



The Conceptualisation of Oloso in Alimoso, Lagos, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the activities of Oloso, that is, prostitutes or commercial sex workers in Alimoso area of Lagos State, Nigeria. The research aims to investigate the classification of oloso, and their mode of operation. It also discussed the sociological factors that influenced ladies and women into oloso and the patterns and trends of behavioural changes among them as well as health implications associated with such trade. Indeed, oloso is among the major social problems in Nigeria and other countries of the world due to its moral and health implications. In all Twenty Five (25) informants were selected through purposive sampling technique. The informants include individuals that were willing to answer the research questions from personal experiences. The findings of the research revealed the various classes of oloso, their mode of operation, sociocultural factors, common behavioural traits and health implications that are common to them. Peer pressure, poverty, parental negligence and high libido are among the notable factors that influenced ladies and young women to indulge in such practices. From the foregoing, it is recommended that the government, corporate and religious organisations among others should embark on aggressive programmes such as comprehensive sex education, economic empowerment programs, parental and community engagement, mental health support services, health services and safe practices education, social media monitoring and regulation, support networks and rehabilitation and strengthening legal framework and law enforcement. Also, the government should enact and enforce laws that regulate the conduct of olosos. This will help to sanitise and regulate the trade, especially the high rate of girl-child/under age prostitution in the country

INTRODUCTION

Ethnologically, the word "Oloso" is of Yoruba origin. Yoruba is the primary language of the Yoruba ethnic group of South-West, Nigeria and is also spoken in some parts of West Africa. Among the Yoruba, "Oloso" refers to a prostitute or commercial sex worker. Over the years, the term oloso has gained currency in Nigerian Pidgin English, a peculiar form of English language spoken by Nigerians and some other West African countries such as Ghana, Sierra Leone among others. Thus, in Nigeria, colloquially, olosho denotes a person or individuals, especially young female adults and teenagers that are involved in the sex trade, that is, commercial sex workers.

Historically, prior to the advent of civilisation, prostitution was a common trade in most ancient societies such as Rome, Athens, Israel among others. For example, there are a number of references to prostitution in the Hebrew Bible. The biblical story of Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38:14-26) provides a depiction of prostitution being practiced in that period. In this story, the prostitute waits at the side of a highway for travelers. She covers her face in order to identify herself as a prostitute. Instead of being paid in money, she asks for a kid goat and water. This would have been the equivalent of a high price and it shows that it was mostly wealthy owners of numerous herds that could afford to pay for the services of a prostitute. The practice was that if the customer does not have his cattle with him, he must deposit valuable items such as staff, seal, etc to the woman as a deposit until a kid goat is delivered to her.

The origins of prostitution can be traced to various historical periods. For example in the book, "The Oldest Profession: A History of Prostitution" Maggy Anthony (1973), offers a compelling narrative that illuminates the rich tapestry of prostitution throughout history. The roots of prostitution could be traced to civilisations such as Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome, where it often had religious significance and served as an integral part of societal norms and practices. In these early societies, prostitution often held religious significance and was intertwined with cultural practices and beliefs. In most ancient societies sacred prostitutes revered as embodiments of fertility and divine power, and courtesans served as companions and entertainers to the elite. During the Middle Ages and Renaissance periods, attitudes towards prostitution became more varied and complex. There were attempts to regulate and control the trade of prostitution by religious institutions, such as the Church, which sought to maintain moral order and regulate sexual behavior in the society. This period paved way for the emergence of brothels and red-light districts in urban centers, where prostitution flourished alongside other forms of vice and entertainment (Maggy Anthony - 1973). It can be said that in the modern world prostitution became firmly established due to the rise of industrialisation and capitalism in the society. In England, during the Victorian era, prostitution underwent significant changes as industrialisation and urbanisation transformed the society.

Thus, there were moral and social anxieties surrounding prostitution during this period, and efforts were made to regulate and reform the sex trade through legislation and social hygiene campaigns. The rise of philanthropic organisations and social reform movements aimed at rescuing and rehabilitating

prostitutes began to spring up during the era. In the modern era, prostitution has continued to evolve in response to shifting social norms, economic pressures, and technological advancements. There is a rise in globalisation of the sex trade, online solicitation, and debates over its legalisation, regulation, and abolition, (Maggy Anthony, 1973).

In Nigeria, prostitution began to gain tacit official recognition during the colonial era. Nigeria was under British colonial rule from 1914 until 1960. The presence of the British and other Europeans was hardly invisible and they influenced both the creation of modern Oloso (prostitution) in Nigeria and the stigma that comes with it. One of the things that the British brought to Lagos, Nigeria was the cash economy which made the prostitution business possible. Beginning in the early 1900s, the strategic economic importance of Lagos as a seaport and capital city changed the political and economic landscape of the city and contributed to the arrival of Nigerians from the hinterland. (Aderinto, Saheed (2012). "Of Gender

Race, and Class: The Politics of Prostitution in Lagos, Nigeria, 1923-1954"). The demographic and commercial changes also expanded to commoditisation of sex and by 1910, commercial sex services had become prevalent. Aderinto posits that "hawking" which is a slang word for prostitution, was possible in major cities in Nigeria like Lagos, where the population jumped rapidly from 5,000 inhabitants to a quarter of a million in over a century. The idea is that poverty increased with the population which encouraged the entrance of children in the work force; resulting in young/teenage girls working as "hawkers"(Aderinto, Saheed (2012). "Of gender, race, and class". *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*. 33 (3): 71–92.).

Response of the Colonial Government and Women Organisations to Prostitution in Lagos

In colonial Nigeria, official response to the activities of commercial sex workers can be traced to 1916. At the beginning of 1916, the colonial government enacted a law prohibiting solicitation by women but the law did not define prostitution. The law was implemented discretionarily by the government and commercial sex trade was tolerated as long it did not lead to public nuisance. In a country was steeped with strong religious and traditional moralist sentiment, prostitution was not tolerated especially by women in the community. In 1923, the Lagos Women League, an elite women organisation wrote a petition to the police chief seeking the cancellation of restrictions placed on the recruitment of women as police officers. The petition was written partly to curb a rise in prostitution and also the patronage of prostitutes by male officers. They also asked the government to step into the situation in Lagos as they claimed it was becoming the "headquarters" of prostitution.(Aderinto, Saheed (2011).

In response, Secretary Donald Cameron remarked that the Colony of Lagos police was taking care of any prostitute who had caused any sort of disruption to the public. The elite women organisation wanted actual policy and continued to petition the government to do something about the prostitutes. Specifically, they requested for the relocation of the prostitutes back to their home countries as many of them were not Nigerians. (Aderinto, Saheed (2012). Public opinion was also critical of the sex trade linking it with juvenile delinquency. In

1932, Tijani Omoyele, a musician released an album, "Asewo/Omo Jaguda" (prostitutes /criminals). By the 1930s, prostitutes were linked with notorious delinquent' groups like the Jagudas and Boma boys in Lagos and they were beginning to be called Ashewo or people who change money into lower denominations. During the pre-World War II period commercial sex workers solicited clients in brothels, cinemas, hotels and bars in the Lagos Island districts of Broad Street, Breadfruit, Labinjo, Martins, Porto Novo Market- and Taiwo (Aderinto 2014, p. 57.). In Lagos, commercial sex was majorly practiced by non-Lagos natives and they were called different names such as Ashewo (Yoruba), Karuwaci (Hausa), Akwunakwuna (Igbo) and Asape. (Aderinto 2014, p. 54).

It should be pointed out that another name that was commonly used as a reference to prostitutes in Lagos, was "Akunakuna" which was the name of a towns name in Ogoja, where most prostitutes are believed to have come from when the first transnational prostitution occurred around 1938. According to Aderinto, thousands of prostitutes were believed to have brought in 2,000 pounds in a month (Aderinto, Saheed, 2011). Many of the workers sometimes returned to their native land with enough money to earn the wrath of men who were not used to women being wealthier than them.

The efforts made by Lagos Women League were not enough to cause actual change in the prostitution business, actual policing did not occur until 1940s. After the onset of World War II, British officials became apprehensive about any link between high venereal disease rates in West African Frontier Force soldiers and promiscuous sexual affairs with prostitutes. This was backed up by the fact that in 1942 there were 43.2% Venereal diseases (VD) contractions in West Asian Football Federation (WAFF); it was reported that these numbers of contraction were higher than those of malaria and any other inflections.

As the rate of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) increased, so was the panic about contracting it also a nightmare among prostitutes and their patrons. Soon there were rumors that African gonorrhoea had a higher death rate than any other kind. During this period, forced prostitution of teenagers was becoming common as well. In 1943, it was reported that a Nigerian born child prostitute named Lady was killed by her older handler, Mary Eyeamevber Eforghere of Warri Province, Nigeria, for refusing to have sex with a European sailor. (Aderinto, Saheed (2015). The combination of the fear of venereal diseases, child prostitution and controlling juvenile delinquency created a new impetus to prohibit prostitution in Lagos. In 1941, an anti-vice squad was formed to prosecute offenders based on two newly created laws, the Unlicensed Guide (Prohibition) Ordinance and the Venereal Disease Ordinance. The former was also known informally as the loitering law which was designed to limit the link between foreign sex tourists and prostitutes. The law required tour guards to obtain license guards in order to perform their work. The law targeted both young delinquents who were considered as pimps and the prostitutes. (Aderinto 2014, p. 119.) In addition, prostitutes who loiter on the street and make advances towards tourists were arrested by the anti-vice squad. In 1942, a hostel was built to rehabilitate child prostitutes in Lagos and a year later, the Children and Young Persons Ordinance was passed prohibiting child prostitution. The colonial

government also established a welfare and social services department to manage the hostel and rehabilitation of child prostitutes.

By 1946, a set of law was enacted that clearly defined prostitution and its prohibition. (Aderinto 2014, p. 121.). In Southern Nigeria, the activities of pimps or madams, underage prostitution and the operation or ownership of brothels are penalised under sections 223, 224, and 225 of the Nigerian Criminal Code.[Criminal penal code Retrieved 31 October 2016.] Even though Nigerian law does not legalise commercial sex work, it is vague if such work is performed by an independent individual who operates on his or her own accord without the use of pimps or a brothel.(Sessou, Eburn, 15 October 2011, Vanguard, Lagos).

Concentration and location of Commercial Sex Workers

There are certain areas oloso activities are concentrated, popularly known as "Red District" or "Red-Light District" which refers to a specific area within a city or town where activities related to the sex trade are concentrated. These districts are typically known for legalised or tolerated sex work, adult entertainment, and related businesses. Red-light districts are often characterised by the presence of brothels, strip clubs, adult theaters, sex shops, and other establishments that cater to adult entertainment.

Key Features of a Red-Light District:

- a. **Sex Work:** The primary activity in a red-light district involves the sale of sexual services. In some areas, this is legal and regulated, while in others, it might operate in a legal gray area or be officially illegal but unofficially tolerated.
- b. **Adult Entertainment:** These areas often have a high concentration of adult entertainment venues, including strip clubs, peep shows, and adult movie theaters.
- c. **Tourist Attraction:** In some cities, red-light districts are also tourist attractions. Visitors may be drawn to these areas out of curiosity or to experience the local culture and nightlife.
- d. **Regulation and Safety:** In places where sex work is legalised, red-light districts may be regulated by the government to ensure the safety and health of workers and patrons. This can include mandatory health checks for workers, strict zoning laws, and law enforcement presence.

Some red-light districts have historical or cultural significance and may reflect the social and economic history of a city.

In Nigeria, there are no officially designated "red-light districts" as seen in some other countries, largely due to legal and cultural reasons. However, there are areas in some Nigerian cities that are informally known for activities related to the sex trade, nightlife, and adult entertainment. These areas often have a concentration of hotels, bars, and nightclubs where such activities might occur, albeit discreetly due to the illegal status of sex work in Nigeria.

Some Red Light Districts in Nigeria include:

1. Allen Avenue (Ikeja, Lagos)

Overview: Allen Avenue in Ikeja, Lagos, is well-known for its vibrant nightlife, with numerous bars, clubs, and hotels. The area is often associated with nightlife and adult entertainment, where informal sex work might take place, especially at night.

2. Opebi (Ikeja, Lagos)

Overview: Opebi, also in Ikeja, is another area that is known for its lively nightlife and entertainment venues. The presence of nightclubs, bars, and hotels has made it a hotspot for various nighttime activities, including informal adult services.

3. Ajegunle (Lagos)

Overview: Ajegunle, a densely populated area in Lagos, and is sometimes associated with informal sex work and adult entertainment. The area is known for its nightlife, with various spots where such activities might occur discreetly.

4. Yaba (Lagos)

Overview: Yaba, known for being a hub of youth culture and tech innovation, also has areas where nightlife is prominent. Some parts of Yaba are known for bars and clubs where adult entertainment and informal sex work may occur.

5. Ojuelegbe (Lagos)

Overview: a very busy commercial hub in the heart of Lagos Mainland which housed many club houses including the 42nd Avenue known for playing Fela Anikulapo's music in the 80s and early 90s. The many clubs found in the areas also attracted many prostitutes to the area. The patronage was quite high as it also served as gateway to Ayilara Street, another notorious area for night life and adult entertainment.

6. Sabongari (Kano)

Overview: Sabongari in Kano is a mixed-ethnicity district known for its vibrant nightlife. It is one of the few places in Northern Nigeria where alcohol is sold, which attracts nightlife and, by extension, informal sex work, despite the conservative cultural context of the city.

7. Oil Mill (Port Harcourt, Rivers State)

Overview: Oil Mill in Port Harcourt is another area that has been associated with nightlife and adult entertainment. The presence of hotels, bars, and nightclubs has led to a reputation for nighttime activities, including sex work.

8. Garki (Abuja)

Overview: In Abuja, some parts of Garki are known for nightlife and informal adult activities. Hotels and clubs in this area may host such activities, although it remains unofficial and discreet due to the legal implications.

9. Nyanya (Abuja)

Overview: Nyanya, located on the outskirts of Abuja, is another area known for a concentration of nightlife and informal adult services. It has a mix of hotels and bars where these activities might occur.

LITERATURE RIVIEW

The proliferation of brothels and hotels for sex workers in most urban centers is not only noticeable but also the increasing number of sex workers rings in the continent is palpable (Adesina, 2001 cited in Ogunkan, Omoruan and Fawole, 2010). It is so prominent that Nigerians refer to it as "Italian connection," "Sex working" "Ashawo business" etc. Harcourt and Donovan (2005) undertook a review of 681 articles on prostitution from 1996-2004 to identify the dimensions of prostitution and the social context in which it occurs. They however noticed that every country and every region have a different composition to its sex industry; and this is shaped by history, social and economic factors, legal frame work and policing practices. About 25 types, forms and dimensions of sex work were identified by them and grouped into direct and indirect.

The Direct Dimension of Commercial Sex Workers Consists of the Following

1. **Street Prostitution:** Here clients are solicited on the street, parks or other public places, and services rendered in street corners, vehicles, or short stay premises.
2. **Brothel:** Client get in touch with sex workers who stay in brothel on
3. **Escort:** Client contacts sex workers by phone or via hotel staff.
4. **Private:** Similar to escort, except services provided in sex worker's premises.
5. **Window or Doorways:** Brothels with sex workers on public display.
6. **Club, Public Bar, and Dance Hall:** Clients solicited in alcohol vending venues and serviced on site or elsewhere.
7. **Other all Male Venue:** Clients solicited in all-male venues such as barber shops, bathhouses and mining camps
8. **Door Knock or Hotel:** Unattached males are approached in their hotel rooms or boarding houses.
9. **Transport (Ship, Truck, Train):** Sex workers may board vehicles to service the crew or passenger or pick up clients at stations and terminals.
10. **Citizen Band (CB) Radio:** Sex workers drive along highways using CB radio to exchange (jargon) messages with potential truck driver as clients. Services at truck or parking areas.
11. **Others:** through various media including notice boards, newspaper advertisements, Sex worker catalogues with mobile phone numbers and the internet via virtual brothels etc. (Harcourt and Donovan, 2005).

The Indirect Forms Include

1. **Lab Dancing:** A recent development involving erotic dancing at close quarters without sexual contact.
2. **Massage Parlor:** Premises ostensibly dedicated to providing massage, but a range of sexual services may be provided.
3. **Travelling Entertainers:** actors-dancers and others involved in entertainment may also provide sexual services.
4. **Beer Girls:** young women hired by major companies to promote and sell products in bars and clubs and in turn render sexual services to supplement income.
5. **Street Vendor and Traders:** Ostensibly marketing rural produce or other goods but supplementing income with income from sexual services.

6. **Opportunistic:** A person approached in a social event may occasionally choose to charge for sexual favours if the client appears wealthy enough.
7. **Individual Arrangement:** The single mother or divorced that may have sex with her landlord in place of rent.
8. **Swingers Clubs:** Some swingers sex clubs may employ (undisclosed) sex workers if there is a shortage of female guests.
9. **Geisha:** Woman engaged primarily to provide social company, but sex may ensue (Harcourt and Donovan, 2005).

According to Clinard (1968: 377) prostitutes are generally classified into four (4) types. The first type of prostitutes and the lowest in status are the 'street-walkers' who solicit for customers in the streets and public places. Often they are arrested by law enforcement agents; however the most usual penalty is fine. The second categories are those who reside in brothels which could be low - class hotels or houses located in slum area. The manager of brothel collects fees which amount to a substantial part of the prostitute's earnings as rent and money for protection from the law enforcement agents. The third type is the 'call girl' who resides in rented apartment but generally known in many of the high class hotels in town especially by the waiters and receptionists. These hotel workers put visitors and lodgers in touch with such girls. The sexual act takes place either in the hotel room of the visitor or lodger or in the girl's apartment.

The fourth category is the upper class independent professional prostitute. Usually she resides in a well furnished apartment in one of the most respectable residential areas in town. Most often customers are referred to her through former customers who are often highly placed members of the society. High class visitors to cities like Lagos, Abuja, Kano, Ibadan and Enugu just to mention a few attending conferences or other meetings are likely to go to such prostitutes since their mode of operation tends to give the customers some level of anonymity.

In addition to these types of prostitutes, Abdullahi (1996:5) identified another feature of prostitution in Nigeria involving female students in tertiary institutions. Campus prostitution takes various dimensions ranging from amorous relationship between the female students and their boyfriends to outright extra-campus prostitution which is a common sight in our big cities and towns. There are some female students who actually compete with the regular prostitutes. They dress to the hilt and go out in the night to line up along the streets looking for customers. Sometimes girls are hired to attend parties and functions where they are paid for services rendered including sex. There are other female students who do not operate in the vicinity of their campuses. They travel out either single or in groups to engage in commercial sex activities and return to their campuses with huge sums of money and with flashy clothes and jewelries. Lastly, some female students trade sex for marks just like some male students pay for mark

Runs girls in Nigeria – Nowadays, it is common to find some set of ladies in neighbourhoods and on the street that are discreetly into prostitution. They come in different 'sizes' and 'packages' and some of them are easy to get while others are not depending on the approach and packaging of the prospective client (Deedee Detola 2018).

Ashomu

Ashomu's are not too difficult to have deals and connections with. They are those girls that are tagged as 'slay queens' in the neighbourhood. Their customers do not need to spend too much on them in order to have sex with them. 'Ashomus' are not hard to identify. They are mostly the regular fine girls you see on the street, on campus, and other not too special places (Deedee Detola 2018). Ashawo (Point and kill)

This class of prostitutes operates in various areas in Lagos, especially, Ipodo area in Ikeja. They are generally called 'bend down select' which means just standby and choose your spec. They are random ladies and the only language they understand is money. At an agreed fee, an Ashawo is good to go. When contacted they may pass the night with their client, and the next day everyone goes back to his/her business like nothing ever happened, (Detola Deedee, 2018), Olosho (Runs Girl)

In the hierarchical order of prostitutes in Lagos, Olosho is the highest in ranking. They operate in not too obvious ways. They leave doubt in the mind of people as to what they really do for a living. Many people refer to some ladies whom they presume their ways are not pure or transparent enough as oloso. Their fee ranges from about five hundred thousand naira to two million naira upward. The 'olosos' are also not that difficult to spot. But the best way to know them is that they do not have a meaningful job, yet they live large, drive big cars and live in sophisticated houses or estates and they do not hesitate to show off their opulence (Deedee Detola 2018).

Socio-Cultural Factors that Shape and Influence the Rise of Prostitution

It is a known fact that prostitution has been on the increase in Nigeria in modern times. The rise in prostitution is partly traced to high levels of unemployment and poverty (Olofinbiyi et al., 2019). The breakdown of social norms and insurgency in some parts of the country also contributes to a rise in such practices. Sangar et al (2015) stated that sex work is seen as a form of labour which students' can exploit for material gain because of their attributes in terms of sexuality, looks, skills, personality and attitude. Moreover, people, mostly young females in other vulnerable or precarious situations such as drug or alcohol addiction, abusive relationships, homelessness, unemployment etc, may engage in prostitution for survival, experimental and/or lifestyle purposes (Sangar et al 2015). Broadly speaking, the major factors that shape and influence the rise in prostitution include:

1. Illiteracy and Poverty

The high rate of illiteracy in Nigeria shows that many parents and youths can neither read nor write. Thus, many uneducated and poor young ladies are easily deceived that in big cities, milk and honey flows through other means such as prostitution (Ewah, 2010). The first rationalisation for the proliferation of prostitution has been poverty, especially if the lady comes from a poor background. Young ladies whose parents are incapable of taking care of their siblings tend to go into such venture (sex work) so as to make ends meet and take care of their family. Aloba and Ndifon (2014) noted that poverty is one of the major reasons for the rise in prostitution.

Also, prevailing economic situation in the country is one of the causes of rise in prostitution. Many families can barely feed themselves. Given such situation, many teenage and young adults are left to fend for themselves. Such precarious situations render some of them vulnerable to prostitution. They see it as an escape route from poverty since all they need to do is to spend a night (or few nights) with a man and get paid, (Detola deede 2018). Otengwo (2002), also observed that many ladies engage in prostitution just for the sake of money and they have numerous ways of seducing their targets.

2. Unemployment

Unemployment is another major factor why most young ladies engage in prostitution (Onah, 2000). Due to lack of job opportunities, many young ladies resort to prostitution for survival. Onah, (2000) noted that unemployment has pushed many young ladies into prostitution against their wish.

3. Imitation

Imitation of any bad trait is bad on its own, and it is very easy to fall into the trap of peer pressure. Some ladies from an average family that crave for luxuries their parents cannot afford often resort to prostitution.

This is common among many female undergraduates who see their mates driving big cars, live in well-furnished apartments off campus, use the latest phones, and are connected to people of affluence. Some of them feel intimidated and desire such lifestyle at all cost, (Detola deede 2018).

4. Fun

Some ladies especially those who fall under the 'Oloso' category do it, just for the fun of it. They feel that life is not too harsh and has to be lived to the fullest. They do not want to live a life whereby they would regret not 'exploring' enough at their youth age (Detola deede 2018).

Patterns and Trends

Ikpe, (2000) posits that, commercial sex has become a lucrative business in Nigeria especially among the youths. Onah, (2000) also observed that about 31 percent of sex workers are students particularly in Nigerian institutions. In the same way Hauwa Usman (2016) identified what can be regarded as common patterns of oloso business. Youth is a very essential factor and many oloso (prostitutes) not only in Lagos but in other states are generally aged between 17 and 25 although some can be older, single girls constitutes the largest proportion of prostitutes. However, some are widows, divorced or separated from their husbands. Prostitutes are highly mobile moving from one town to the other.

Through associations, they develop attitudes and behavioural patterns which become part of their conduct in the society. It should be noted however, that western trends and patterns of prostitution are essentially different from prostitution in Nigeria. Prostitution in the cities of Africa like Lagos and other states and many less developed countries does not carry with it as much of the stigma associated with this profession in the more developed countries. The African prostitute has not become susceptible to organisation along European lines and although she has been known to work for a procurer, this custom is not common. Prostitution generally is open and not less organised in Africa than it is in more developed countries. Moreover, the pimp or intermediary is probably less necessary (Clinard & Abbot, 1973)

Consequences of Prostitution

There is no action without consequences. For every act including prostitution there are repercussions.

The Consequences of Prostitution Include:

1. Physical Repercussions

The physical repercussion of prostitution is basically risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases such as staphylococcus, hepatitis B, gonorrhoea to HIV/AIDS. Any person that engages in unprotected sex with various individuals is prone to contracting sexually transmitted diseases. There is this popular notion that a woman that has slept with so many men tends to have very awful body odour (Deedee Detola 2018).

2. Emotional and Psychological Repercussion

From a religious point of view, sex is more than just a physical exercise. It connects the minds involved in it to a supernatural realm. This simply means that when an individual has sexual intercourse with someone, they both share a bond which is more than physical pleasure. (Detola deedee 2018). HIV among commercial sex workers in Nigeria is very high, yet surveys report very low levels of HIV-related risk perception among this group. In a recent survey among most-at-risk populations in six states in Nigeria, over half of sex workers did not consider themselves at risk of HIV infection (Federal Ministry of Health. HIV/STI integrated biological and behavioural surveillance survey 2007. Abuja, Nigeria: Federal Ministry of Health; 2007).

In Lagos state, which has the highest concentration of sex workers in Nigeria, only 16% of brothel-based sex workers felt they were at risk, even though each worker has an estimated average of 34 clients per week. Despite the high-risk nature of the trade, many sex workers that the chances of contracting HIV is minimal. (Messersmith LJ, Kane TT, Odebiyi AI, Adewuyi AA. Who's at risk? Men's STD experience and condom use in southwest Nigeria. *Stud Fam Plann.* 2000;31:203-216. (PubMed, Google Scholar).

3. The Legal Implication

There is a legal connection between all occupations and the laws of the state. In other words every occupational activity is carried out within the ambit of the law. In Nigeria, prostitution is considered an illegal occupational activity because it is not covered by the Nigerian labour laws. Some Northern States of Nigeria that practiced Islamic Penal Code has made prostitution illegal. Equally, in Southern Nigeria, the law considers underage prostitution and the operation or ownership of brothels illegal under section 223, 224 and 225 of the Nigerian Criminal Code. It is important to state that the Nigeria law does not legalise commercial sex work and it is vague if such work is performed by an independent individual who operates on his or her own accord with the use of pimps or brothels (Nigerian Criminal Code). It is therefore illegal to operate or render services as a prostitute or in whatever guise as a commercial sex worker. This proviso has made law enforcement agents to undertake periodic search of brothels and hot spots suspected to carry out such economic activities. Punishments of the offenders are diverse, ranging from fines to imprisonment.

4. The Moral and Religious Implications

Nigeria is a highly religious country. Chastity and self-control are the moral and cardinal principles of major religions in Nigeria. For instance, Christian religion forbids adultery and fornication (Exodus 20: 14, 1 Corinth 3: 16 and 1 Corinth 5:1-13). The consequences of prostitution are that it is sacrilegious, and God cannot dwell in bodies that have been defiled. By implication, it leads to a breakdown in relationship between the sex workers and God. The moral implication is that, it is a sin and the end result of sin is death. Any attempt to legalise sex trade in Nigeria would have faced serious criticisms from well-meaning religious leaders and organisation just the same way the attempt to introduce gay marriage suffered a decisive blow. Prostitution and homosexuality are seriously frowned at by the major religions in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Findings and Analysis

From the response of the key informants, the data was analyzed using thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke, thematic analysis is “a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data”. It’s a flexible approach that can be used with a variety of different types of data, such as interviews, focus groups, surveys, and field notes.

The findings include a thorough description of the data analysis methods that was adopted in the study and a detailed presentation of the results

Tabel 1

Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
19-21	6	24%
22-24	12	48%
25-27	6	24%
28-30	1	4%
Total		100%
Educational Qualification		
HND	1	4%
SSCE	12	48%
ND	1	4%
BSE	1	4%
Undergraduate	7	28%
SSCE (drop out)	2	8%

BSE (drop out)	1	4%
Total		100%
Ethnicity		
Igbo	10	40%
Yoruba	13	52%
Hausa	2	8%
Others	0	0%
Total		100%
Religion		
Islam	10	40%
Christianity	15	60%
Others	0	0%
Total		100%
Years of Service		
Less than a Year	0	0%
1-4	19	76%
5-8	7	28%
Above 8years	0	0%
Total		100%

Analysis of Socio Demographic Characteristic of Respondents

The table 4.1a represents the socio demographic of the informants in Lagos that were informant in the study. . The data shows that the majority of informant 12 out of 25 are within the age 22 to 24, within that age group. 6 informant are between the ages 19 to 21, 6 informant are between the age 25 to 27 and 1 informant between ages 28 to 30. This means that the majority of informant are young adult. Educational attainment among informant shows that 12 informant are SSCE holder, 1 informant is an HND holder, 1 informant is a ND holder, 1 informant is a BSE holder, 7 informant are an undergraduate, 2 informant are SSCE dropout and 1 BSE dropout. So, we can see that the majority of the informant are SSCE holder, with a smaller percentage of HND, ND, BSE, BSE drop out and SSCE drop out. That's splendid! Next, I'll look at the ethnicity of the informant, the data shows that 10 informant are Igbo which means they from the eastern part of Nigeria. There are 13 informant who Yoruba which means they

are from south western Nigeria and 2 informant are Hausa who are from northern part of Nigeria. This implies that majority of the informant are from Yoruba ethnic group, the next largest group is Igbo with 10 informant. In terms of religion shows that the majority of respondents, 15 out of 25, identify as Christian. The next largest group is Muslim, with 10 informants.

Thematic Analysis of Response from Informants

Thematic analysis of response from informants covers types of oloso; online/hookup oloso. Hotel oloso, road side, in call and outcall oloso, escort, street oloso, hook up and osho among others.

Contact Point: dating site, snapchat, referrals, linkup, posting seductive pictures, tiktok and videoclips of nude pictures. Different types of oloso in Lagos and how they conduct it include: online oloso/hookup; this is conducted using online via social media handles such as a snapchat, tiktok, X (formerly known as twitter), whatsapp, telegraph and facebook, by posting seductive pictures or videos to attract client.

Hotel olosos; are the ones that can be found in specific hotels, at times work for a pimp. The roadside olosos are categorized as those that stand at the road sides usually at night. Incall and outcall oloso: in call oloso is the type whereby the client goes over while the out call oloso is the opposite, the oloso goes to meet the client. Most time they come in contact through referrals from friends. Escort are the high class oloso, they don't necessarily needs to have sex with client, and they hang out most times with clients. Street oloso are the ones found on the street, they conduct business within their vicinity, more of the local oloso. Osho free are the ones that gives out sex willing without collecting money, they are the ones that carry out oloso activity for fun, they tend to have high libido, they can have sex with anyone so long they are satisfied.

According to one informant, the various types of olosho and their mode of operation is captured thus:

"We have different types such as; online oloso, street oloso, escort, in call and out call. How I conduct it: initially I go over to clients" place but now I do online service, I have girls I send to meet my clients. What I do now is just advertise, follow my rich client as an escort to clubs, event and vacation". (KII/CHRISTIAN/IGBO/26YEARS)

Another Informant Noted:

"The various types we have include: road side, online oloso, escort, street oloso and osho free. I conduct mine online, profile picture with mask on, the same thing with my status, I send nudes and sell video of me masturbating online to my clients" (KII/CHRISTIAN/YORUBA /21YEARS)

Socio Cultural Factor: Poverty, peer pressure, parental negligence, unemployment, high libido, ignorance and greed.

Poverty is the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions. It is one of the socio cultural factor that lead to involvement of young girls in oloso.

Peer pressure push girls into becoming an oloso, it is influence exerted by a group of individuals, typically of the same age or social status, to conform to certain behaviors, attitudes, or beliefs. This can lead to individuals engaging in activities they might not normally do, such as substance abuse or risky behaviors,

to fit in or gain acceptance. Parental negligence is also a significant factor that leads young girls into oloso, Inability of parents or guardians to provide adequate care, supervision, and support for their ward's physical, emotional, and psychological needs may expose them to peer pressure. This can lead to children feeling unloved, unsupported, and vulnerable to negative influences.

However, unemployment is another factor, the state of being without a job or stable income, leading to financial instability, reduced self-esteem, and increased stress. Prolonged unemployment can also lead to young girls to become an oloso.

In addition, high libido also contributes to the tendency of being an oloso. It is an intense or excessive desire for sexual activity, which can lead to impulsive decisions. High libido can be driven by various factors, including hormonal imbalance, emotional needs, or psychological issues.

Ignorance which is lack of knowledge, information, or understanding about a particular subject or issue is also an essential factor. Ignorance can lead to misconceptions, poor decision-making, and harmful behaviors, often due to a lack of education, exposure, or critical thinking.

Conclusively, greed which is an excessive desire for wealth, material possessions, or power, often beyond the capacity of a person is one of the root causes of prostitution. Greed can lead to any destructive behaviour which can be at the expense of one's health and cause harm to an individual, communities and society as a whole.

When asked about the socio cultural factor that led them into oloso informants responded thus:

"Poverty and peer pressure, I lost my parent when I was 2 years of age, I stayed with my uncle but he usually maltreat me. I moved out and decided to stay with friends who happen to be hookup girls, I had to survive so I started going out with them and that was how I started." (KII/ISLAM/YORUBA/20 YEARS).

Another Informant Response is Captured Below:

"Peer pressure and greed, my parent are trying their best but i need and want more. I wanted to live large and get designers stuff, upgrade my phone always. I told a friend about it in school, so she started linking me up with her friends and people." (KII/ISLAM/YORUBA/23YEARS).

Common Behaviours; materialism, mode of dressing, jealousy, competition and clubbing/partying;

Changes Over Time: use of social media and dating site, same sex as client, price, method of satisfaction and method of meeting client. Common behaviours among oloso includes: materialism; an excessive and insatiable love for money, wealth, and material possession. Mode of dressing; oloso tends to wear skimpy, revealing and seductive dresses so as to attract clients. Jealousy; oloso tends to be insecure, possessive, envy and desire to control the business. When another oloso attract rich and sophisticated client others tends to get jealous which brings about competition. They are also competitive; always having the desire to have the richest client. Additionally, partying is also a common behaviour among them because it is an avenue to meet more clients.

However, there has been some kind of changes over time in oloso operations. Among them is the use of social media and dating site to carry out their activities, meet and source for client, the popular one mostly use is the snapchat. Moreover, another changes over time is same sex as client, their client aren't majorly the males, on few occasion they encounter female client. Furthermore, the price paid to oloso has now increased, they are now paid handsomely. Their prices are not static, it is dynamic and prone to increasing as time goes on. Also method on satisfaction already change, satisfying clients now goes beyond sex, there are now other activities carried out to add spice to oloso work, such as blow jobs(oral sex), lap dance, anal sex etc. Conclusively, method of meeting client, it is now virtually at times where by oloso don't necessarily go over to satisfy clients. It can be done online through trade of nude pictures and nude videos, an oloso can satisfy her client through video call, all she have to do is caressing herself while moaning softly and the client watches her while masturbating.

When asked the common behaviour and changes over time in oloso trends in Lagos, an informant reported:

"Common behaviour is wearing revealing dress and changes over time is that it is not only sex we give our customers, there are other things we do aside sex. We lap dance, blow jobs and play with their genital organs. Now we have few female customers, personally i prefer them to male because it is easy and stress free with them."(KII/ISLAM/HAUSA/23YEARS).

Another Response:

"Common behaviour among us are love for money, likes partying and greed and common changes over time in oloso trend is now the use of social media and site online to carry out our activities."(KII/CHRISTIAN/YORUBA/22YEARS)

Health Implication: these include; sexually transmitted diseases (STD), Infections, complications from abortion (bleeding), bruises, fatigue and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Health implications among oloso in include: sexually transmitted diseases (STD); Examples of STDs include chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, and HIV. Sexually transmitted infection is another one similar to STD, but STI emphasizes the initial stage of infection, which may not have developed into a disease yet. STIs can be asymptomatic and may not necessarily lead to a disease. Futher more, bruises is another health implication; type of injury causing discoloration and swelling in the skin, usually due to blood leakage from damaged blood vessels. Bruises in oloso are often caused by physical abuse from pimper or client. Additionally, Fatigue is also a health implications which is a state of physical, mental, or emotional exhaustion, reducing a person's ability to function or perform daily activities, Fatigue can result from various factors, including stress from activities, some oloso do over work which tell on their health. Lastly, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); A psychological condition developing after experiencing a traumatic event, such as combat, abuse, or natural disasters. **PTSD symptoms include:** Flashbacks, Nightmares, Anxiety, Hyper vigilance,

Avoidance behaviors etc. Some oloso do experience such as a result of some traumatic experience

When asked about the health implication of their action, some informants noted:

“The health implication I encountered was infection, it happen on rare occasion because after having sex I do take drugs and go for checkups. There was a time I had to abort a pregnancy, I forgot to flush my system after an unprotected sex, I had complications after the abortion which led to bleeding but I went to the hospital. I stayed away from people that period, I became anxious and depressed.” (KII/ISLAM/YORUBA/25YEARS).

Another Response From an Informant:

“Infection, bruises around the vagina; some clients have a high libido and make out with pressure. Tiredness, bruises also from Bondage, Discipline, Sadism, Masochism (BDSM), at times I derive pleasure from receiving pains while satisfying clients”. (KII/CHRISTIAN/IGBO/22YEARSSource: Field Work, 2024.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings from the study provide a comprehensive socio-demographic profile of individuals involved in the "oloso" subculture in Lagos, along with an exploration of the types of "oloso" activities, socio-cultural factors influencing involvement, common behaviors, changes over time, and health implications. This section will discuss these findings in relation to existing literature and sociological theories.

The study's socio-demographic data reveal a predominant age range of 22 to 24 years among the informants, accounting for 48% of the total participants. This indicates that the majority of those involved in oloso activities in Alimoso in Lagos, are young adults, a finding consistent with existing literature that suggests young adults are more likely to engage in sex work due to factors such as economic hardship and the desire for financial independence (Chukwuma, 2019). The educational attainment of the informants further emphasizes this point, with the majority holding only a Secondary School Certificate (SSCE), which may limit their job prospects and push them toward informal and precarious employment like oloso activities. The ethnic distribution shows a dominance of Yoruba and Igbo informants, reflecting the ethnic composition of Lagos, where these two groups are prevalent. Religion-wise, a majority of the informants identify as Christian, followed by a significant Muslim population, indicating that oloso activities cut across religious divides despite the moral and cultural prohibitions against such practices in both religions.

The study identifies several types of oloso in Lagos, each with distinct operational methods. The types range from online oloso, who utilize social media platforms like Snapchat to attract clients, to street oloso, who operate locally within their immediate environments. This diversification of oloso activities reflects broader trends in the sex trade, where technology and globalization have expanded opportunities for sex workers to reach a wider clientele (Jones & Javier, 2021). The existence of in-call and out-call services, as well as high-class escorts,

indicates a stratification within the sex trade, where services are tailored to different clienteles based on socio-economic status.

The rise of osho free, who engage in sex without monetary compensation but for personal satisfaction, highlights a shift in the motivations behind sex work. This phenomenon might be linked to the normalization of casual sex in modern societies, particularly among younger generations (Smith, 2020). The various operational methods—ranging from referrals to the use of dating sites—also underscore the adaptability of oloso practices to changing societal norms and technological advancements.

The socio-cultural factors driving involvement in oloso activities in Lagos are primarily economic, with poverty being the most cited reason among informants. This aligns with studies that have shown poverty as a critical determinant of engagement in sex work, particularly in urban areas where the cost of living is high (Oluwaseun, 2018). Peer pressure and parental negligence are also significant factors, reflecting the role of social networks and familial environments in shaping individuals' life choices. The influence of unemployment, especially among the youth, further exacerbates the situation, as limited job opportunities push many towards oloso as a means of survival.

Interestingly, high libido is mentioned as a contributing factor, suggesting that for some, the decision to engage in oloso may also be driven by personal sexual desires. This aspect of the study introduces a complex layer to the understanding of oloso activities, where economic and psychological factors intersect.

Common behaviors among oloso in Lagos include materialism, competitive tendencies, and a particular mode of dressing aimed at attracting clients. These behaviors reflect broader societal values where material wealth and appearance play significant roles in determining social status (Miller, 2017). The study also notes significant changes in oloso trends over time, particularly the increased use of social media and dating sites for conducting business. This shift mirrors global trends where digital platforms have become crucial tools for sex work, allowing for greater anonymity and access to a broader client base (Levy & Jakobsson, 2014). The introduction of same-sex clients and the diversification of services provided—such as lap dances and BDSM—indicate a broader acceptance and normalization of diverse sexual practices within the oloso community. This evolution suggests that oloso activities are not static but are continuously adapting to meet the demands of a changing clientele.

The health implications associated with oloso activities in Lagos are significant and concerning. The prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) among informants underscores the health risks inherent in sex work, particularly when protection is not consistently used. This finding is consistent with global studies that have identified sex workers as a high-risk group for STDs and other health complications (World Health Organization, 2020). The study also highlights issues such as physical abuse, leading to bruises, fatigue, and even post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which reflect the dangerous and often violent conditions under which oloso operate.

These health challenges are exacerbated by the stigmatisation of sex work, which often prevents individuals from seeking necessary medical care and

support. The psychological toll, including PTSD, suggests that the mental health of those involved in oloso activities is a critical area that requires attention. The link between physical and psychological health in sex work is well-documented, with many workers experiencing trauma that can have long-lasting effects on their well-being (Farley, 2018).

Conclusively, the study provides a comprehensive look into the socio-demographic characteristics, types, socio-cultural factors, common behaviors, and health implications of oloso activities in Lagos. It reveals a complex interplay of economic, social, and psychological factors driving young individuals into sex work, with technology playing a significant role in how these activities are conducted today.

The thematic analysis of interviews conducted with "oloso" (sex workers) in Lagos, reveals a complex and multifaceted phenomenon shaped by socio-cultural, economic, and psychological factors. The study identifies various types of oloso, including online, hotel, roadside, street, and escort services, among others, each with distinct methods of operation. These activities are facilitated through social media, dating sites, referrals, and other digital platforms, indicating a significant shift in how sex work is conducted in the digital age.

Socio-cultural factors such as poverty, peer pressure, parental negligence, unemployment, high libido, ignorance, and greed emerge as primary motivators for individuals entering the oloso lifestyle. These factors highlight the intersection of economic hardship and social influence in driving young women into sex work. The narratives of informants reveal a poignant reality where survival, materialism, and a desire for a better life often outweigh the risks involved.

The analysis also sheds light on common behaviors among oloso, such as materialism, seductive dressing, jealousy, competitiveness, and a penchant for partying. These behaviors reflect the socio-economic pressures and desires that characterize the lives of many sex workers. Over time, there have been notable changes in the industry, including the increasing use of social media, the involvement of same-sex clients, rising prices, and the diversification of services beyond traditional sex work. These changes indicate a dynamic and evolving landscape, where oloso must adapt to new trends and demands to remain relevant. Health implications are a significant concern for oloso in Lagos, with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), infections, complications from abortions, bruises, fatigue, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) being common issues. The physical and psychological toll of sex work is evident in the experiences of the informants, who recount instances of infections, injuries, emotional trauma. Despite efforts to mitigate these risks through medical check-ups and self-care, the dangers associated with sex work remain ever-present.

In conclusion, the phenomenon of oloso in Lagos is deeply rooted in socio-cultural and economic factors that drive young women into this line of work. The evolution of sex work, particularly through digital platforms, reflects broader societal changes, while the health implications underscore the vulnerability and risks inherent in this lifestyle. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for addressing the underlying causes and providing support and interventions for those involved in sex work.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the Findings of the Research the Following Recommendations are Proposed:

1. Comprehensive Sex Education and Awareness Campaigns:

There is a critical need for comprehensive sex education that not only addresses the risks of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and infections but also promotes healthy relationships, consent, and self-respect. Awareness campaigns should be targeted at both young girls and boys, focusing on the dangers of unprotected sex, the importance of regular health check-ups, and the psychological effects of engaging in transactional sex.

2. Economic Empowerment Programs:

Poverty and unemployment are significant socio-cultural factors contributing to the involvement of young girls in "oloso" activities. Implementing economic empowerment programs, such as vocational training, microfinance opportunities, and entrepreneurial support, can provide alternative means of livelihood. This could help reduce the economic pressures that push young women into sex work.

3. Parental and Community Engagement:

Addressing parental negligence and the impact of peer pressure requires active involvement from both parents and the community. Programs that educate parents on the importance of providing emotional and psychological support to their children can help reduce the vulnerabilities that lead to risky behaviors. Community leaders should also be engaged to foster environments where young people feel valued and supported.

4. Mental Health Support Services

The analysis reveals that many oloso experience mental health challenges, including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and anxiety. Establishing accessible mental health support services, including counseling and therapy, can help these individuals cope with the psychological effects of their experiences. Support groups and helplines should also be made available for those who need immediate assistance.

5. Health Services and Safe Practices Education

Health implications, such as STDs, infections, and complications from abortion, highlight the need for improved access to healthcare services. Providing free or low-cost sexual health services, including testing, treatment, and contraception, can mitigate the health risks associated with oloso activities. Additionally, educating these individuals on safe practices and the importance of regular health check-ups can prevent severe health consequences.

6. Social Media Monitoring and Regulation

The increasing use of social media and dating sites to conduct oloso activities indicates a need for stronger monitoring and regulation of online platforms. Authorities should collaborate with tech companies to develop algorithms that detect and remove content related to sex work, and ensure that these platforms have reporting mechanisms for illegal activities. Simultaneously, educational campaigns on the responsible use of social media should be launched to inform users of the risks involved.

7. Support Networks and Rehabilitation Programs

Creating support networks and rehabilitation programs can help those involved in oloso transition to safer and more sustainable livelihoods. These programs should offer education, vocational training, and psychological support. They should also provide pathways for these individuals to reintegrate into society, free from stigma and discrimination.

8. Strengthening Legal Frameworks and Law Enforcement

Enhancing the legal frameworks that protect individuals from exploitation, abuse, and coercion in the context of sex work is crucial. Law enforcement agencies should be trained to approach cases involving oloso with sensitivity and a focus on protecting the rights of those involved. Additionally, stricter penalties should be imposed on pimps and clients who exploit vulnerable individuals.

By addressing the socio-cultural, economic, and health factors identified in this study, these recommendations aim to reduce the prevalence of oloso activities in Lagos, and improve the overall well-being of those affected

FURTHER STUDY

This research is still delayed, so it is necessary to conduct further research on the topic of The Conceptualisation of Oloso in Alimoso, Lagos, Nigeria to improve this research and add insight for readers

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