The internet, global prostitution industry and the place of social work

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Abstract

Though sex has a very long history which has existed long before now, it has never taken the dimension and proportion it has taken in recent times. Sex as an industry has expanded over the last decades which has facilitated the exploitation of women world over but mostly in developing countries. The exploitation and expansion of the prostitution industry has gained scholarly recognition through the presence of affordable internet facilities. This paper examines the extent to which the internet promotes global prostitution and the place of social work practice in curbing this menace. Variables considered were global bride trafficking as well as video sex conferencing. Conceptual classifications on the internet and global prostitutions were reviewed accordingly, while social network theory was employed. The paper was a quantitative study with a sample of 230 participants selected purposively for the study. The sampling technique was convenience sampling. Statistical tool for testing the studies hypotheses was Chi-square tool at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed a significant relationship between internet and global bride trafficking and video sex conferencing through social media sites. The study concluded that, it is a clear evidence that the internet through social media sites have significant impact on global prostitution. The community has made the world a global village where sex is traded across borders. It however recommended the abolition of all sites and social media sites that promotes live sex conferencing. There should be effort geared toward the abolition and destruction of all obscene sites and media platform that promote pornography.

Keywords: Internet, global prostitution, social work practice, sex, trafficking, video conference.

Introduction

Though sex has a very long history which has existed long before now, it has never taken the dimension and proportion it has taken in recent times. Sex as an industry has expanded over the last decades which has facilitated the exploitation of women world over but mostly in developing countries. The exploitation and expansion of the prostitution industry has gained scholarly recognition through the presence of affordable internet facilities on mobile phone applications such as Facebook, Myspace, WhatsApp, Instagram, Badoo, Twitter, Email and lots more has made the industry juicy and interesting venture for this generation to make ends meet (World Class Service, 2001). Through these internet applications on mobile phones, it has made internet pornography industry also very profitable and extremely accessible. While laws might prevent producers from forcing women into work in many countries, they are able to produce them in countries with less stringent laws.

The internet has become the latest place for promoting the global trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and children. This global communication network is being used to promote and engage in the buying and selling of children (Donna, 1998). Agents offer catalogues of mail order brides, with girls as young as 13. Commercial prostitution tours are advertised. Men exchange information on where to find prostitutes and describe how they can be used. After their trips men write reports on how much they paid for women and children and give pornographic descriptions of what they did to them. New technology has enabled an online merger of pornography and prostitution, with video conferencing bringing live sex shows to the internet.

Furthermore, there are also rape videos which are usually broadcasted over the internet which has made global sexual exploitation to be on the rise. The profits are high, and there are few effective barriers at the moment. Because there are little regulations of the Internet, the traffickers and promoters of sexual exploitation have rapidly utilized the Internet for their purposes. Traffickers and pornographers are the leading promoters of the internet industry. PC computing magazine urged entrepreneurs to visit pornography Websites. 'It will show you the future of online

commerce. Web pornographers are the most innovative entrepreneurs on the internet' (Taylor & Jerome, February 2007). The pornographers and other promoters of sexual exploitation are the internet leaders in the developing privacy service, secure payment schemes and online data base management. Global statistics have revealed that by the mid-1995, strip clubs set up advertising on web sites. During this period, strip clubs from New Jersey, New York and Delaware, USA, had their own home pages where they advertise their shows. They featured pornographic photos of strippers; they called their 'cyber-avatars' of the week. The major website during this period in Delaware included pornographic images of women engaged in the type of legal prostitution offered at that club, including couch dancing, table dancing, shower shows and dominatrix acts (Fantasy Show Bar, Summer 1995).

The high prices and profit margin of pornographic materials keep the revenue and profit high for the sex industry. In 1996 Americans spent more than US$9 billion on pornographic videos, peep shows, live sex shows, pornographic cable programmes, pornographic magazines and computer photography. That amount is more than many other entertainment businesses, such as film, music, and theatre. To put that amount in some context, according to War on Want, US$9 billion is enough to provide debt relief for the world's 20 worst affected countries (The Guardian, November 2007). These revenue figures don't include the millions of dollars made illegally through the sale of women in brothels, massage parlours, or on the street, or the sale of illegal materials, such as child pornography. The highest revenue for legal materials produced by the sex industry was for the sales and rentals of pornographic videos at US$5 billion dollars, followed by strip clubs at US$2 billion. Sex industry sites on the internet earned US$925 million in 1996 (Taylor & Jerome, February 2007).

The influence of this endemic global culture in recent times has diffused to other countries of the world there by leading an evil acculturation and cultural assimilation to other parts of the world through the medium of the internet on mobile phones (Cyberspace, 2007). In Nigeria precisely, internet has contributed negatively in fostering the rapid expansion of prostitution through mobile phone social media applications, like Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, Badoo, WhatsApp, 2go and others. The phenomenon has eaten deep into our social fabric thereby distorting our norms and value system, trading our traditional and endogenous moral consciousness. Young girls now post nude and indecent pictures online in order to get attention of men, involve in internet dating and trading. It is against these complexities the paper was designed to investigate the role internet play in promoting global prostitution industry.

Conceptual clarification of the internet and global prostitution
The oldest forum on the internet for promoting the sexual exploitation of women is the news group alt.sex.services (later renamed alt.sex.prostitution). Its 'aim is to create market transparency for sex related services.' Postings from this newsgroup are archived into a World Wide Web Site called The World Sex Guide, which provides 'comprehensive, sex-related information about every country in the world' (Atta and M., World Sex Guide, July 1996). Details of the men's report of their prostitution tour and buying experience include: information on where to go and find prostitutes, hotel prices, telephone numbers, taxi fares, cost of alcohol, the sex act that can be bought, the price for each act, and evaluation of the women's appearances and performances (Cyberspace, 2007). The men go on to describe, often in graphic details, their experiences of using women and children. The scope and detail of this exchange is without precedence. The women are completely objectified and evaluated on everything from skin colour

to presence of scars and firmness of their flesh. Women's receptiveness and compliance to men buyers is also rated.

The men buying women and posting the information see and perceive the events only from their self-interested perspective. Their awareness of racism, colonization, global economic inequalities, and of course, sexism is limited to how these forces benefit them. A country's economic or political crisis and the accompanying poverty are advantages, which produce cheap readily available women for the men. Often men describe how desperate the women are and how little the men have to pay. This rapid publishing electronic medium has enabled men to pimp and exploit individual women. Now, men can go out at night, buy a woman, go home, and post the details on the news group. By morning anyone in the world with internet connection can read about it and often have enough information to find the same woman. For example, in Nevada, one man bought a woman called 'Honey' and named the brothel where she could be found. Within a week other men went and bought 'Honey' themselves and posted their experiences on the newsgroup. Within a short period of time men were having an orgy of male bonding by describing what each of them did to this woman. The men are keeping a special website on the internet for men to post their experiences of buying this one woman (Bashful, 1994, 1995, 1996). Additional Websites have been created for other identifiable women. To my knowledge this is completely unprecedented. The implication of this type of public exchange in a fast-publishing easily accessible medium like the Internet are very serious for the sexual exploitation of women in the future.

The internet and global bride trafficking

World Class Service (2006) observed the mail order bride agents have moved to the internet as their preferred marketing location. The internet reaches a prime group of potential buyer-men from Western countries with higher than average incomes. The new internet technology enables web pages to be quickly and easily updated; some services claim they are updating their selection of women weekly. The internet reaches a global audience faster and less expensively than any other media. One mail order agent explained why he preferred operation on the internet. 'So when the World Wide Web came along, I saw that it was a perfect venue for this kind of business. The paper catalogues were so expensive and their quality was usually very poor; but on the web you can publish high resolution full-colour photos which can be browsed by everyone in the world' (Toms, Santa Barbara International 1996). The agents offer men assistance to finding a "loving and devoted" woman whose "views of relationships have not been ruined by unreasonable expectations." The agencies describe themselves as "introduction services," but a quick examination of many of the websites reveal their commercial interests in bride trafficking, sex tours and prostitution.

The catalogues offer women mostly from Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America, although in mid-1998 special catalogues of women from Africa appeared. They are called "African Queens," and "Brides of Nubia." Pictures of the women are shown with their names, height, weight, education and hobbies. Some catalogues include the women's bust, waist and hip measurements. The women range in age from thirteen (13) to fifty (50). One of the commonly promoted characteristics of women from Western Europe is that they "traditionally expect to marry gentlemen that are ten (10) to twenty (20) years older" (Toms, 1995). The women are marketed as "pleasers," who will make very few demands on the men, and will not threaten them with expectations in their relationships, as women from the U.S. and Western Europe are said to do. The mail order bride websites rely on racist and sexist stereotypes about the women in order to

attract men from the U.S. and Western Europe. The bride traffickers sell addresses to men. Later they offer to arrange tour for the men to go and meet the woman with whom they have been corresponding, or to meet as many women as possible. Men can pay for these services over the internet with their credit cards. There are some catalogues which list women with young children. One website asks if men want women with or without children. On another website there are pictures of naked children playing. I think children are being trafficked also in this way. The men are being subtly shown ways of acquiring women and children- all in one package (Toms, 1995).

The internet and live sex video conferencing

Caroline, (2008) noted that the most advanced technology on the internet is live video conferencing, in which live audio and video are transmitted over the internet from video recorder to computer. The advanced technology is being used to sell live sex shows over the internet. Real time communication is possible, so the man can personally direct the live sex show as he is viewing it on his computer. The only limitation on this type of global sex show is the need for high speed transmission, processing and multimedia capabilities. Runett, (2008) noted that the software required is free, but the most recent version of Web browsers have these capabilities built into them. As more men have access to high speed multimedia computer and transmission equipment, this type of private sex show will grow. There are no legal restrictions on live sex shows that can be transmitted over the internet. As with all internet transmissions, there are no nation-state border restrictions.

With internet technology a man may be on one continent, while directing and watching a live strip show, a live sex show, or a sexual abuse of a child on another continent. There have been several documented cases of live transmission of the sexual abuse of children through live video conferencing (Carolyn, 2008). The first live video conferencing prostitution industry site I saw on the web was Virtual Dreams in October 1995, running off the CTSNET server in San Diego, California. "Virtual Dreams use cutting-edge technology to bring you the most beautiful girls in the world. Using our software and your computer, you can interact real time and one-on-one with the girl of your dreams. Ask her anything you wish- she is waiting to please you!" (Virtual Connections, October 1995). By November 1995, "live nude video tele-conferencing" was being touted on the internet newsgroup *alt.sex.prostitution.* Derek Hamilton said: By November 1995, "live nude video tele-conferencing" was being touted on the internet newsgroup *alt.sex.prostitution.* Derek Hamilton said:

> *"Here's something that will make your modem sizzle! I was sitting at home… my Penthouse subscription had run out, when I stumbled across "Video fantasy" on the net. This is one of the most interesting "adults only" services I've ever seen. With Windows, my 486 and their software, I called a pretty girl's studio with my modem and watched her undress. All of these was live and in colour on my computer monitor. What will they think of next. Sitting at home being entertained by a beautiful girl. Talk about "safe sex"! This is lots of fun"* (Hamilton, alt.sex.prostitution, 21 November 1995).

Who buys women over the internet? According to the Internet Entertainment Group (IEG), the largest pimp on the web, the buyers for live strip shows are 90% Male, 70% living in the United States and 70% are between ages 18 and 40. The buyers are young men in college, and business men and professionals who log on from work. This information was obtained from analysis of credit card usage (Wired, December 1997).

Social network theory

Social network theory was propounded by Wasserman and Faust in 1994. The theory sees a community of individuals as connected actors, and uses mathematical models to study its structure, development, and evolution. Social network analysis treats individual actors in a community as nodes; the communication between those actors are deemed as ties, edges, links, or connections. Social networks can form in many levels, from individual people, to families, communities, and nations. Those ties could be communication frequencies, friendships, kinships, financial exchange, sexual relationships, or common interests or beliefs. Together they form a complex graph structure. Mathematical calculation on many indices could be performed on this complex graph, including the following:

Betweenness: The extent of a node lying between other nodes

Centrality: -   How connected is a node to the network

Closeness: -   How one node is near all other nodes in the network

Density: -   All the ties in a network in proportion to all the possible ties

Structural hole: The node which connects other nodes

Those nodes are disconnected without the first node

These measurements determine the importance and structural position of individual actors, and the characteristics of the partial or whole networks. The measurements could be used to study the social network, improve the network structure, and help increase the efficiency of information flows in the network. Network analysis software such as UCINET could be used to measure those indices (Borgatti et' al 1992). Traditional social network analysis views individuals or organisation as nodes in the network, and the communication between them as edges. However, social media content is exactly the materialization and solidification of the chatter, comments, or reviews.

The recent emergence of multi-dimensional social network framework is crucial in studying the interaction between social actors and information artefacts (Contractor 2009). By treating social media content as nodes, one can perform mathematical calculations on those information artefacts, such as what are the most important pieces of information shared by many people, how one can connect users through artefacts, where are the structure holes of social media by connecting which the network could be more tightly integrated. Buckner's (1965) theory on rumour transmission indicates the accuracy and speed of rumour passing were affected by the structure of the network and the mental sets of individual actors in the network. Connecting this line of research with social network analysis of those online social network sites could inform prostitution businesses of the methods on promoting themselves through organic word-of-mouth. Recent applications of multidimensional social network analysis to web 2.0 has generated some fruitful results (Kajdanowicz et al. In Press; Kazienko et al. 2010).

Methodology

The study used a quantitative approach through a descriptive, survey research design. A study is descriptive when "it intends to describe a phenomenon accurately within its specific context and when it is based on collective data." The population of the study comprised of young adults or youth between the ages of 18-35 years. A sample of 230 was purposively selected for the study while the convenience sampling was used to get participants for the study due to the nature

of the phenomenon under study. The study was purely quantitative using a well design questionnaire to elicit from respondents or participants. Data was analysed using Chi-square statistical tool at 0.05 level of significance.

Data analysis (Test of hypotheses)

Hypothesis one

Ho: There is no significant relationship between the internet and global bride   trafficking.

Hi: There is relationship between the internet and global bride trafficking.

Decision Rules: Accept H_o if critical X^2 value of 8.20 is greater than the calculated value of 41.521^a is at 0.05 level of significance and 1 degree of freedom otherwise reject the H_o and accept the H_i. To test hypothesis one, Chi-square analysis was used in testing the hypothesis or analysis of the two variables- internet and global bride trafficking. From the analysis, the calculated X^2 value of 41.521^a was tested in comparison with the X^2 table value of 8.20 at 0.05 level of significance. The calculated X^2 value was greater than the critical X^2 values. Therefore it means that there is a significant relationship between the internet and global bride trafficking.

Decision: hypothesis one above was tested using chi-square statistical analysis to determine the significant relationship between internet and global bride trafficking. From the test, it showed that the internet through different websites had in recent times aided bride trafficking across borders in the world as most of the marriages often end up in deadlock and divorces.

TABLE 1: Chi-square analysis for the internet and global bride trafficking

The internet * global bride trafficking cross tabulation			Global bride trafficking		Total
			Yes	No	
	Bad	OF	117	43	160
		EF	114.8	45.2	160.0
The Internet	Good	OF	8	21	29
		EF	20.8	8.2	29.0
	Fair	OF	40	1	41
		EF	29.4	11.6	41.0
	Total	OF	165	65	230
		EF	165.0	65.0	230.0

Keys: O- Observed Frequency

         E- Expected Frequency

Chi-square   = 41.521^a

Degrees of freedom = 1

Table Value   =   3.84

Hypothesis two

H_o: There is no significant relationship between internet through porn websites and promotion of live sex video conferencing.

H_i: There is a significant relationship between internet through porn websites and promotion of live sex video conferencing.

Decision Rule: Accept H_o if critical X^2 value of 6.22 is greater than calculated value of 129.566[a] is at 0.05 level of significance and 3 degree of freedom otherwise reject the H_o and accept the H_i.

To test hypothesis one, chi-square analysis was used in testing the hypothesis or analysis of the two variables- internet through porn websites and live sex video conferencing. From the analysis, the calculated X^2 value of 129.566[a] was tested in comparison with the X^2 table value of 6.22 at 0.05 level of significance. The calculated X^2 value was greater than the critical X^2 value. Therefore it means that there is a significant relationship between internet through porn websites and live sex video conferencing.

Decision: Hypothesis two above was tested using chi-square statistical analysis to determine the significant relationship between internet through porn websites and how it promotes live sex video conferencing. From the test, as shown from respondent's opinion in the observed and expected counts, revealed that the internet through porn websites or social media applications like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, and others promote live sex video conferencing. This from the analysis is evidenced by the rapid change in cyber date and porn related pictures online via social media and other porn websites.

TABLE 2:   Chi-square analysis for the internet and live sex video conferencing

The internet * live sex video conferencing cross tabulation

			Live sex video conferencing		Total
			Yes	No	
	Facebook	OF	138	14	152
		EF	109.0	43.0	152.0
The internet	WhatsApp	OF	20	2	22
		EF	15.8	6.2	22.0
	Instagram	OF	1	23	24
		EF	17.2	6.8	24.0
	Alt.sex.prostitution web	OF	6	26	32
		EF	23.0	9.0	32.0
Total		OF	165	65	230
		EF	165.0	65.0	230.0

Keys: O- Observed Frequency

E- Expected Frequency

Chi-square   =   129.566[a]

Degrees of freedom = 1

Table Value   =   3.84

Discussion of findings

The internet and global bride trafficking

Hypothesis one was tested using the X^2 statistical tool and the result show a strong significant effect of the internet on global bride trafficking. The result of the hypothesis agrees

with the World Class Service (2006) who observed that Mail order bride agent have moved to the internet as their preferred marketing location. The internet reaches a prime group of potential buyer-men from Western countries with higher than average incomes. The new internet technology enables web pages to be quickly and easily updated; some services claim they are updating their selection of women weekly. The internet reaches a global audience faster and less expensively than any other media. One mail order agent explained why he preferred operation on the internet. 'So when the World Wide Web came along, I saw that it was a perfect venue for this kind of business.

The paper catalogues were so expensive and their quality was usually very poor; but on the web you can publish high resolution full-colour photos which can be browsed by everyone in the world' (Toms, Santa Barbara International 1996). The agents offer men assistance to finding a "loving and devoted" woman whose "views of relationships have not been ruined by unreasonable expectations." The agencies describe themselves as "introduction services," but a quick examination of many of the websites reveal their commercial interests in bride trafficking, sex tours and prostitution.

The internet and live sex video conferencing

Furthermore, hypothesis two was also tested using the X^2 statistical tool and the result shows a strong significant effect of the internet and live sex video conferencing via the medium of social media applications like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, and alt.sex.prostitution web. The result is in line with Caroline, (2008) noted that the most advanced technology on the internet is live video conferencing, in which live audio and video are transmitted over the internet from video recorder to computer. The advanced technology is being used to sell live sex shows over the internet. Real time communication is possible, so the man can personally direct the live sex show as he is viewing it on his computer. The only limitation on this type of global sex show is the need for high speed transmission, processing and multimedia capabilities.

Runett, (2008) noted that the software required is free, but the most recent version of Web browsers have these capabilities built into them. As more men have access to high speed multimedia computer and transmission equipment, this type of private sex show will grow. There are no legal restrictions on live sex shows that can be transmitted over the internet. As with all internet transmissions, there are no nation-state border restrictions. With internet technology a man may be on one continent, while directing and watching a live strip show, a live sex show, or a sexual abuse of a child on another continent. There have been several documented cases of live transmission of the sexual abuse of children through live video conferencing (Carolyn, 2008).

Summary

The thrust of this study is to examine the effect of internet on the promotion of global prostitution industry and the place of social work practice. The study tested two hypotheses to ascertain to what extent the internet has promoted global bride trafficking as well as live sex video conferencing using social media applications. From the finding of this study, the study revealed as follows:

1. There is a significant relationship between the internet and global bride trafficking

2. There is a significant relationship between internet through porn websites and promotion of live sex video conferencing.

Conclusion

From the study, it is clear evidence that the internet through social media sites have a significant impact on global prostitution. The community has made the world a global village where sex is traded across borders. It has been observed from the study that the advance of information technology has inculcated and diffused an evil of international sex slavery system across Atlantic ocean where young girls mostly from developing nations are exported as sex toys and machines which has also contributed to a lot of ritual killing and 21st century slave trade where young girls are transported to countries like Italy, America, France, Spain for commercial sex purposes.

Recommendations

From the finding of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. International law against prostitution; since it has been observed that there is high rate of global bride trafficking, both national and international government should make enforceable laws to govern leakages across borders where illegal importation and exportation of human cargos for sexual purposes take place.

2. Abolition of all sites and social media that promote live sex conferencing. There should be effort geared toward the abolition and destruction of all obscene sites and media platform that promote pornography.

3. Educate and sensitize the public on the detrimental effect of internet prostitution.

4. Professionalization of social work practice for enhanced advocacy, education, rehabilitation and reintegration of victims.

5. Eradication of poverty through the provision of skills acquisition centres for the training and empowerment of the youth.

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