

# UTILIZATION OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN CURTAILING THE MENACE OF SEX WORKERS IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS IN OGUN STATE

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## **Abstract**

The study examined utilization of social work education in curtailing the menace of sex workers in higher institutions in Ogun State. This study employed descriptive survey research design where questionnaire was used to acquire necessary data for the research work. Population comprises of all higher institutions in Ogun State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select three higher institutions in which fifty (50) students were selected from the chosen higher institutions to make a total of one hundred and fifty (150) as sample for study. Three (3) research questions were raised and answered in this study. Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha. The result obtained in the administration was correlated, the reliability co-efficient is 0.62 which is reliable enough for this study. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentage, mean and standard deviation statistical tools. Findings revealed that as institutions continue to strive for a safer and more supportive environment within higher institution settings, the utilization of social work education stands as a critical pathway towards addressing the menace of sex work. Integrating social work education into campus programming and curriculum is essential for raising awareness and promoting alternatives to sex work within higher education settings. It is therefore recommended that curriculum planners should design and implement a comprehensive curriculum that incorporates social work perspectives and addresses topics related to sex work, gender inequality, poverty, and social justice. They should ensure that courses and workshops provide students with a holistic understanding of the complexities surrounding sex work.

**Keywords:** Curtailing, Utilization, Social work, Menace, Sex workers

## **Introduction**

Higher Institution, more commonly referred to as post-secondary education, refers to the third place of learning after graduating from high school or secondary school in the Nigerian context. Nigeria is one of the countries with many tertiary institutions in the world. These institutions include Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnic and Colleges of Education. Tertiary Institutions have come a long way, in building, guiding and growing intellectuals and reputable leaders who are equipped to drive the change and innovation required for economic growth and development through their intellectual prowess.

Sex work within higher institutions presents a complex and pressing social issue, characterized by its clandestine nature and multifaceted impact on individuals and communities. According to Lutnick (2019) sex work is the exchange of sexual services, performances, or products for material compensation. It includes activities of direct physical contact between buyers and sellers as well as indirect sexual stimulation (Weitzer, 2010). Sex work only refers to voluntary sexual transactions; thus, the term does not refer to human trafficking and other coerced or nonconsensual sexual transactions such as child prostitution (Weitzer, 2010). The transaction must take place between consenting adults of the legal age and mental capacity to consent and must take place without any methods of coercion, other than payment.

Sex work has a long history in the United States, yet laws regulating the sale of sex are relatively new. In the 18th century, prostitution was deeply rooted from Louisiana to San Francisco (Ditmore, 2018). Despite its prevalence, attitudes towards prostitutes were negative and many times hostile. Although the law did not directly address prostitution at this time, law enforcement often targeted prostitutes. Laws against lewdness and sodomy were used in an attempt to regulate sex work (Harcourt, 2015). Red-light districts formed in the 19th century in major cities across

the country in an attempt by sex workers to find spaces where they could work, isolated from outside society and corresponding stigma.

The prevalence of sex work within these institutions can be attributed to a combination of socio-economic challenges, including financial strain, limited access to employment opportunities, and the pursuit of higher education as a means of economic advancement (Kidd & Wilson, 2017). Moreover, gender inequality and power dynamics play a significant role in perpetuating sex work within higher institutions, with marginalized individuals, particularly women and LGBTQ+ individuals, disproportionately affected (Klein & Minchella, 2019). For some, engaging in sex work may be perceived as a means of survival or a way to cope with financial hardships, while for others, it may result from coercion, exploitation, or lack of viable alternatives (Vanwesenbeeck, 2017).

The impact of sex work within higher institutions extends beyond the individuals directly involved, affecting the broader campus community and institutional culture. Instances of sexual exploitation, harassment, and compromised safety can undermine the academic and personal well-being of students and contribute to a hostile learning environment (Ferrer-Wreder, 2020). Additionally, the stigma associated with sex work can lead to social isolation, mental health challenges, and barriers to seeking support services (Koken, 2017). Understanding the complex dynamics of sex work within higher institutions requires a nuanced approach to address this pervasive issue, amongst the approaches is social work education.

Social work education serves as a pivotal framework for addressing social issues and promoting social justice within communities (Council on Social Work Education, 2015). Social work education equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and ethical framework necessary to address complex social issues, including sex work within higher institutions. Rooted in theoretical perspectives such as

systems theory, ecological perspective, and strengths-based approach, social work education provides a comprehensive understanding of the interconnected factors influencing social phenomena (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2020). Additionally, social work education emphasizes the development of strengths-based approaches that empower individuals and communities to enact positive change. By focusing on individuals' strengths and resilience, social work practitioners can collaborate with individuals engaged in sex work within higher institutions to identify their needs, goals, and resources for support (Saleebey, 2019). Through coursework, field education experiences, and ongoing professional development, social work education prepares practitioners to engage in ethical and culturally competent practice. This includes upholding the values of social justice, human rights, and respect for diversity in all aspects of their work (NASW, 2017).

Utilizing social work education in addressing the issue of sex work within higher institutions involves a multifaceted approach that encompasses prevention, intervention, policy advocacy, and collaboration with stakeholders. Social work education equips practitioners with the knowledge, skills, and ethical principles necessary to engage effectively with individuals engaged in or vulnerable to sex work, while also addressing the systemic factors that contribute to its prevalence (Council on Social Work Education, 2015). Prevention strategies in the context of sex work within higher institutions may include educational initiatives aimed at raising awareness about the risks and consequences of sex work, as well as promoting healthy relationships, financial literacy, and alternative means of financial support (Logan, 2019). By integrating such initiatives into campus programming and curriculum, social work educators can empower students to make informed decisions and seek support when needed.

Moreso, social work practitioners can offer confidential counselling on how to curtail the menace of sex workers in higher institutions. Collaboration is essential

in addressing sex work within higher institutions, as it requires a coordinated response from multiple stakeholders. Social work educators can collaborate with faculty, staff, student organizations, and community agencies to develop comprehensive strategies for prevention, intervention, and support (Garcia, 2021). By leveraging their interdisciplinary knowledge and networks, social work practitioners can foster a campus culture that promotes respect, inclusion, and support for all students. Integrating prevention, intervention, policy advocacy, and collaboration into their practice, social work educators and practitioners can play a critical role in creating safer, more supportive environments for all students.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of the research is to examine utilization of social work education in curtailing the menace of sex workers in higher institutions in Ogun State. Specifically, objectives are to:

- i. Examine the factors contributing to the menace of sex workers in higher institutions in Ogun State.
- ii. Examine how social work education be integrated into higher institutions curriculum to raise awareness against sex work.
- iii. Examine the influence of the use of social work education on the menace of sex workers in higher institutions in Ogun State

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are the factors contributing to the menace of sex workers in higher institutions in Ogun State?
2. How can social work education be integrated into higher institutions curriculum to raise awareness against sex work?
3. What are the influence of the use of social work education on the menace of sex workers in higher institutions in Ogun State

## Methods

This study employed descriptive survey research design. Population comprises of all higher institutions in Ogun State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select three higher institutions in which fifty (50) students were selected from the chosen higher institutions to make a total of one hundred and fifty (150) as sample for study. Three (3) research questions were raised and answered in this study. A self-developed questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. It was developed in Likert scale of Agreed and Disagreed. The instrument was moderated by experts who affirmed its validity. Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha. The result obtained in the administration was correlated, the reliability co-efficient is 0.62 which is reliable enough for this study. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentage and standard deviation statistical tools.

## Results

**Research Question 1:** What are the factors contributing to the menace of sex workers in higher institutions in Ogun State

**Table 1**

S/N	ITEMS	AGREED		DISAGREED		Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	S.D
		Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent		
		(N)	%	(N)	%		
1.	The lack of viable employment opportunities for students contributes to the prevalence of sex work.	118	78.7	32	21.3	3.09	0.897
2.	Financial difficulties faced by students, such as tuition fees and living expenses, drive some individuals to engage in sex work.	130	86.6	20	13.4	3.31	0.732

3.	Gender disparities create unequal opportunities for men and women, leading to a higher prevalence of sex work among women.	125	83.3	25	16.7	3.18	0.786
4.	Societal norms and attitudes towards sex and relationships contribute to the acceptance or normalization of sex work.	127	84.7	23	15.3	3.13	0.748
5.	Limited awareness about the risks and consequences of sex work contributes to its prevalence within higher institutions in Ogun State.	126	84.0	24	16.0	3.27	0.843

**Grand Mean (x) = 3.196 and SD = 0.801**

Table 1 above, shows the lack of viable employment opportunities for students contributes to the prevalence of sex work ( $x = 3.09$ ,  $SD = 0.897$ ), financial difficulties faced by students, such as tuition fees and living expenses, drive some individuals to engage in sex work. ( $x = 3.31$ ,  $SD = 0.732$ ), gender disparities create unequal opportunities for men and women, leading to a higher prevalence of sex work among women ( $x = 3.18$ ,  $SD = 0.786$ ), societal norms and attitudes towards sex and relationships contribute to the acceptance or normalization of sex work ( $x = 3.13$ ,  $SD = 0.748$ ) and limited awareness about the risks and consequences of sex work contributes to its prevalence within higher institutions in Ogun State ( $x = 3.27$ ,  $SD = 0.843$ )

**Research Question 2:** How can social work education be integrated into higher institutions curriculum to raise awareness against sex work?

**Table 2**

S/N	ITEMS	AGREED		DISAGREED		Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	S.D
		Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent		
		(N)	%	(N)	%		
1.	Inviting social work practitioners to lectures topics related to sex work would help raise awareness among students.	104	69.3	46	30.7	3.09	0.882
2.	Providing field practicum opportunities for students would enhance awareness and understanding	107	71.4	43	28.6	3.01	0.894
3.	Integrating discussions and assignments related to sex work into existing courses would promote interdisciplinary awareness	120	80.0	30	20.0	3.07	0.887
4.	Establishing peer education programs to educate their peers about the risks and consequences of sex work would be effective.	114	76.0	36	24.0	3.12	0.955
5.	Introducing social work courses specifically addressing issues related to sex work within the curriculum would effectively raise awareness against sex work.	107	71.3	43	28.7	3.14	0.956

**Grand Mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) = 3.086      and SD = 0.915**

Table 2 above, indicated that inviting social work practitioners to lectures topics related to sex work would help raise awareness among students ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.09, SD = 0.882), providing field practicum opportunities for students would enhance awareness and understanding ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.01, SD = 0.894), integrating discussions and assignments related to sex work into existing courses would promote interdisciplinary awareness ( $\bar{x}$  = 3.07, SD = 0.887), establishing peer education



programs to educate their peers about the risks and consequences of sex work would be effective ( $x = 3.12$ ,  $SD = 0.955$ ) and introducing social work courses specifically addressing issues related to sex work within the curriculum would effectively raise awareness against sex work ( $x = 3.14$ ,  $SD = 0.956$ ).

**Research Question 3:** What are the influence of the use of social work education on the menace of sex workers in higher institutions in Ogun State

Table 3

S/N	ITEMS	AGREED		DISAGREED		Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	S.D
		Freq (N)	Percent (%)	Freq (N)	Percent (%)		
1.	The use of social work education has led to increased awareness among students about the risks and consequences of engaging in sex work	122	81.3	28	18.7	3.15	0.895
2.	Social work education has contributed to the establishment of enhanced support services and resources for students affected by or at risk of engaging in sex work	130	86.6	20	13.4	3.29	0.830
3.	The use of social work education has resulted in positive changes aimed at addressing the root causes of sex work within higher institutions	120	80.0	30	20.0	3.06	0.985
4.	The use of social work education has contributed to reducing stigma and discrimination against individuals engaged in or vulnerable to sex work	123	82.0	27	18.0	3.11	0.916
5.	The use of social work education will empower vulnerable populations	98	65.3	52	34.7	2.91	1.077
		<b>Grand Mean (<math>\bar{x}</math>) = 3.104</b>				<b>and SD = 0.9406</b>	

Table 3 above, indicated that the use of social work education has led to increased awareness among students about the risks and consequences of engaging in sex work ( $x = 3.15$ ,  $SD = 0.895$ ), social work education has contributed to the

establishment of enhanced support services and resources for students affected by or at risk of engaging in sex work ( $x = 3.29$ ,  $SD = 0.830$ ), the use of social work education has resulted in positive changes aimed at addressing the root causes of sex work within higher institutions ( $x = 3.06$ ,  $SD = 0.985$ ), the use of social work education has contributed to reducing stigma and discrimination against individuals engaged in or vulnerable to sex work ( $x = 3.11$ ,  $SD = 0.916$ ) and the use of social work education will empowered vulnerable populations ( $x = 2.91$ ,  $SD = 1.077$ ).

### **Discussion of findings**

From table 1 above, research question 1 has a weighted mean of 3.196 which is above the benchmark of 2.50. This shows the factors contributing to the menace of sex workers in higher institutions in Ogun State. Therefore, this finding agrees with the findings of Kidd and Wilson (2017) which stated that factors contributing to sex work among students includes financial strain, limited access to employment opportunities, and the pursuit of higher education as a means of economic advancement.

From table 2 above, research question 2 has a weighted mean of 3.086 which is above the benchmark of 2.50. The findings show how can social work education be integrated into campus programming and curriculum to raise awareness and promote alternatives to sex work. The above finding is in congruence with the findings of Ditmore (2018) who is of the opinion that social work education can be integrate into higher institutions curriculum to raise awareness against sex work through offering courses and workshops, incorporating social work perspectives, field practicum opportunities, guest lectures and panels, establishing peer education programs etc. These events can offer diverse perspectives, insights, and practical strategies for addressing the issue within higher education

From table 3 above, research question 3 has a weighted mean of 3.104 which is above the benchmark of 2.50. Thus, this indicates the influence of the use of social

work education on the menace of sex workers in higher institutions in Ogun State. Hence, this finding is in resonance with the findings of Council on Social Work Education (2015) that revealed that social work education equips practitioners with the knowledge, skills, and ethical principles necessary to engage effectively with individuals engaged in or vulnerable to sex work, while also addressing the systemic factors that contribute to its prevalence.

### **Conclusions**

In conclusion, as institutions continue to strive for a safer and more supportive environment within higher institution settings, the utilization of social work education stands as a critical pathway towards addressing the menace of sex work. However, integrating social work education into campus programming and curriculum is essential for raising awareness and promoting alternatives to sex work within higher education settings. By infusing social work perspectives, offering courses and workshops, providing field practicum opportunities, and organizing guest lectures and panels, institutions can create a supportive and inclusive environment that empowers students to address the root causes of sex work. Through these efforts, students gain a deeper understanding of the socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors contributing to sex work and develop the skills necessary to advocate for change. By engaging with community organizations, collaborating with stakeholders, and fostering peer education programs, institutions can effectively promote alternatives to sex work and create a campus culture that upholds dignity, respect, and social justice for all individuals.

### **Recommendations**

In line with the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

- i. Curriculum planner should design and implement a comprehensive curriculum that incorporates social work perspectives and addresses topics related to sex work, gender inequality, poverty, and social justice. They should

ensure that courses and workshops provide students with a holistic understanding of the complexities surrounding sex work.

- ii. Government should establish partnerships with community organizations and agencies working in the field of social services to offer students field practicum opportunities focused on addressing social issues, including sex work. There should provide supervision and support to students during their practicum experiences to enhance their learning and skill development.
- iii. Schools' management should conduct training sessions and workshops for faculty members, staff, and students to increase their awareness and understanding of sex work issues. Offer resources and support for those interested in incorporating social work perspectives into their teaching and programming efforts.
- iv. Government and school management should enhance support services and resources for students affected by or at risk of engaging in sex work. They should establish resource centers, counseling services, and financial assistance programs to provide students with the support they need to pursue alternative means of livelihood.

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