used to test the hypotheses.

**Table 1: Analysis of questionnaire administered**

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Returned	348	87
Not returned	52	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2024.

The table above indicates that out of 400 questionnaire administered to respondents, 348 questionnaire representing 87% were returned, while 52 questionnaire representing 13% were not returned.

## Research Questions

### Respondents' view

S/NO	QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS	RESPONSES			
		SA	A	SD	D
	<b>Academic Performance</b>				
		<b>125</b> (35.9%)	73 (20.9%)	<b>84</b> (24.1%)	<b>66</b> (18.9%)
1.	Many students in Akwa Ibom State University finds it difficult to balance sex trading and academic activities.				
2.	Engaging in sex trading has led to increased stress which negatively impacted many Akwalbom State University Students academic success.	<b>180</b> 51.7%	<b>20</b> 5.7%	<b>112</b> 32.1%	<b>36</b> 10.3%
3.	Many students in Akwa Ibom State University Students Academic performance has reduced as a result of their engagement in sex trading.	<b>140</b> 40.2%	<b>127</b> 36.4%	<b>35</b> 10.1%	<b>46</b> 13.2%
4.	Some male lecturers frustrate female students with the intention of negotiating sex for grades.	<b>100</b> 28.7%	<b>60</b> 7.2%	<b>138</b> 39.7%	<b>50</b> 14.3%
5.	Sex trading has negatively affected many Akwa Ibom State University Students studies and completion of class work, assignments and continuous assessment on time.	<b>130</b> 37.3%	<b>48</b> 13.7%	<b>95</b> 27.2%	<b>75</b> 21.5%
	<b>LIVELIHOOD ENHANCEMENT</b>				
		<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>
6.	Sex trading has enabled many Akwalbom State university students to pay fees and house rents.	<b>200</b> 57.4%	<b>100</b> 28.7%	<b>28</b> 8.1%	<b>20</b> 5.7%
7.	Engaging in sex trading has improved the standard of living of most Akwalbom State University Students.	<b>210</b> 60.3%	<b>120</b> 34.4%	<b>10</b> 3.4%	<b>8</b> 2.2%
8.	Most students engaging in sex trading are financial independent in school.	<b>185</b> 53.2%	<b>105</b> 30.2%	<b>28</b> 8.0%	<b>30</b> 8.6%
	<b>HEALTH IMPLICATIONS</b>				
		<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>
	Access to healthcare services and support has been inadequate due to most Akwalbom State University Students engagement in sex trading.	<b>54</b> 14.9%	<b>82</b> 23.6%	<b>124</b> 35.6%	<b>90</b> 25.9%
	Engaging in sex trading has increased the risk of sexually transmitted infections(sti)	147 42.2%	<b>120</b> 34.4%	<b>35</b> 10.1%	<b>46</b> 13.2%

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

The table above shows that 56.8% of the responses agree that many students in Akwa Ibom State University balanced sex trading with school, while 43%, disagreed on the view. It also was observed that engaging in sex trading can lead to an increased risk of stress, with 57.4% respondents attesting to this, while 42.4% shown divergent views, that stress poses no significant impact on the academic performances of female students who indulge in transactional sex on the campus.

In spite of the 76.6% respondents in agreement, on the significant reduction in the number of female students engaging in this kind of business, only 23.3% have divergence views on the subject. This alien practices in Akwa Ibom State University, according to 52.7% of the respondents, is as a result of frustration of female students by male lecturers with intension of negotiating sex for high grades, whereas, 35.9% disagreed on this views. This situation, according to 51% of the responses affirmed that the practice has profound negative on students' studies and completion of classwork, assignments and continuous assessment on time while 48% disagreed on the view.

On the payment of fees and house rents, 86.1% are of the opinion that this practice had given them seamless stress, whereas, 13.8% disagree on this regard. However, a general notion from 94.7% of respondents who nodded in agreement that engaging in sex trading improves the standard of living of students who transacts sex, blaming the involvements on the harsh economy of the country, while only 5.6% poses dissenting views on this. Following from these assertions, 83.4 % respondents are of the opinion that those who actively engaged or indulged in the practice are financially independent and self-reliance in the school, while 16.6% took a swipe on the issue.

Conclusively, the table further shows that 38.5 % are of the views that access to healthcare services and support has been inadequate in the University, thus, the students engagement in sex trading to cater for health challenges when the faced with one, while 61.5% of respondents strongly disagreed with the views. This compels the majority of these respondents of about 76.6% to continue to take a firm stance, that the active engagements on transactional sex by the practitioners, increased the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) not only in the University, but, the larger society, by extension, whereas, an insignificant percentage of respondents, 23.3% disagreed on this.

### **Testing of Hypotheses**

The chi- square statistical method was used in testing the hypotheses. In calculating the chi-square, the level of significance is given as 0.05

The degree of freedom (df) is calculated as;

$$df = (R-1) (C-1)$$

Number of row minus 1  
Number of column minus 1

To calculate the chi square, the following formula is used;

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(fo - fe)^2}{fe}$$

Where  $X^2$  = chi square  
fo = observed frequency  
fe = expected frequency  
 $\sum$  = summation

The expected frequency is calculated as:

$$E = \frac{\text{Row total} \times \text{column total}}{\text{Grand total}}$$

**Rules of Decision**

Where the calculated chi-square Value is less than critical table value, null hypothesis will be accepted and Alternate hypothesis will be rejected. Where the calculated chi-square value is greater than the table values, Alternate hypothesis will be accepted while the null hypothesis will be rejected. The hypothesis tested in this study is hypothesis 1, II and III as obtained in chapter one of this research work. Data used for testing the hypothesis are obtained from the responses to the questionnaire distributed to various Departments in the four Faculties of Akwa Ibom State University.

**Hypotheses One**

There is no significant relationship between sex trading and academic performance of female students in Akwa Ibom State University.

**Table 4.2.2 Responses from question one was used to test hypotheses one.**

Responses	SA	A	SD	D	Total
Male	46	25	35	10	116
Female	40	45	62	85	232
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>348</b>

*Source: Field survey, 2024.*

**Table 4.2.3: Chi-square distribution table**

Cell	Fo	Fe	Fo-Fe	(Fo-Fe) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(Fo-Fe)^2}{Fe}$
A	46	28.66	17.34	300.67	10.49
B	25	23.33	1.67	2.79	0.12
C	35	32.33	2.67	7.13	0.22
D	10	43.67	21.67	469.58	14.83
E	40	33.33	17.33	300.32	5.24
F	45	46.7	1.7	2.89	0.06
G	62	64.67	2.67	4.24	0.06
H	85	87.33	21.67	469.58	7.41
<b>Total</b>	<b>348</b>				<b><math>\sum x^2 = 38.97</math></b>

*Source: Field survey, 2024.*

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Degree of freedom} &= (R-1) (C-1) \\ &= (2-1) (4-1) \\ &= 1 \times 3 \\ &= 3 \end{aligned}$$

**Decision:** Since the calculated value of 38.97 is greater than the table value of 7.82, the Alternate hypotheses (H1) will be accepted and the null hypotheses (H0) will be rejected.



### Hypotheses Two

There is no significant relationship between sex trading and livelihood enhancement of female students in Akwa Ibom State University.

**Table 4.2.4: Responses from question 13 was used to test the hypotheses two.**

Responses	SA	A	SD	D	Total
Male	65	25	32	60	182
Female	50	40	29	47	166
<b>Total</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>348</b>

Source: Field survey, 2024.

**Table 4.2.5: Chi-square distribution table**

Cell	Fo	Fe	Fo-Fe	(Fo-Fe) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(Fo-Fe)^2}{fe}$
A	65	60.14	4.86	23.61	0.39
B	25	33.99	8.99	80.82	3.23
C	32	31.90	0.1	0.01	0.00
D	60	55.96	4.04	16.32	0.29
E	50	54.86	4.86	23.61	0.43
F	40	20.33	19.67	386.91	19.03
G	29	29.09	0.09	0.01	0.00
H	47	35.67	11.33	128.37	3.59
<b>Total</b>	<b>348</b>				<b>Σx<sup>2</sup> =26.96</b>

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Degree of freedom} &= (R-1) (C-1) \\ &= (2-1) (4-1) \\ &= 1 \times 3 \\ &= 3 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{The level of significance} &= 0.05 \\ \text{Calculated value} &= 26.96 \\ \text{Critical table value} &= 7.82 \end{aligned}$$

**Decision:** Since the calculated value of 26.96 is greater than the critical table value of 7.82, the Alternate hypotheses (H1) will be accepted and the null hypotheses (H0) will be rejected. From the above, there is significant relationship between sex trading and livelihood enhancement of female students in Akwa Ibom State University.

### Hypotheses Three

There is no significant relationship between sex trading and the health status of female students in Akwa Ibom State University.

**Table 4.2.6: Responses from question eight was used to test hypotheses three.**

Responses	SA	A	SD	D	Total
Male	100	25	30	70	225
Female	25	20	50	28	123
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>348</b>

Source: Field survey, 2024.

**Table 4.2.7: Chi-square distribution table**

Cell	Fo	Fe	Fo-Fe	Fo-Fe) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(Fo-Fe)^2}{fe}$
A	100	80.82	19.18	367.87	4.55
B	25	29.09	4.09	16.73	0.09
C	30	57.72	1.72	2.96	0.06
D	70	63.36	6.64	44.09	1.24
E	25	44.18	19.18	367.87	8.33
F	20	15.91	4.09	16.73	0.18
G	50	53.02	21.72	471.76	16.68
H	28	36.64	6.64	44.09	6.25
<b>Total</b>	<b>348</b>				<b>Σx<sup>2</sup>= 31.13</b>

Source: Field survey, 2024.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Degree of freedom} &= (R-1) (C-1) \\
 &= (2-1) (4-1) \\
 &= 1 \times 3 \\
 &= 3
 \end{aligned}$$

The level of significance = 0.05  
 Calculated value = 31.13  
 Critical table value = 7.82

**Decision:** Since the calculated value of 31.13 is greater than the table value of 7.82, the alternate hypotheses (H1) will be accepted and the null hypothesis (H0) will be rejected. From the above, there is significant relationship between sex trading and the health status of female students in Akwa Ibom State University.

## Discussion of Findings

### Hypothesis One

Hypotheses one (1) was tested using question one (1) from the questionnaire.

This finding is in concord with the writings of Sanders T. (2007) and Uzokwe, (2008) who posited that prostitution is very rampant in Nigerian universities. He said that our young girls sent to the universities to acquire knowledge and become productive citizens found a vocation in Sex trading. Misi ((2008) added that professional sex workers are everywhere in the campuses as undergraduates, because according to him “men now prefer students to street prostitutes”. Olugbile, et al (2008), opined that female students now trade with their bodies to earn huge income to pay fees and house rents. The questionnaire which was used in testing the hypothesis confirms to this as majority of respondents representing 57.4%agreed. This led to the rejecting of the null hypotheses and accepting the alternate hypotheses.

### Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis two (2) was tested using question (13) from the questionnaire. Engaging in sex trading has led to increased risk of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) of most Akwalbom State University students. Shanon, Stefan and Smitha,(2015), opined that sex workers are disproportionately affected by Sexually Transmitted Infections, HIV etc. Also, Pauw and Brener (2003) noted that the reasons for rapid

spread of Sexually Transmitted Infections are as a result of the massive transmission etc, among sex workers and clients. Thus, according to Effiong, (2024), begging the attention of governments to put in place a functional social security mechanism in place, in case of eventuality to take care of cases of this sort. The questionnaire which was used in testing the hypothesis shows that majority of respondents representing 42.2% agreed. This led to the rejecting of the null hypotheses and accepting the alternate hypothesis.

### **Hypothesis Three**

Hypotheses three (3) was tested using question (8) from the questionnaire, it revealed that as a result of their engagement in sex trading it has reduced their academic performance. Koffi et al (2022), opined that it has reduced their concentration and has lower their academic achievement. Also, Smith et al (2020), argued that it is mostly students from lower socio-economic backgrounds that engage in sex trading as a means of survival. In the works of Nguyen and Kim (2023), environmental factor such as unstable living conditions and lack of supportive environment contribute to difficulties that hinder academic focus. A situation, such as this, according to Umoh, Ekpo, Effiong and Asangausung, (2023), requires the application of entrepreneurial education which has been the nucleus of self-reliance amongst students, nowadays. The questionnaire which was used in testing the hypothesis confirms to this as majority of respondents representing 40.2% agreed. This led to accepting the alternate hypotheses and rejecting the null hypotheses.

### **Conclusion**

The phenomenon of sex trading among female students presents a significant challenge that adversely affects academic performance and overall well-being. Research according to Okeke, Chukwuorji and Nwosu, (2020), have shown that economic status of students, parents, and the desire to maintain a certain lifestyle and material possessions are factors that drive students toward engaging in sex trading, often leading to detrimental consequences such as decreased attendance, lower academic achievement, and increased dropout rates.

The psychological impact of involvement in sex trading, including mental health issues and social stigma, further complicates the educational landscape for these students. While some may develop resilience and coping mechanisms, the long-term implications often hinder their academic success. Related Literatures were reviewed for this study and research design was adopted for this study.

Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach that includes financial support systems, mental health resources, and educational interventions. By providing scholarships, counseling services, and awareness programs, educational institutions can create a more supportive environment that empowers female students to pursue their academic goals without resorting to sex trading.

Additionally, tackling the underlying economic and social factors that contribute to sex trading is crucial for fostering a more equitable and conducive educational atmosphere. Continued research and targeted interventions are essential to support affected students and promote their academic success and personal development.

### **Recommendations**

1. Provision of academic counseling by academic advisers and mentoring.

2. The university should ensure that policies addressing sex trading-related health issues.
3. There is need for NGOs, sex workers advocate etc, to empower and support female students educationally (through scholarship) and financial assistance.
4. Awareness programmes that are needed to pull female students out of these social ills in Akwa Ibom State University.

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