

Android-Phone as Paraphernalia of commercial sex and Hookup culture among students in Public Universities in Nigeria

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Abstract

*In Nigeria, commercial sex has become a lucrative sector, especially for young people. A huge percentage of sex workers are students, particularly in Nigerian public institutions. The high prevalence of commercial sex among these future leaders is a source of worry. It has been noted that behaviour has taken a new dimension as a result of improved science and technology. The dynamic of commercial sex specifically among university students posed a source of worry among the criminologists and stakeholders. Recently, the hook-up culture has taken the stage with the use of Android and smartphones as Paraphernalia of the act. Despite this dynamism, scholars and researchers remained silent while the act continued as an inferno, thereby creating a wider gap that needs to be filled urgently. It is against this background that this study investigates Android-Phone as Paraphernalia of commercial sex and Hookup culture among students in Public Universities in Nigeria. The study therefore discussed the prevalence of hook-up culture among Public university students. This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and observational methods. This means that the study relied on online and internet sources, scholarly works, and personal observation to gather data. The study provides a useful framework for understanding how hook-up culture spreads and is adopted by university students in Nigeria. This culture is significantly very high among this important group of future leaders. Arising from this the study recommends among others that there is a need to **integrate** healthy relationships and sex education into the university curriculum and assess the campus environment and culture to identify areas that may be contributing to the hook-up culture.*

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Introduction

In modern society, commercial sex has taken a troubling and, in fact, repulsive turn. This type of sex is carried out for cash or other business purposes. In Nigeria, commercial sex is still very much in use. This profession is believed to be among the oldest in human history, having existed for as long as humanity⁵. Depending on what those cultures permit, sex employment is fairly frequent in many nations and civilisations, either openly or surreptitiously. Naturally, the Bible documents the history of commercial sex and its practice in ancient Israel. Additionally, it should be noted that, despite being widespread in Israel, the practice was only permissible for single people; married persons were prohibited from participating, and couples who did so faced penalties⁶.

Notably, criminologists, scholars, labour unions, governments, and intergovernmental organisations have gradually started using the term "sex work" in debates about prostitution worldwide since Carol first invented and used it in 1978. Leigh adopted the word to promote women's sexual freedom and sex workers' rights because she was both a sex worker and an activist because of the economic importance of her line of work. This is because the trafficking of people across borders, particularly to Italy and certain other parts of Europe, has led to severe human rights violations and the expansion of trade internationally⁷.

In Nigeria, brothels and their houses are the most common locations for sex workers. The growing number of young students and recent graduates who turn to prostitution as a source of income is causing a shift in the tactics adopted by sex workers. These people are also occasionally called call girls or Aristo girls⁸. Some of these recent grads and students regularly frequented restaurants and pubs, while others had sex with call-ups and pimps⁹. There are other forms of prostitution, such as floating prostitutes, "night brides, and sugar daddy syndrome. It's referred to as *Sugar Daddy Syndrome* when a young girl and a wealthy older man exchange sexual favours¹⁰. The duration of these relationships is significantly longer than that of hookups. Part-time workers

⁵Y.O. Adediran, O.O. Olusanya and O.O. Ajayi, "Prevalence of Hookup Culture and its Consequences on Psychosocial and Academic Development of Female Undergraduates", *Journal of Specialised and Professional Education*, 7, No. 1 (2023):14-23

⁶M.B. Agunbiade and J.O. Ajobiewe, "E-Dating and Marital Life in Nigeria: The Nexus," *Journal of Social Sciences and Public Policy*, 10, No.2 ((2018): 56-78

⁷J. DeLamater, "Sexual expression in later life," in Michael Kimmel and the Stony Brook Sexualities Group, (ed) *Sexualities: Identities, Behaviors, and Society*, (Oxford: University Press, 2015): 175-197

⁸J. DeLamater, "Sexual expression in later life, 175-197.

⁹ J.S. Aubrey and S.E. Smith, "The Impact of Exposure to Sexually Oriented Media on the Endorsement of Hookup Culture: A Panel Study of First-Year College Students," *Mass Communication and Society*. 1 No.19,(2016): 74–101.[doi:10.1080/15205436.2015.1070875](https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2015.1070875).

¹⁰J.S. Aubrey and S.E. Smith, "The Impact of Exposure to Sexually Oriented Media, 74-101.

known as "aristo girls," "night brides," or "floating prostitutes," prowl the streets of big cities at night in the hopes of being picked up by primarily desirable men¹¹. In some cases, wealthy Nigerians and the call girls are connected through porters and hotel staff. The majority of the aristo females serve upper class clients, and foreigners are paid more than brothel prostitutes. Traders, bartenders, hairdressers, and other occupations employ about two-thirds of the people who work as prostitutes in brothels and on the streets. Brothels, which are present in practically every major Nigerian city, offer the least priced type of service. The brothels are located in the city's slums and crowded neighbourhoods.

In Nigeria, commercial sex has become a lucrative sector, especially for young people. About 31% of sex workers are students, particularly in Nigerian institutions¹². There are various types of sex workers, including those who work from home, those who stand by the side of the road, and those who reside in brothels. ¹²pointed out that the presence of sex worker households is an indication of bad governance and unwholesome social conditions for both adults and children. Similarly, Agunbiade, and Ajobiwe noted that the sex trade among the students in universities is a threat to the community and that the emergence of a sizable number of commercial sex workers has become a substantial societal concern more especially as it takes another dimension¹³.

It was recently observed that university students are now communicating with people for casual sex via their Android phones instead of looking for more conventional meeting spots, such as brothels or special locations. The desire to avoid stigmatization and prejudice is a major factor in this change. Students can preserve a degree of anonymity and prevent peer rejection or judgment by interacting with others via their phones. The emergence of the digital era has completely changed how people engage, communicate, and build relationships. The widespread use of cellphones, especially Android models, has opened up new channels for networking, social interaction, and even love relationships. However, a new phenomenon known as hookup culture has also emerged as a result of this enhanced connectedness.

Hookup culture refers to the practice of engaging in casual, short-term romantic or sexual encounters, often without any commitment or expectation of a long-term relationship¹⁴. This culture has become increasingly prevalent among young adults, particularly university students, who are seeking new experiences, excitement, and a sense of freedom. In Nigeria, the hookup culture

¹¹A. Kangiwa, "The Socio-economic Factors and Effects of Prostitution in Nigeria," *European Journal of Research in Social Sciences*. 5, No.3, (2015): 2056-5429.

¹²I.B. Olojede, V.A. Omoniyi, and B.Q. Ibikunle, "Poverty and Sex Trade in Nigeria: Implications on Women's Sexual Health," *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3, No.10, (2020): 67-81.

¹³ M.B. Agunbiade, and J.O. Ajobiwe, "E-Dating and Marital Life In Nigeria: The Nexus," *Journal of Social Sciences and Public Policy*, 10, No.2,(2018): 26-41.

¹⁴ J.R. Garcia, C. Reiber, S.G. Massey and A.M. Merriwether, "Sexual Hook-up Culture," *Monitor on Psychology, American Psychological Association*. 44, No. 2. (2013): 60-75.

has taken a new dimension, particularly among university students¹⁵. The use of Android phones and social media platforms has created an enabling environment for students to engage in casual sex, often in exchange for material gains or financial benefits¹⁶. This trend has significant implications for the moral, social, and economic well-being of students, as well as the overall academic environment.

It has been observed that most of the public universities in Nigeria, in particular, have become breeding grounds for this hookup culture and the scholars remain silent over this ugly situation. The lack of effective supervision, inadequate counseling services, and the absence of clear policies on sexual relationships has contributed to the proliferation of this culture. Furthermore, the economic challenges faced by many students have made them vulnerable to exploitation, with some engaging in commercial sex to make ends meet.

This study aims to investigate the phenomenon of Android phones as paraphernalia of hookup culture among students in public universities in Nigeria. Specifically, it seeks to examine the role of Android phones in facilitating hookup culture, and the implications of this culture for the academic environment and the well-being of students

Statement of Problem

In Nigeria, where the practice is obviously on the rise, particularly in large cities like Uyo, Lagos, Ibadan, Umuahia, Kano, Port Harcourt, Makurdi, and Oshogbo, among others, commercial sex workers are most commonly seen in car parks, brothels, hotels¹⁷, and busy streets¹⁸. It is also commonly known that young female undergraduates and unemployed graduate females use sex work as a way to support their families and make money. Most criminologists and sociologists have blamed the society for the high rate of commercial sex and the hook up culture among the students. They of the view that the trend's consistent upward trajectory, however, have been influenced by the challenging socio-economic conditions thereby neglecting the influence of science and technology.

The widespread use of Android phones by Nigerian students at public colleges has given the hookup culture a new facet and turned it into a profitable commercial sex industry. The accessibility of dating apps, social networking sites, and other online resources has made it possible for students to have casual sex, frequently in return for cash or other advantages. This trend has significant implications for the moral, social, and economic well-being of students, as well as the overall academic environment.

¹⁵ K.M. Lufkin, "Hookup Culture in Gay Men: an Application of Minority Stress Model, Just World Belief, and Attachment Style on Interpersonal Relationship Choices," (A BS thesis submitted to *University of Portland*. 2017): 382-387.doi:10.15760.

¹⁶ J.S. Aubrey and S.E. Smith, "The Impact of Exposure to Sexually Oriented Media, 74-101.

¹⁷ I.B. Olojede, Omoniyi and B.Q. Ibikunle, "Poverty and Sex Trade in Nigeria, 79-94.

¹⁸ A. Kangiwa, "The Socio-economic Factors and Effects of Prostitution in Nigeria, 2056-5429.

The use of Android phones as a paraphernalia of hookup culture has also raised concerns about the objectification of students, particularly females, and the commodification of sex. Despite the growing concern about this trend, there is a dearth of empirical research on the role of Android phones in facilitating hookup culture and commercial sex among students in public universities in Nigeria. This study aims to bridge this knowledge gap by investigating the phenomenon of Android phones as paraphernalia of hookup culture among students in public universities in Nigeria.

Method

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and observational methods. This means that the study relied on online and internet sources, scholarly works, and personal observation to gather data. A comprehensive review of existing scholarly literature on hookup culture, Android phones, and university students was conducted. Online databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ResearchGate were used to access relevant articles, journals, and books. The researcher conducted personal observations of university students' behaviour and interactions on campuses, particularly in areas where students tend to congregate, such as cafes, libraries, and student unions.

Android-Phone as Paraphernalia of Commercial Sex in Nigeria: A Hookup Scenario

With the rise of dating apps, social media, and shifting social norms, the hookup culture the common practice of having casual, brief romantic or sexual encounters, frequently without any commitment or expectation of a long-term relationship—has become more and more common, especially among young adults¹⁹.

The impact of dating apps and websites on hookup culture has been the subject of more studies. According to Olojede et al²⁰, the potential of "skipping the small talk and not needing to worry about the customary "barriers" of saving face by talking to someone online has made discussing sex simpler as hookups and dates can now be found online. Additional research has investigated hookup trends to discover how mobile app makers have catered to their potential customers. For example, the creators of Grindr capitalized on the increased sexual desires among gay men to base their app on locational awareness. That paved the way for apps in which users can find connections and meet up with people, who are often right around the corner.

First, the Internet has made it possible to connect with a much larger network of potential partners that were previously unknown or inaccessible; second, it has made it possible for people to communicate almost instantly through a

¹⁹R. Howard, and C. Perilloux, "Is Mating Psychology Most Closely Tied to Biological Sex or Preferred Partner's Sex?" *Personality and Individual Differences*. 115: (2016): 83–89. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2016.05.009.

²⁰I.B. Olojede, Omoniyi and B.Q. Ibikunle, "Poverty and Sex Trade in Nigeria, 79-94.

variety of channels (text, voice, image, and video) without the need for partners to be in the same place or even be aware of it (e.g., by allowing others to view one's information online); and third, whereas choosing a mate used to primarily rely on a person's intuition and personal opinions, the Internet promises to pair up compatible partners using new tools that use data from thousands or even millions of users²¹.

Through the use of software applications, such as online dating apps like Tinder, Happn, or Grindr, smartphones have drastically altered how people interact with one another, including how we communicate, find sexual partners, and set up meetings.

These apps are an advancement over desk-based technologies like chatrooms or messaging clients like Messenger because they allow users to share not only text, images, or videos with other users but also their current location²².

Numerous studies support the American Academy of Paediatrics' contention that media portrayals of sexuality may have an impact on teens' sexual behaviour. According to some research, teenagers who watch more sexually explicit films are more likely to engage in riskier sexual behaviours and become sexually active earlier in life²³. The idea is that the media may serve as a "super peer" for youth, who then seek to develop a sexual identity that is in line with popular portrayals. On the other hand, conservatives opposed to hookup culture have generated controversy and come under attack²⁴.

MTV's Jersey Shore is one of the most popular reality shows on cable television, which paints a picture of partying and sexy hookups. About 35% of sexual conduct on cable television, according to studies, involves persons "who are not in established committed relationships." Gender differences in sexual monogamy on television imply that women want commitment and men stray from it. This further implies that sex is synonymous with masculinity, which may make male viewers more receptive to the hookup culture²⁵.

As the cost of personal computers dropped and online access has increased, Lufkin et al²⁶, argue that internet pornography has emerged as a primary influence on young people, especially men's, attitudes towards sex and their own sexuality. They opine that the increase in access to pornography via the internet is what "spurred" hookup culture, in part by challenging the idea that "good sex" takes place in a monogamous relationship. Feminists have opined

²¹L.A. Stuart, "College Hookup Culture: Myth or Reality?". *Express Milwaukee*. (2011), 07-22.

²²L.E. Napper, S.R. Kenney and J.W. LaBrie, "The Longitudinal Relationships among Injunctive Norms and Hooking Up Attitudes and Behaviors in College Students," *Journal of Sex Research*. 5, No.52 : (2016). 499–506. doi:10.1080/00224499.2014.952809.

²³I.Z. Prochner, T.K. Chen, and H. Lu, "Casual Sex During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Risks, Recommendations and Spaces for Design Intervention," *Imagination Lancaster*, 5, No.77 (5). (2021): 48–51.

²⁴I.Z. Prochner, T.K. Chen, and H. Lu, "Casual Sex During the COVID-19 Pandemic, 48–51.

²⁵I.B. Olojede, Omoniyi and B.Q. Ibikunle, "Poverty and Sex Trade in Nigeria, 45-67.

²⁶K.M. Lufkin, "Hookup Culture in Gay Men, 382-387.

that pornography is a cultural force that is shaping the sexual attitudes of an entire generation" and a "major form of sex today for boys"²⁷.

Women who have multiple premarital sexual relationships are more likely to experience long-term disruptions if they ever get married, according to a 2004 peer-reviewed study published in the *Journal of Marriage and Family*²⁸. This effect is "strongest for women who have multiple partners in modern society, commercial sex has taken a troubling and, in fact, repulsive turn. This type of sex is carried out for cash or other business purposes. In Nigeria, commercial sex is still very much in use. This profession is believed to be among the oldest in human history, having existed for as long as humanity. Depending on what those cultures will permit, sex employment is fairly frequent in many nations and civilizations, either openly or surreptitiously. Naturally, the Bible documents the history of commercial sex and its practice in ancient Israel. Additionally, it should be noted that, despite being widespread in Israel, the practice was only permissible for single people; married persons were prohibited from participating, and couples who did so faced penalties"²⁹.

Recently, it has been noted that criminologists, scholars, labour unions, governments, and intergovernmental organizations have gradually started using the term sex work" in debates about prostitution worldwide since. This is because the trafficking of people across borders, particularly to Italy and certain other parts of Europe, has led to severe human rights violations and the expansion of the trade internationally. Two opposing philosophies exist regarding prostitution. These are the organizations battling to end criminalization and decriminalize sex workers. This implies that a woman's value is diminished and she is portrayed as a consumable commodity when she is a prostitute. However, fervent abolitionists contend that Nigeria should emulate Sudan and punish prostitution with the death penalty. The 1949 United Nations Convention, which declares that "prostitution and the accompanying evil of the trafficking for the purpose of prostitution" damage the welfare of the individual, the family, and the community, is in line with abolitionist viewpoints³⁰.

However, when it comes to prostitution, Nigeria has adopted a hybrid prohibitionist decriminalization strategy. Since sex work is a legitimate profession and people have the ability to decide whether or not to work in it, the rights group for sex workers has called for full decriminalization and backed industry regulation, stating that it is wrong to criminalize that decision. Any attempt to limit women's power to make decisions about their bodies leads to their subordination and acceptance of the patriarchal system that is now in

²⁷Lufkin, K. M. Hookup Culture in Gay Men: an Application of Minority Stress Model, Just World Belief, and Attachment Style on Interpersonal Relationship Choices (BS thesis). *University of Portland*. (2017): 382-387. doi:10.15760.

²⁸Agunbiade, M. B. and Ajobiwe, J. O "E-Dating and Marital Life In Nigeria: The Nexus," *Journal of Social Sciences and Public Policy*, 2, No.10, (2018):98-107.

²⁹Agunbiade, M. B. and Ajobiwe, J. O, "E-Dating and Marital Life In Nigeria, 98-107,

³⁰B. Fahs and A. Munger, "Friends with benefits? Gendered performances in women's casual sexual relationships". *Personal Relationships*. 2, No.22, (2015): 188-203.

place. Thus, the prohibition of commercial sex work violates consenting adults' rights to association and personal liberty³¹.

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It was recently observed that students are now communicating with people for casual sex via their Android phones instead of looking for more conventional meeting spots, such as brothels or special locations. The desire to avoid stigmatization and prejudice is a major factor in this change. Students can preserve a degree of anonymity and prevent peer rejection or judgement by interacting with others via their phones.

The emergence of the digital era has completely changed how people engage, communicate, and build relationships. The widespread use of cellphones, especially Android models, has opened up new channels for networking, social interaction, and even love relationships. However, a new phenomenon known as "hookup culture" has also emerged as a result of this enhanced connectedness³³.

The use of Android phones and social media platforms has created an enabling environment for students to engage in casual sex, often in exchange for material gains or financial benefits. This trend has significant implications for the moral, social, and economic well-being of students, as well as the overall academic environment. It has been observed that most of the public universities in Nigeria, in particular, have become breeding grounds for this hookup culture and the scholars remind silence over this ugly situation. The lack of effective supervision, inadequate counseling services, and the absence of clear policies on sexual relationships has contributed to the proliferation of this culture. Furthermore, the economic challenges faced by many students have made them vulnerable to exploitation, with some engaging in commercial sex to make ends meet.

³¹A. Kangiwa, "The Socio-economic Factors and Effects of Prostitution in Nigeria, 2056-5429.

³²S.E. Blessing, "Is Commercial Sex Work Really Work in Nigeria? The Motivations, Dimensions and Policy Implications," *International Journal of African Society, Cultures and Traditions*, Vol.10, No.1, (2021): 11-26.

³³J.S. Aubrey and S.E Smith, "The Impact of Exposure to Sexually Oriented Media, 74-101.

Theoretical Framework

The paper adopted diffusion innovation theory to explain the hookup culture among public university students in Nigeria.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory (DOI)

The Diffusion of Innovations Theory (DOI) was first introduced by Everett Rogers in 1962. The theory aims to explain how new ideas, technologies, and innovations spread and are adopted by individuals and organizations. According to Rogers, the adoption of an innovation is influenced by five characteristics: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability.

In the context of hook-up culture among university students in Nigeria, the DOI theory can be applied to understand how this behaviour spreads and is adopted by students. For instance, the relative advantage of hook-up culture may be perceived as a way to gain social status, intimacy, or excitement. The compatibility of hook-up culture with existing values and norms among university students in Nigeria may also influence its adoption rate. For example, students who value independence and autonomy may be more likely to adopt hook-up culture.

The complexity of hook-up culture may also influence its adoption rate among university students in Nigeria. For instance, students who are familiar with dating apps and social media platforms may find it easier to adopt hook-up culture. On the other hand, students who are not familiar with these technologies may find it more difficult to adopt hook-up culture. The trialability of hook-up culture may also influence its adoption rate. For example, students who are able to try out hook-up culture without committing to it may be more likely to adopt it.

The observability of hook-up culture may also influence its adoption rate among university students in Nigeria. For instance, students who observe their peers engaging in hook-up culture may be more likely to adopt it themselves. Social media platforms, in particular, can play a significant role in making hook-up culture more observable and desirable among university students.

Conclusion

This study aims to investigate the phenomenon of Android phones as paraphernalia of hookup culture among students in public universities in Nigeria. Specifically, it seeks to examine the role of Android phones in facilitating hookup culture, the motivations and experiences of students who engage in hookup culture, and the implications of this culture for the academic environment and the well-being of students. In conclusion, the study provides a useful framework for understanding how hook-up culture spreads and is adopted by university students in Nigeria. By examining the characteristics of hook-up culture and the types of adopters, criminologists and researchers can

gain insights into the factors that influence the adoption of hook-up culture among university students in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Arising from the threatening nature of this behaviour, the study recommends as follows:

1. University-Wide Education and Awareness Programs: Implement comprehensive education and awareness programs that address the physical, emotional, and psychological risks associated with hook-up culture. These programs should be mandatory for all students and should include discussions on consent, healthy relationships, and safe sex practices.
2. Promote Healthy Relationships and Sex Education: Integrate healthy relationships and sex education into the university curriculum. This can include workshops, seminars, and online resources that provide students with accurate and unbiased information about sex, relationships, and intimacy.
5. Address Campus Environment and Culture: Assess the campus environment and culture to identify areas that may be contributing to the hook-up culture. This can include reviewing campus policies, procedures, and programs to ensure they promote healthy relationships and safe sex practices.
6. Involve Parents and Guardians: Engage parents and guardians in the conversation about hook-up culture and healthy relationships. This can include providing them with resources and information to help them support their children in making healthy choices unions.

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