

Determinants Of Transactional Sex Among Undergraduate Students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education

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Abstract: The study investigated determinants of transactional sex among undergraduate students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. Two research questions and two hypotheses were stated to guide the study. The population of the study consisted of 15,058 female undergraduate students of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. A simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 450 respondents for the study. A structured questionnaire titled “Determinants of Transactional Sex Questionnaire” (DPTSQ) was used for data collection. The reliability coefficient of (DPTSQ) was $r=0.82$ and was determined using the test-retest method. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and independent sample t-tests were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that poverty and age at sexual debut influenced the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. Also, poverty and age at sexual debut significantly influenced the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. It was recommended among others that; Nurses who are in charge of school health clinics should counsel undergraduate students on the dangers of transactional sex and also provide them with skills to be able to make the right decisions regarding their sexual lives.

Keywords: Age, determinants, transactional sex, undergraduate, university.

Introduction

The practice of exchanging money or gifts for sexual encounters, known as transactional sex, is widely viewed as a risky behavior globally, persistently contributing to the spread of sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancies. Transactional sex refers to engaging in heterosexual intercourse in return for financial compensation and/or material possessions, encompassing the exchange of sexual acts for money, gifts, services, or other benefits.

Transactional sex, alternatively known as "sugar daddy" relationships in sub-Saharan Africa, involves sexual partnerships between older, usually wealthier male individuals and younger, typically socially and economically disadvantaged females, including adolescents (Adjei, 2018). Unlike the conventional notion

of prostitution, which often entails non-marital, multiple-partner engagements primarily for monetary gain, transactional sex is distinguished by the portrayal of participants as "girlfriends" and "boyfriends" rather than "prostitutes" and "clients" (Masvawure, 2020). While transactional sex shares similarities with prostitution in its non-marital and potentially multi-partner nature, it extends beyond a simple exchange of cash for sexual services, incorporating a broader range of obligations that may not be predetermined. A cross-sectional survey carried out in July 2012 among 790 students from eight private colleges in Bahir Dar City, Ethiopia, revealed that students acknowledged engaging in sexual activities in exchange for money or gifts. The likelihood of participating in such exchanges was notably higher among students residing in rented accommodations without family members

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compared to those living with family (Alarem, 2021). There is mounting evidence indicating a rise in transactional sex among African youth, including university students. For instance, Kunles (2020) research indicates that transactional sex is particularly widespread in Western Africa.

Traditionally, transactional sex has often been associated with the concept of engaging in sexual activities with "sugar daddies," where gifts typically flow in one direction from these older men to younger women. However, the reality of transactional sex is more intricate than commonly depicted. This complexity arises because "sugar mummies" are also participants in these arrangements, and the exchange of gifts and resources tends to be more reciprocal, although women generally receive more material benefits than men. Recent research has challenged the notion that being the recipient of money and gifts in these relationships is inherently disempowering. Instead, young individuals, particularly students, are seen to assert their agency by leveraging their sexuality to acquire benefits (Gukurume, 2021).

Qualitative research conducted by Poulin (2015) in Balaka illustrates that monetary transactions within sexual relationships are commonplace in the studied community, driven by both symbolic and economic motivations. The exchange of money in these relationships is multifaceted. The transfer of funds often signifies the expectation of sexual activity, as money provides girls with material advantages and enhances their social standing. Girls may use the money to purchase luxury items, which in turn garner admiration from their peers. In some cases, a male partner may encourage his girlfriend to make such purchases to enhance her social image among friends.

From a conservative viewpoint, two broad perspectives; namely agency and structuration, have shaped discussions surrounding transactional sex. The agency perspective acknowledges an individual's capacity for decision-making, while the structuration perspective focuses on the societal structures that influence and sometimes constrain

these decisions, leading individuals to make choices they might not otherwise make (Luke, 2015). Under the agency perspective, young women are viewed as rational actors who may leverage their sexuality to gain economic and material advantages from wealthier older men. For example, in a study conducted in Tanzania, young women cited poverty as a primary motive for engaging in transactional sexual activities, viewing themselves as fortunate for being women, as they could exploit their sexuality for pleasure and material benefits. They also expressed criticism towards men for paying for goods (vaginal/sexual services) they could not possess (Wamoyi, 2021).

Hawkins (2015) supported this perspective by indicating that young women engaging in transactional sexual behaviors and maintaining multiple sexual partners acknowledged peer pressure as a significant influencer. They described how friends enticed them into the practice by introducing them to influential and affluent sexual partners who rewarded their sexual services with monetary gifts, favors, and social support. Moreover, the study revealed a consensus among these women that the primary motivation for transactional sex was economic gain, viewing it not merely as a survival tactic to meet basic needs but as a means of empowerment for their upward mobility as young women.

These women argued that their transactional relationships with older men differed from prostitution because their exchanges were part of ongoing relationships rather than one-time encounters. They rejected the notion of being passive or coerced victims in these relationships, asserting their agency in defining their own social identities and making choices. For them, transactional sex served as a strategy to challenge and overturn existing gender and economic disparities, allowing them to assert power (Hawkins, 2015). Additionally, factors such as early sexual debut, family structure (including broken homes, parental death, separation, divorce, and single parenthood), were identified as contributing to the high prevalence of risky



sexual behaviors and engagement in transactional sex among females (Wosu, 2018; Alarem, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

Socialization and the pursuit of essential needs have contributed to the increased prevalence of risky sexual behaviour, such as transactional sex, among female university students. Engaging in transactional sex not only serves as a means for obtaining money and social status to meet basic needs but also exposes individuals to various health risks associated with excessive sexual activity, including unwanted pregnancies, induced abortions, sexually transmitted infections (such as HIV/AIDS, HPV, syphilis, and gonorrhoea), and other maternal health complications and mortality.

Observations have indicated that many young female undergraduate students discuss involvement in sexual activities with older and often married men who are financially affluent, in exchange for financial support to sustain themselves while in school. Some students even facilitate connections between their female peers and male partners in exchange for financial benefits, disregarding the health consequences of such behaviour. Additionally, it has been noted that while many students engaging in transactional sex express unhappiness with the practice, they continue due to its perceived utility in meeting the financial demands of student life, including purchasing textbooks, covering campus meals, paying for accommodation, buying clothing, and having discretionary funds for other expenses.

Transactional sex has gained significant popularity among female undergraduate students, to the extent that it has been given nicknames such as "Hookup" or "Friends with Benefits." This concerning trend raises questions about its underlying reasons and poses a threat to our cultural values as Africans if left unchecked. Therefore, there is a pressing need for empirical research to investigate the determinants of transactional sex among undergraduate students. Consequently, this study examined the determinant of

transactional sex among undergraduate students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to guide the conduct of the study

1. What is the influence of poverty on the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education?
2. What is the influence of age at sexual debut on the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were stated to guide the study

1. Poverty does not significantly influence the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education
2. Age at sexual debut does not significantly influence the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate students in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education

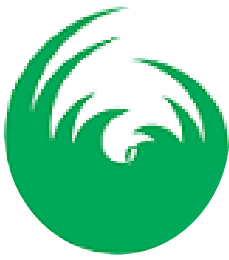
Methods

Participants and recruitment

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised 15,058 female undergraduate students of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The sample size used for the study was 450 female undergraduate students which was calculated using Taro Yamane Formula which gave $n = N/(1+N(e)^2)$; $15,058/(1+15,058(0.05)^2)$ $n = 15,058/(1+ 15,058 (0.0025))$ $n = 15,058/(1+1)$ $n = 15,058/2$ $n = 389$ and was drawn through stratified random sampling.

Instrument and Measures

The research instrument was a self-designed instrument titled: "Determinants of Transactional Sex Questionnaire" (DPTSQ). Section A contained the demographic data of respondent 'B' consisted of 20 items and it was structured on a four-point modified Likert Scale of Strongly Agree SA= 4.00, Agree, A= 3.00, Disagree, D= 2.00, Strongly



Disagree, SD= 1.00. The reliability coefficient of (DPTSQ) was $r=0.82$ and was determined using the test-retest method. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research

Results

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation showing the influence of poverty on the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. Criterion $\bar{X} = 2.5$

S/N	Poverty and Practice of Transactional Sex among Undergraduate Students in IAUE	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1	The practice of transaction sex is a result of being able to meet economic needs	3.16	0.97	Agreed
2	Students practice transactional sex to be able to pay for textbooks	3.38	0.79	Agreed
3	Students practice transactional sex because of the need to be able to pay for their school fees	3.08	0.95	Agreed
4	Transactional sex is heavily practiced in tertiary institutions due to hunger	3.24	0.85	Agreed
5	Students in tertiary institutions need pocket money to maintain themselves in school and its lack causes them to practice transactional sex	3.08	0.82	Agreed
Cluster mean/Standard Deviation		3.19	0.88	

questions and Independent sample t-tests were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 1 shows that items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively were all accepted, as influence of poverty on the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate students in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The table showed that the mean ratings of items 1-5 were 3.16, 3.38, 3.08, 3.24, and 3.08 respectively with the corresponding standard deviations of 0.97, 0.79, 0.95, 0.85 and 0.82. The cluster

mean of 3.19 with a standard deviation of 0.88 was also found to be above the criterion of 2.50. This implies that poverty influences the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education.

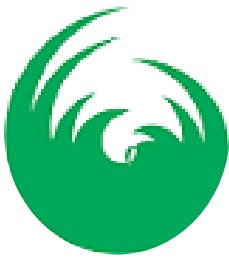


Table 2: Mean and standard deviation showing the influence of age at sexual debut on the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate students’ in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. Criterion $\bar{X} = 2.5$

A	Age at Sexual Debut	14-18years N=217		19years-Above N=233	
6	Female students practice transactional sex as a result of early exposure to sexual intercourse	2.90	0.85	2.85	0.33
7	Transactional sex is common among female undergraduates who lost their virginity before the age of 18	2.92	0.66	2.90	0.87
8	Female students who had early exposure to sexual experiences are more comfortable in practicing transactional sex	2.81	0.89	2.82	0.88
9	Female students who were able to resist early sexual debut find it difficult to engage in transactional sex	3.65	0.85	3.09	0.98
10	Female students practice transactional sex as a result of t early exposure to sexual intercourse	2.99	0.66	2.71	0.56
Grand Mean/SD		3.05	0.33	2.87	0.46

Table 2 shows that items 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 respectively were all accepted, as the influence of age at sexual debut on the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. Specifically, the result in the table shows a grand mean for age at sexual debut from (14-18years as $\bar{X} = 3.05$; SD =

0.33), and (19years-Above as $\bar{X} = 2.87$; SD = 0.46) which is higher than the criterion mean of (>2.50). This implies that age at sexual debut influences the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education.

Table 3: T-test analysis showing the significant influence of poverty on the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education

Poverty	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	Standard Error	Calculated t-value	Critical t-value	Decision
Influence	312	3.08	0.94	448	0.134	5.108	1.960	Significant
Does not Influence	138	1.02	0.33					

Table 2 shows that the calculated t-value is 5.108 and at 448 degrees of freedom. Since the calculated t-value

(5.108) is greater than the critical t-value (1.960) at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis that poverty does



not significantly influence the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate students in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education is been rejected.

Table 4: T-test analysis showing the significant influence of age at sexual debut on the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education

Age at Sexual Debut	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	Standard Error	Calculated t-value	Critical t-value	Remark
14-18 Years	217	3.05	0.33	448	0.134	4.481	1.960	Significant
19Years-Above	233	2.87	0.46					

Table 4 shows that the calculated t-value is 4.481 and at 448 degrees of freedom. Since the calculated t-value (4.481) is greater than the critical t-value (1.960) at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis that age at sexual debut does not significantly influence the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education is been rejected.

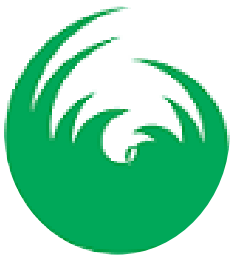
Discussion of the Findings

The result in Table 1 revealed that poverty influences the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The practice of transaction sex is a result of not being able to meet economic needs (3.16), students practice transactional sex to be able to pay for textbooks (3.38), and students practice transactional sex because of the need to be able to pay for their school fees (3.08), transactional sex is heavily practiced in tertiary institutions due to hunger(3.24) and students in tertiary institutions need pocket money to maintain themselves in school and its lack causes them to practice transactional sex (3.08). This finding is not surprising because an individual who is impoverished and is desiring for material things can embark on anything to satisfy her needs. This finding

supports that of Schoepf (2016) which revealed that extreme poverty and desire for material things were observed to be the elements that push respondents into the engagement of value-based sex. The result of this study also agreed with the finding of Poulin (2015) whose students perceived socioeconomic status to be the driving factor pushing students to engage in transactional sex.

The finding in Table 3 revealed that age at sexual debut influences the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. It was observed that respondents from 14-18 years and respondents from 19 years and above indicated that; they practice transactional sex as a result of early exposure to sexual intercourse (2.90) (2.85), Transactional sex is common among female undergraduates who lost their virginity before age 18 (2.92) (2.90), Female students who had early exposure to sexual experiences are more comfortable in practicing transactional sex (2.8) (2.82), Female students who were able to resist early sexual debut find it difficult to engage in transactional sex (3.65)

(3.09) Female students who were lured at an early age to engage in sexual practices are more prone to practicing transactional sex (2.99), (2.71).



The finding in Table 3 also indicated that poverty significantly influenced the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The study is in tandem with the observation of Poulin (2015) writing “Confronting the ‘sugar daddy’ stereotype: Age and economic asymmetries and risky sexual behaviour in urban Kenya’ revealed that poverty was the major determinant of the practice of transactional sex, that most individuals who were involved in the practice did so to take care of their economic needs. The finding in Table 3 revealed that age at sexual debut influences the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. It was observed that respondents from 14-18 years and respondents from 19 years and above indicated that; they practice transactional sex as a result of early exposure to sexual intercourse (2.90) (2.85), Transactional sex is common among female undergraduates who lost their virginity before age 18 (2.92) (2.90), Female students who had early exposure to sexual experiences are more comfortable in practicing transactional sex (2.8) (2.82), Female students who were able to resist early sexual debut find it difficult to engage in transactional sex (3.65)

(3.09) Female students who were lured at an early age to engage in sexual practices are more prone to practicing transactional sex (2.99), (2.71). The findings in the table also indicated that age at sexual debut significantly influences the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The finding collaborates with the study of Gukurume (2021) who observed that adolescents and young adults who engaged in sexual practice at an early age were more susceptible to partake in transactional sex than their counterparts who engaged in sexual practice at a late age.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that poverty and age at sexual debut influenced the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate

students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. That, poverty and age at sexual debut significantly influenced the practice of transactional sex among undergraduate students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education.

Recommendations

1. Nurses who are in charge of school health clinics should counsel undergraduate students on the dangers of transactional sex and also provide them with skills to be able to make the right decisions.
2. Parents and guardians should re-examine and sharpen their parenting skills to instill the desired strong moral and disciplinary attitudes in the youths.

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