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Transactional Sex in Nigerian Universities among Female Students: Drivers and Safety Concerns

By E. K. Oyeoku, N. E. Ibezim, P. C. Agwu, U. O. Okoye

Abstract

Freedom away from parents and guardians for students in higher institutions could have effects on their sexual decisions and behaviours, which when not guided could portend devastating consequences. Such a decision could lead to indulging in transactional sex (TS), a kind of sexual relationship that is adopted in exchange for material and non-material benefits. In this study, we underscored why female students are involved in TS in some Nigerian universities and offer potential remedies that could mitigate or prevent associated negative consequences. The study relied on a qualitative research methodology, adopting in-depth interviews to source data from 40 female students across 5 universities in southeastern Nigeria. Data were analysed in thematic categories that reflected the research questions. Family pressure/parental disconnectedness, gender, peer influence, poor economic background, greed, etc., influenced TS involvement. We also identified some psychosocial and health risks associated with TS. The roles of social service professionals were found to be of much importance, although the universities that were studied barely employed and/or utilised their services.

Keywords: Gender, social work, Transactional sex, undergraduates, universities, Nigerian universities, Nigeria

Introduction

Transactional sex (TS) activities in Nigerian tertiary institutions are found to be common among female students. Often, they are not powerful enough to determine the terms of the transaction with the involving males (Mume, 2017; Olatunji, 2012; Kjellgren, Priebe, Svedin & Langstrom, 2010). With disproportionate effects on women, TS is becoming topical in a growing body of literature (Stoebenau, Heise, Wamoyi & Bobrova, 2016; Mume, 2017; Oyeoku, Ngwoke, Eskay & Obikwelu, 2014). Notwithstanding that sexual decisions are premised on the principles of self-determination and should be respected (Dienye, 2016; Lam, 2018), there are concerns about some avoidable conditions that lead to TS, as well as the devastating health and psychosocial consequences that could emerge (Badejo, 2012; Mume, 2017).

TS relationships are built on the premise of deriving economic gains, social capital, and material support in non-marital and non-commercial contexts (Stoebenau et al, 2016). By this definition, it means that TS differs from sex work because it does not involve habitual sexual involvement with anyone for economic benefits. However, there are suggestions that TS could cascade into sex work, especially when economic demands become overriding (Amo-Adjei, Kumi-Kyereme & Tuoyire, 2014; Stoebenau et al, 2016). While economic demands tend to be a primate factor influencing TS involvement, some other factors are mentioned in studies. They include the need to acquire social status and peer influence (Collinson & Ash, 2015; Kangiwa, 2015; Olatunji, 2012; Shefer et al, 2012); make good grades in school (Oyeoku et al, 2014; Shafiei, Kootanai & Rad, 2012); meet some luxury needs (Khan, Johansson, Zaman, Unemo, Rahat & Lundborg, 2010; Masvawure, 2010), and outright sexual satisfaction (Saggurti, Sabarwal, Verma, Halli & Jain 2011).

Previous studies show a conservative attitude toward non-marital and transactional sexual relationships in Nigeria (Alobo & Ndifon, 2014; Okwara, 2011). For instance, security operatives in Nigeria, raid areas known for sex work, and even make arrest of sex workers (Ndah & Joseph, 2020). It is common to see religious groups in Nigeria that tend to frown at illicit sexual affairs, such as TS (Alobo & Ndifon 2014; Eburn, 2011). Within the traditional religious practice in Nigeria, sexual intercourse is held in high esteem and considered permissible in marriage alone (Amo-Adje et al, 2014). Thus, when sex happens in a non-marital context, there could be an associated social stigma. This is the reason those that get involved with TS in such locations like Nigeria might not be entirely free to own up participation (Alobo & Ndifon, 2014; Oyeoku et al, 2014).

Several studies examine the damaging consequences of TS. First, the vulnerability to Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and associated emotional trauma for the women who are often less powerful in the TS relationship (Rossler, Koch, Lauber, Hass, Altwegg, Ajdacic-Gross & Landolt, 2010; WHO, 2012); second, the tendency to have multiple sexual partners for several transactions (Scott, 2010; Shefer et al, 2012); third, the possibility of TS building into sex work with more damaging consequences (Scott, 2010); fourth, the potential of several forms of domestic violence against the women, including the risks of unwanted pregnancies, which could fuel existing gender gap in Nigeria (Amo-Adjei et al, 2014; Imaledo, Peter-Kio & Asuquo 2012; Masvawure, 2010; Tompert, 2012), to mention but a few.

Owing to the several consequences of TS as mentioned above, we found the roles of social workers needful in helping female students in tertiary schools avoid these consequences. Unfortunately, the profession faces a huge disservice in Nigeria as a result of a lack of professionalisation by an act of law (Nnama-Okechukwu, Agwu & Okoye, 2020). Although social workers are currently employed in Nigerian institutions, yet their roles are unpopular and sometimes not fully understood by their employers. Cases also abound of non-social workers getting employed to do the jobs of social workers (Onalu, Agwu, Okoye & Agha, 2020). Thus, the profession is largely constrained in Nigeria. There are vital roles social workers could play when working with women in unwholesome sexual contexts (Agwu, Okoye, Ekoh, Chukwu, Onalu, Igwe, Onuh, Amadi & Nche, 2020). The roles of education, counselling, advocacy for policy and programmatic actions to enhance wellbeing and protection for women, as well as the promotion of health-savvy behaviours and gender equity are discussed. Anti-oppressive social work seems to align perfectly with the roles of social workers seeking to address concerns on TS, especially since there is the involvement of a seemingly less powerful group (Linsk, 2011; Okoli, Agwu & Okoye, 2017; Teater, 2010).

Finally, we acknowledge the several studies on TS in most parts of Africa (Amo-Adjei et al, 2014; Masvawure, 2010; Shefer et al, 2012), and the few of Nigerian origin (Alobo & Ndifon, 2014; Eburn, 2011). However, we observed paucity of empirical studies on TS in Nigerian universities, apart from some media editorials (Mume, 2017; Olatunji, 2012). Therefore, our study seeks to address this gap, and this time tries to achieve connections with the roles social workers can play in advancing safe sex, gender equity, anti-oppressive practice, and better and decent conditions for female students. Findings from this study will be meaningful to authorities in Nigerian higher institutions, ministries of education, social service centres, and social workers in practice and training. We aim to address the questions of the several drivers of TS, the associated risks, and implications for social work practice. We believe that addressing these questions would offer insights into the dynamics of TS and potential remedies which we feel confident that social workers can champion.

Theoretical framework

We draw on the assumption of the intersectionality theory to interrogate what could predispose female students to TS and how the factors we identify could be addressed. The intersectionality theory by Crenshaw (1989) explains how a collection of personal or societal attributed identities could intersect to cause increased vulnerability in individuals. Such identities include gender, economic status, race, ethnicity, social status, etc. Interestingly, the theory focuses on women in the context of patriarchy, race, and other divisive concepts. For instance, in patriarchally dominated societies, women tend to be vulnerable to abuse and deprivation because the culture has attributed more power, privileges and rights to male folks (Agwu et al, 2020). In a country like Nigeria with an endemic patriarchal culture, women are seen to be weak and vulnerable, and men tend to dominate the economic structure. As a result, the women become more vulnerable when they lack economic power and are most likely to be exploited. This is why in the Nigerian context, the risks that are often associated with economic-induced TS involving men and women, are usually more devastating for the women (Amo-Adjei et al, 2014). Thus, women in a patriarchal environment are often prone to vulnerability and its consequence of exploitation because of the intersections of the female gender and lack of economic power. While the lack of economic power is key in fostering vulnerability, there are other attributes that exist such as hierarchical relationships, poor academic performance, poor social status of families, among others. Hence, the more women possess attributes that put them below their male counterparts, the more they become vulnerable and prone to inimical situations, perhaps TS.

On the other hand, while we accept that TS must not necessarily be exploitative, as well as involving just economically weak women, it is clear that lack of power, whether in terms of gender, economy, socially deprived backgrounds, hierarchy in the school setting or lack of academic capacity, could cause one to consider TS as a way to take care of situations that exceeds one's capacity. This implies that the one with the lesser power stands higher chances of being exploited in the process (Khan et al, 2010; Stoebenau et al, 2016). The continual survival of these predisposing factors that have exacerbated the vulnerability of women draws from the aloofness or support of the societal structure. Beyond psychosocial interventions to scale up awareness and capacities of women at personal levels, committed policy and programmatic measures are needed to address the structural support that have permitted these predisposing factors to thrive across different levels.

Methodology

The study was administered across 5 states in southeastern Nigeria. The states include Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. The zone houses a total of ten public universities (2 per state) which are managed by either the Federal or State governments. We interviewed 8 final-year female undergraduates from each of the 5 universities that represented the five states. The universities were Abia State University; Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Anambra; Ebonyi State University; University of Nigeria, Enugu; Federal University of Technology, Imo. We purposely selected just final-year female undergraduates for the study because of the experiences we inferred that they should have gathered based on their length of stay in the university. Simple random sampling technique by balloting was adopted to pick one university from each of the 5 states in southeastern Nigeria. In the end, federal universities were selected in Enugu, Imo, and Anambra, while state universities were picked in Abia and Ebonyi. To get directly to the respondents, we

also adopted a snowball sampling technique, where some final year female students could refer us to persons whom they feel are with the information we needed.

The questions for the in-depth interview were collectively designed by the researchers, taking into consideration that the interviews should last for 30 minutes. Each researcher had just a research assistant who assisted in notetaking and recording. All interviews were done in English language, and at the convenience of the students, usually at their resting points or sit-outs. So, they felt relaxed while taking questions. Their classrooms were always busy and rowdy at the hours the interviews were scheduled. Respondents were briefed on the aims of the research, and upon acceptance to participate, were offered consent forms to sign. The consent forms detailed issues of confidentiality and anonymity, and had provision for the researcher to sign, indicating and promising non-violation of the contents of the consent forms at any time. The rationale for using in-depth interviews is because of the sensitive nature of the study. That way, respondents would feel at ease narrating their experiences without being concerned that a friend or anyone might be paying attention to them. In cases of snowballing, we were mindful to not let the respondent know that we came to them through referral, as we suspected that that could make them uneasy. The study lasted for a month and was approved by the ethical review board of the University of Nigeria. To analyse the data, tape-recordings were transcribed verbatim in English language after each discussion. The transcribed data were studied extensively by all researchers and arranged in themes through employing the NVivo9 software. The rationale behind the use of themes is to help in classifying responses as it relates to the research questions (Lopez et al, 2008). It is also on the premise of phenomenology, which entails adopting thematic clusters to gain lucid understanding of lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). The researchers independently achieved the thematic clustering of the quotes. Afterward, we came together to harmonise. This process was adopted in line with observer triangulation. To add more rigour, we indulged in peer debriefing by handing the harmonised file to two peers to check and critique what we have done. In the end, their comments were noted and incorporated. Observer triangulation and peer debriefing are recommended to scale up scientific rigour in qualitative research (Padgett, 2008).

Results

Results are presented in themes and sub-themes. We began by briefly describing the demographic features of respondents, which followed by detailing the drivers of TS. These drivers were further categorised into sub-themes to include: family pressure/disconnectedness, peer influence, social media, economic status, and luxury/school-grade influence. Thereafter, we highlighted the associated health risks that are incurred in TS relationships. Ideas from the discussions informed our position on efforts certain professionals, and especially social workers can make in providing preventive and curative approaches to the predisposing factors and consequences of TS experienced by undergraduate female students.

Demographic characteristics of respondents

The respondents were 40 female students from five Universities in southeastern Nigeria. The ages of respondents ranged from 20–27 years. They were all final year students. About 62.5% of the respondents reported that their parents earn less than N100,000 (\$258) a month and 55% reported that they have at one point or the other had a reason to consider indulging TS.

Drivers of transactional sex in Nigerian Universities

Family pressure and disconnectedness

Some respondents opined that some parents through their actions and inactions could encourage their children to involve in TS. Below are some responses:

[...] Some mothers will expect their children to return from school with gifts and material items even when they know that they are just students **[Student, 23 years, Abia State University]**.

I use to have a roommate whose mum will always call to ask her about the school fees of her younger ones and money for feeding at home, even when she knows that she is a student and has no job at all **[Student, 22 years, Ebonyi State University]**.

The cases above are typical of family pressure on female students that could cause them to resort to TS to contain the pressure. Such pressure implies that the parents would accept whatsoever they bring home without explicitly being concerned about the source. The narrative below reveals further:

Collecting gifts from a man when you know it is sex he wants in return implies that you are indebted to him. Some parents don't ask their daughters how they get the money and gifts they return home with. They just open their hands and take. The girl who will not want the gifts and money she is receiving to stop will keep supplying sex to the giver **[Student, 24 years, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu]**.

Also, the respondents pointed at some parents who pay no attention to the activities and welfare of their children in school, because they are busy with career and work or because they have refused to pay attention to their daughters.

One of my friends has this man that is helping her with money so she can pay her fees and take care of herself. This girl's parents don't just care about her. I have asked her severally if her parents are her real parents as she claims, and she keeps saying yes **[Student, 25 years, Ebonyi State University]**.

Some girls just use sex to seek status. They want to be seen with the big boys on campus or with that lecturer. And they take pride in it [...] For some of them who are like this, they don't get monitored or advised by their parents. If not, they will see that there is no gain in such a lifestyle **[Student, 26 years, Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Imo]**.

Peer-group Influence

Peer pressure was considered a prominent driver of TS by the respondents. They narrated how the topic of sex is discussed among themselves and information on how to get hooked with

male TS counterparts is passed around them. They also mentioned how the opulent lifestyles of some of the female students attract people into the act. See the narratives below:

When you see your friend looking attractive, using good gadgets, wearing expensive wigs, dresses, and shoes, and living so comfortably, you will be forced to ask her what she is doing to afford her lifestyle. You will even consider joining her. At least, a rich guy that can give all these while you keep servicing (sex) him, will not be bad **[Student, 23 years, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Anambra]**.

My friend usually comes back to the hostel with money and gifts. I kept asking her what she does. One day, she introduced me to a man, and I carried on from there **[Student, 26 years, University of Nigeria, Enugu]**.

Social Media Influence

Social media was reported to facilitate TS. Partners could meet on an organised social media platform. It makes the meeting very swift, and sometimes, also protects the identity of the partners, until they meet physically.

There are platforms on social media where you can be hooked with your man. Just always be ready to give him what he wants (sex) [...], and he will take care of you. If a friend is interested, I just introduce her to any of the platforms **[Student, 25 years, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Anambra]**.

Most of them into TS also have so many Facebook groups and chat rooms they belong to where they meet men and choose the ones they want. Sometimes, some of them even go to sites where they post their pictures and put their phone numbers. They usually have different phone numbers they use and also answer different names so that you will not know who they are **[Student, 24 years, Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Imo]**.

Equally, there were cases of some girls being influenced by the ostentatious lifestyles of some women on social media, attracting more approval in terms of likes and reactions. They were forced to enquire and discovered that some had male sponsors behind the scenes, who fund the ostentatious lifestyle they see online. The males were sex-mates.

I had this friend I so envied on social media. She changes her hair, her nails, her clothes, all the time. So, I decided to do a follow-up and pleaded with her to carry me along. She later opened up to me about her sex-mate who takes care of her. He is married [...] The rest is history [...] **[Student, 21 years, Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Imo]**.

Economic Status of Parents

The poor economic status of the parents was found to be a driver. The quote below captures several similar quotes we got:

A student in my class had this ‘sugar daddy’ [an older adult rich male she sexually satisfies for money], who was providing her school fees and other needs. The man even gives her money to take home to her parents. She is a very decent girl and I do not think if her parents were rich she will have a sugar daddy. Poverty in her home drove her into TS [**Student, 27 years, Ebonyi State University**].

Quest for Luxury and Better Grades

An opulent lifestyle is an attraction to TS and equally sustains those who are already in it. The want for expensive pieces of jewelry, mobile phones, designer wears, and even cars were listed as factors sustaining TS and attracting participation. Sometimes, TS female participants are from financially stable homes, but they seem to want more than they are given by their parents. The testimonies below illustrate this:

I know two of my hostel mates that engage in TS. They are sisters. The day their parents came to visit them, we were all shocked because their parents are just okay and not poor at all. One of them had to remove the dress she was wearing to put on another one so that her parents would not see it [**Student, 20 years, University of Nigeria, Enugu**].

Of course, it is normal for ladies to always want to outshine their fellow ladies in the kind of wigs they wear, that they use iPhones or Apple laptops, that they have more money or even use a car [...] We are students and cannot just afford these items all the time. No doubt that there are girls with rich parents. But they are not so much. We know those whose sex-mates are rich and help them with these items and money, so they keep up with the game [**Student, 25 years, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Anambra**].

Finally, some of the respondents also noted that the girls sleep with willing male lecturers to get enhanced grades because they are not ready to study. This does not mean to underplay the fact that male staff in tertiary institutions solicit and coerce female students into sexual affairs with them. Just that the focus of our study barely captures the latter experience.

Some girls do not want to get C or D, they want A or B, and so, they go look for lecturers who are willing and will sleep with them to make the grades they do not deserve. Some of them are so desperate to make any grade other than failure, and it is achieved through offering sex. And usually, it seems to be those ‘runs’ girls (those in TS already) who do these more, because they barely have time to study well [**Student, 26 years, Ebonyi State University**].

Knowledge of Health Risks Associated with Transactional Sex

The associated health risks with TS did not elude the respondents. Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), as well as some psychological dysfunctions, were highlighted by respondents. The issue of self-medication, abortion, and consumption of harmful substances were also mentioned by the respondents. The quotes below reveal further:

You know that the relationship is usually not balanced. One person is funding and the other is there to offer sex. The one who is paying can force you into highly unprotected sex, and you just have to comply. That is why most of the girls tend to have one disease or the other, and some get pregnant, forcing them into several abortions [**Student, 24 years, Abia State University**].

The girls I know that engage in TS do self-medication. Most of the time, they recommend these medications among themselves without consulting any health professional. They do so to cover up their health status and activities and not to raise any suspicion. Some of them also take a lot of herbal drugs prescribed by their friends and even their sex-partners [**Student, 27 years, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Anambra**].

Just recently, a girl in my hostel who I suspect to be involved in this TS was bleeding excessively. We were all scared, so we rushed her to the medical centre. That was when we were told that she attempted abortion. I felt pity for her because she would have died if we had not intervened [**Student, 22 years, University of Nigeria, Enugu**].

Discussion of Findings

Safe sexual practices are topical in global health, given the implications they have on morbidity and mortality (Nunu et al, 2020). However, the need to practice safety in sexual indulgence should take into consideration the factors that could make persons vulnerable. Our study has shown that a kind of sexual practice that increases the vulnerability of women is transactional sex. While we recognize that sexual choices could be premised on the right to self-determination, we equally note that sexual choices could be a result of frustrating conditions that are avoidable. We are concerned about these conditions that make female students more vulnerable to TS, especially given the associated risks that demean their rights, freedom, and safety. In this study, we interviewed 40 female students from five universities in the southeastern part of Nigeria, seeking to understand the drivers of transactional sex, and where necessary, the solutions to these drivers.

Our findings suggested that the respondents largely blamed external factors for indulging in TS. Some of which include, parental and family pressure, parental disconnectedness, peer influence, poor economy, the quest for ostentatious lifestyles, earning good grades, and social media. We discovered that these factors tend to overlap and are somewhat interconnected. For instance, a parent refusing to pay attention to the needs of the daughter would mean that the daughter gets exposed to peers and might in that process meet peers who are involved in TS, hence getting initiated. Same girl who is experiencing parental neglect or facing some kind of family

pressure as a result of the poor economy might consider TS as a bailout option. And one that performs academically might either offer sex to a willing male academic staff for good grade or coerced into sexual affair by the male staff who wants to take advantage of her weak academic performance. The interconnectedness of these factors is barely explored in literature, as most studies tend to treat each of the factors in isolation. Nevertheless, studies by Masvawure (2010) and Shefer et al (2012) attempt to establish the interconnectedness of factors influencing TS involvement. This case of the interconnectedness of the drivers of TS aligns with the proposition of the intersectionality theory, which argues that vulnerability is an outcome of the interaction of several factors, and such interaction should be considered when proposing solutions (Crenshaw, 1989).

Remedies to TS will have to ensure that they are tailored to address such interconnectedness and not each of the drivers in isolation. For instance, a school that is aimed at ensuring that male lecturers stand their grounds against preying on lazy female students for the exchange of sex for marks will have to ensure female students are counselled properly and offered conditions that can assist them economically. They might also take into consideration the need to reach out to parents to remind them of their parental responsibilities to their children. Such an eclectic approach is recommended by our study to address TS and their drivers (Agwu et al, 2020). An eclectic approach to managing such social issues is akin to case management and mobilisation of resources, which are areas social workers should explore because they have the expertise. Findings also showed that the respondents acknowledged the conservative positions toward TS in Nigeria, especially when it is done outside marriage, let alone when it takes a seemingly face of being traded for something in return. This accounts for the reason respondents reported that some TS involvers that use designated social media platforms keep their identities in hiding by using disguised phone numbers or refuse to disclose their real names until they physically meet with the sex solicitor. Some who get infected or have a reason to take any medication subscribe to self-medication because visiting a health facility could disclose the source of their ailments or health condition to the parents or public. The fact that TS is done in hiding in countries with conservative cultural practices is disclosed in previous studies (Alobo & Ndifon, 2014; Amo-Adjei et al, 2014; Dingeta et al, 2012). Thus, social workers who are faced with such cases in climes like Nigeria should realise that it is expected that the involvers would never be fast to expose themselves, especially when in troubling situations. There is, therefore, the need to probe harder, using several questioning skills and at same time be friendly and non-judgmental enough to get the client into relaxing and talking. We applied these skills during the interviews, which caused some respondents to acknowledge that they were active TS participants and gave reasons for involvement.

The vulnerability of the female students was deepened as a result of the imbalanced relationship they had with the sex-mates. In the sense that there was one who financed the relationship, and the other that “sexed” it. Usually, the women were found in the category of the latter. As a result, we discovered that they experienced high chances of risk of sexual violence and sexually transmitted infections. Some had to resort to taking sedating and/or intoxicating substances so they could either deal with the shocks from the sexual relationship or match the hard-sexual encounters they got. They seem to have lost their voices in the process, typical of “he who pays the piper dictates the tune” (Okoli et al, 2017; Olaore & Agwu, 2020). It portends a case of oppression in TS relationships and should be a viable research interest. We recommend that social workers should take note of ongoing oppression in TS relationships and should use such lessons as instructions to women in certain conservative climes to possibly abstain or help those who have refused to abstain to even the rights between them and their sex-mates. Again, the social

worker who is expectedly skilled in mobilising resources should make efforts to connect the right professionals to help the victim in terms of medical, psychological, and security concerns. Notwithstanding, we had findings that show that not all TS amounted to exploitation and rights abuse.

On a broader scale, as a way to scale up interventions to address the unpalatable consequences of TS, there is the need for social workers to discuss these concerns and their drivers with university authorities. That way, the authorities will recognize TS as a challenge faced by the female students and should intensify their supply of social services to them. There is generally a disservice to the social service professions. For instance, social work is yet to gain a professional status in Nigeria (Agwu et al, 2020; Nnama-Okechukwu et al, 2020). However, this has not placed on hold the employment of social workers, particularly within the health setting (Onalu et al, 2020). Universities can see to it that social workers among other relevant professionals are employed to man their centres that dispense social welfare services, and those that do not have such centres should begin to establish them. This would offer social workers the capacity to engage students on issues bothering around TS, through counselling, behaviour modification, and advocacy for financial scholarships or subsidisation of school expenses for undergraduates, public enlightenment, and evidence-based sensitization activities. The dearth of available policies and programmes to address vulnerabilities and their consequences is also a key explanation made in the intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989).

Also, victims of TS can be helped by social workers through rehabilitation. This could be through group-therapy (Feeney & Collins, 2015), where victims under strict ethical compliance could meet, share and learn from their TS experiences if they so wish to quit (Beckes & Coan, 2011). It is important that social workers, while working with victims of TS, make efforts in understanding the influence of their parents (Oseni & Odewale, 2017). This would determine if the parents should be involved in the treatment process.

Conclusion

This study's aim is not to condemn TS given that people have rights to sexual choices. We only discussed TS in the light of avoidable conditions that lure female students into indulging the act, sometimes against their will. We went ahead to consider possible solutions to the drivers, citing some indispensable roles for social service professionals, particularly, social workers. Our study has shown that there are indeed victims of TS, as well as those who are involved in TS without being victims. The former feel that their rights are threatened by the TS partner, while the latter consider their TS partners as fair, and perhaps, caring. Some equally consider TS as a fun activity, as theirs are not necessarily driven by any difficult condition. Notwithstanding how various persons related with TS, the respondents still felt that TS was an activity the Nigerian society frowned at, and there is some sort of stigma associated with it. Among university students, the subject of TS is treated lightly, as evidenced by poor social services in these institutions. Therefore, an important step to tackle TS is to intensify social services through several psychosocial professionals like social workers. On the other hand, we discovered that all TS relationships as narrated in our study were structured across the male-female dichotomy (though we accept that gender is not binary). We had no mention of same-sex TS, and this could allude to the conservative culture that is operational in Nigeria.

Finally, a limitation of this study is that it tends to consider TS from a female perspective. It will make sense to do the same study from the male perspective to gain a balanced view. Another limitation is that the study is restricted to just a geopolitical zone in Nigeria and does not take into

consideration other kinds of tertiary learning, such as Colleges of Education and Polytechnics. Expanding the study to these unreached areas will help lend more justification to the findings that are presented here.

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