

“To be or not to be?” Reasons for Engaging in Commercial Sex Work in the Cape Coast Metropolis, Ghana

Kwame W. Nkrumah ^{1*}, Joshua A. Omotosho^{2*}, Stephen Doe Fia² & Koawo A. Edjah³

1. Methodist Church Ghana, Cape Coast Diocese, Cape Coast, Ghana
2. Department of Guidance and Counselling, University of Cape Coast, Ghana
3. Department of Education and Psychology, University of Cape Coast, Ghana

*Corresponding authors's email address: atonku@gmail.com
jomotosho@ucc.edu.gh

Abstract

The practice of commercial sex work exists in many parts of Ghana. However, research is scanty on its nature and its associated activities. This study was designed to examine the reasons why commercial sex workers in the Cape Coast Metropolis of Ghana choose to venture into the sex business. Using a nested concurrent mixed method design, a sample of 364 participants (356 commercial sex workers and eight key persons) were reached for the study. A questionnaire and an interview guide were used to collect data for the study. Frequencies, percentages, and thematic analysis were used to analyze the data. The study found that most of the respondents ventured into the practice due to the socio-economic challenges confronting them and the need to make money to resolve those challenges. The study concluded that the commercial sex business in the study area is a thriving one because it is a business which does not demand any technical know-how or specialized skills and competencies to get engaged in. Furthermore, institutionalized systems and mechanisms, particularly enforcement of laws and regulations banning the practice were found to be woefully inadequate. The study recommended that key stakeholder institutions such as the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, the Cape Coast Metropolitan Assembly, and Oguua Traditional Council jointly formulate and operationalize interventional schemes and educational programmes to help effectively mitigate the practice.

Keywords: Career counselling; commercial sex work; sexual adventurism; practice; socio-economic challenges; unemployment

Introduction

The practice of commercial sex work is a known non-legalized business in almost every part of the modern world, yet it thrives. It is patronized and popularized in different countries and cities despite the associated public condemnation and hazards. Typically, hazards such as severe health risks, kidnappings, forced enslavement, defrauding by clients and some personnel of the law-enforcement agencies, abuses – physical, sexual, and emotional – and in some instances murder for ritual purposes are associated with the practice. Ghana's case is not different. commercial sex work continues to attract appreciable patronage even in recent times for varied reasons. It is quite perplexing why, in spite of the numerous grave consequences on both the commercial sex workers in particular and the society in general, some female individuals would still venture into the practice. It is of utmost importance to investigate the real motivators and reasons that attract some individuals in the society to engage in commercial sex work in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

Statement of the problem

Commercial sex work has been an age-long issue of concern and contention confronting human societies globally and nationally. The situation is increasingly becoming complicated and sophisticated due to modernization and globalization (Ibrahim & Muhtar, as cited in Ezeh, Ugwu, & Ngwu, 2019). Globally, the practice is not restricted to one gender. However, female commercial sex workers are more common than their male counterparts (Greenberg, Bruess, & Oswalt, 2014). In Ghana, commercial sex workers are mostly females and their participation in the commercial sex business is not only local, but a cross-border phenomenon (Ansah, 2006; Ampofo, 2001). Within the confines of Ghana, particularly, the nation's capital, Accra, and in other Metropolitan cities such as Tema, Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi, Tamale, and Cape Coast, commercial sex work hotspots are dotted in several areas. Localities such as the Kwame Nkrumah Circle, Atembuda in East Legon, St Johns in Achimota, Kejetia in Kumasi, European Town and the Zenith area in Sekondi-Takoradi, Ashaiman in Tema, Kru Town and London Bridge in Cape Coast have become hot vicinities for commercial sex workers. The practice has become more rampant and is fast emerging as a source of cheap supply of female sex partners (*MyJoyonline.com*, 2013, Ansah, 2006).

Apparently, the Cape Coast Metropolis with its rich and enviable socio-cultural, historical, educational, and religeo-political heritage, coupled with its relatively sizeable geographical area, is often reported to have high rates of commercial sex workers, a situation that leaves much to be desired. The practice is considered to be widespread and lucrative in the Cape Coast Metropolis. It is quite surprising that the locality, widely reputed to be one of Ghana's tourism hubs and a citadel of formal Western education should be engulfed in commercial sex work and its allied activities. *MyJoyonline.com* (2013) reports that there is a steady increase in the number of young people aged between 13 and 19 years, involved in commercial sex work in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

Also, *Mynews.gh* (2017) reported that 'child prostitutes' offer free sex in Cape Coast. In the Cape Coast Metropolis, the practice is reported to be more popular in Brofoyedur, Ntsin, Anafo, Amanful, Gyeagyano, and Bakaano area in the main Cape Coast township and Abura, OLA Estates, and Kwaprow near the University of Cape Coast. Such disturbing reports need to be carefully and scientifically investigated to ascertain the reasons that motivate some individuals to venture into the practice in the Metropolis. For instance, there is a need to investigate whether these reports and claims are true and substantiated or not. Also, the issue of the real motivators leading the people into commercial sex work in the Cape Coast Metropolis need to be examined. For instance, could it be economic, psychosocial, socio-cultural, technological forces or some other variable? In short, it is of paramount importance to carry out investigations to identify the causes of the practice in the Metropolis.

The work of Oduro, Otoo, and Amoako-Asiama (2019) is both revealing and fascinating in that the authors' primary focus was on minors (persons below 18 years of age) as well as the challenges that researchers face when investigating minors who engage in commercial sex work. However, Oduro et al. (2019) did not investigate the reasons that motivate individuals to venture into commercial sex work in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Also, that research did not engage key stakeholders of the act in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The current study was therefore designed to fill the gaps identified above, especially, the reasons why individuals enter into commercial sex work in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

Literature review

Contemporary Conceptualisation and Trends of Commercial Sex Work

Commercial sex work persists in different forms and magnitude across the globe due to certain conditions (Sanders, O'Neill, & Pitcher, 2009). Commercial Sex Work carries certain severe health hazards and socio-cultural consequences that may negatively impact an individual's life (Balfour & Allen, 2014; Aveling, Cornish, & Oldmeadow, 2013; Kamise, 2013). The internet and perforation of new technologies such as mobile technology and social media platforms have increasingly become less cumbersome for individuals, not only to network, advertise and sell electronically and participate in commercial sex work but also practice it physically (Ezeh et al., 2019). Modern day attitudes towards the essence of sex and what constitute appropriate heterosexual behaviour and conduct to some extent have been shaped by the prevailing rapidly changing social and cultural contexts (Hayes, 2002, Busia as cited in Ampofo, 2001).

Causalities of Commercial Sex Work

Certain reasons, may be overtly or covertly, responsible for the existence of this phenomenon that has pervaded all the nations of the world. Balfour and Allen (2014) have posited that some individuals may consciously or unconsciously decide to venture into Commercial Sex Work as a means of livelihood or an avenue to make ends meet. In the same vein Hayes (2002) has pointed out that in the face of restricted choices in economic ventures, individuals can resort to commercial sex work as a way of refusing poverty, or a medium to resolve the threat to one's existence. Martin (2019) also underscores social and economic inequalities as one of the conditions that push people into the sex industry internationally.

Generally, while some females venture into commercial sex work out of desperation (Scorgie, Chersich, Gerbase, Lule, & Lo, 2012), others are kidnapped and forced into it (Dewey, Crowhurst, & Izugbara, 2019). Similarly, others enter into the practice as a result of curiosity and adventurism (Malarek, 2011) while still for some others, it is another stream of income to supplement their earnings from their regular employment (Malarek, 2011).

Social and economic disparities coupled with harsh socio-economic conditions affecting women and young persons do not only predispose them to Commercial Sex Work as an option for economic

liberation and prosperity but also cause them to actually venture into it (Scorgie et al., 2012; Nasir et al., 2010). Also, that some individuals venture into commercial sex work as a result of youthful exuberance, unguided desire for freedom and certain personal liberties, as well as the quest for power, fame, and popularity are noteworthy (Scorgie et al., 2012; Hayes, 2002). Furthermore, Darko (2010) which reiterates that the desires of individuals to liberate themselves from personal and social responsibilities, may cause them to troop to the streets and consequently fall victim to the practice.

The above notwithstanding, Commercial Sex Work is also seen as a perfect avenue to carry out certain illegal habits and unlawful practices such as the sale of illicit drugs, gambling, collection of seminal fluids as byproducts from sexual engagements for ritual purposes, and human trafficking (Hayes, 2002). Also significant is parental influences and peer pressure which cause some individuals to enter into Commercial Sex Work either to satisfy societal expectations or fulfill personal ambitions such as easy and quick accumulation of wealth and possessions, and obtaining of upward economic mobility (Ansah, 2016; Shively, Kliorys, Wheeler, & Hunt, 2012).

Manipulative and abusive relationships, defilement, incest, sexual molestations, domestic violence, and emotional deprivation especially during childhood, may result in homelessness with its resultant social evils such as inadequate social and financial support and lack of formidable nurture and guidance, all of which may easily entice young and youthful females into commercial sex work with a view to finding acceptance, solace, companionship, and safe shelter (Nasir et al., 2012).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to ascertain the reasons which account for female persons' participation in Commercial Sex Work in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

Research Question

- What reasons motivate individuals to venture into Commercial Sex Work in the Cape Coast Metropolis?

Delimitation

The study was delimited to the following: only female Commercial Sex Workers aged at least, 16 years and above in the following selected localities in the Cape Coast Metropolis: Kwaprow,

Apewosika, Abura, Pedu, Antem, London Bridge, Coronation Street, Kru Town, Anafo, Ntsin, Amanful, and Brofoyedur. The reasons which motivate females in the said Metropolis to venture into commercial sex work was the main concern to the current researchers.

Theoretical Framework

Behaviour formation and disposition have been explicated by various theories, hence the theoretical framework for this current study is the social identity theory by Tajfel (1981a). The theory is a social psychological theory of intergroup relations and processes and holds social context as the main determinant of self-definition and behaviour (Ellemers & Haslam, 2011).

Research Methods

The research design adopted for the study was the mixed methods design, specifically, the nested concurrent design. The choice of the concurrent mixed methods design was based on the following reasons: firstly, it is adjudged to be particularly useful when investigating complex issues such as Commercial Sex Work where different levels of analysis are needed (Creswell, 2003). Secondly, it is suitable for getting rich and comprehensive data that capture both the “what and the why” of a phenomenon being studied, thereby leading to a richer understanding of the topic. A third reason for the choice of the nested concurrent design borders on its being time-efficient. As pointed out by Creswell and Clark (2017), since both types of data - quantitative and qualitative are collected concurrently, this design was able to help the researchers save time better than if a sequential mixed methods design had been used. For the current study, both the quantitative and the qualitative phases of the study were carried out at the same time but independent of each other. Also, both data were converged to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. Lastly, more weight was given to the quantitative data than the qualitative (Creswell & Clark, 2017; Creswell, 2003).

Population

The target population for the study comprised all female Commercial Sex Workers in the Cape Coast Metropolis numbering over 1,950. However, the accessible population was 954 female Commercial Sex Workers. This number was obtained from the 2019 annual reports and statistical data of the West Africa Programme to

Combat AIDS & STI (WAPCAS), Ghana. Additionally, 16 key stakeholder institutions in the Cape Coast Metropolis were also included in the study. The following constitute the concerned stakeholder institutions: (1) Oguua Traditional Council, Cape Coast Local Council of Churches, (2) the Girl Child Division of the Cape Coast Metropolitan Education Directorate, (3) Central Regional Coordinating Council, (4) Cape Coast Metropolitan Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, (5) Regional Directorate of Ghana AIDS Commission, (7) Cape Coast Metropolitan Assembly, (8) Department of Gender, (9) Ghana Health Service/the Ministry of Health, (10) Regional Peace Council, (11) Central Regional House of Chiefs, (12) Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service, (13) a Household/Family Community of a commercial sex worker, (14) Central Regional Development Commission (CEDECOM), (15) Teacher Association Groups (GNAT/NAGRAT), and (16) Coalition of Media Houses in Cape Coast.

Limitations of the Study

The following were the limitations of the study:

1. Reaching out to the Commercial Sex Workers and engaging them for a scientific study was not without challenges since the practice is mostly carried out under the cover of darkness because it is illegal in Ghana. Some of the venues and times for engaging the respondents for data collection purposes were occasionally disrupted. As a result, some of the questionnaire failed to pass the eligibility for inclusion criteria for data processing. Additionally, the non-cooperative attitude of some of the respondents, particularly, quitting the data collection process unceremoniously to attend to their regular clients contributed to a shortfall in the sample size of 386.
2. The subjectivity of the respondents in responding to the questionnaire (enlargement or concealment) due to fear of full public disclosure and social desirability could not be completely ruled out neither were they underestimated.

Sample and Sampling Procedure(s)

Commercial sex workers and persons in key positions, heads of departments and coordinators, in key stakeholder institutions in the Metropolis were selected for the research.

Sampling of Research Participants

The sample size for the commercial sex workers was determined based on the estimates of Creswell (2012). Creswell stipulates a minimum sample size of 350 for a research survey (of which the current study is). However, the sample size for the commercial sex workers was increased by 36 to obtain 384 based on the assertion of Glenn (1992). Glenn asserts that it is necessary for sample sizes to be adjusted. The reason for the increase (upward adjustment) of 36 for the current study was to cater for possible fallouts that could possibly occur during the data collection stage on the parts of the participants due to the sensitive nature of the issue under investigation. Additionally, it was also to cater for any attritions during data processing stages which could result from incomplete responses and wrongful completion of the questionnaire. A multi-stage sampling technique comprising purposive sampling, simple random sampling, and convenience sampling was used in selecting the commercial sex workers.

It had been determined from the onset that 50% of the 12 Commercial Sex Work hotspots and 50% of the key stakeholder institutions would be the sources from which the participants would be drawn. Specifically, purposive sampling was used to select 50% of the 12 Commercial Sex Work hotspots in the Metropolis. Simple random sampling (lottery method) was used to select the resulting number six commercial sex work hotspots. These were (1) Kru Town, (2) Anafo, (3) Ntsin, (4) Abura, (5) Antem and (6) Coronation Street, from the 12 commercial sex work hotspot in the Metropolis. Convenience sampling was used to select Commercial Sex Workers from the six selected hotspots. Convenience sampling was used at this stage because it helped to include whoever happened to be available at the particular points in time among the already existing groups were used (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). This was facilitated through the assistance of WAPCAS, Ghana personnel, who by the nature of their work have well-established official regular and routine interactions with the community of the Commercial Sex Workers in the Metropolis.

Sampling of Key Stakeholder Institutions

As noted earlier, purposive sampling method was used to select key stakeholder institutions. Fifty percent of the 16 key stakeholder institutions (ie, eight) were sampled in the Metropolis for the research. Furthermore, simple random sampling (lottery method) was used to select the resulting eight key stakeholder institutions. Following are the eight selected key stakeholder institutions: (1) Oguaa Traditional Council, (2) the Girl Child Division of the Cape Coast Metropolitan Education Directorate, (3) Cape Coast Metropolitan Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, (4) Regional Directorate of Ghana AIDS Commission, (5) Department of Gender, (6) Ghana Health Service, (7) Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service, and (8) a Household/Family Community of a commercial sex worker. Furthermore, it was purposive sampling that was used to select one person in a key position from each of the eight key stakeholder institutions. They had to be either heads of departments or coordinators of key stakeholder institutions. The principles of adequacy (DeVillis, 2017) and saturation (Baker & Edwards, 2012; Cobern & Adams, 2020) greatly informed the sampling of the participants for the qualitative component. In sum, the sample size used for the study was 364. It comprised 356 Commercial Sex Workers and eight persons in key positions in the selected key stakeholder institutions.

Data Collection Instruments

Two data collection instruments designed by the researchers were used for the study: a questionnaire titled “Nature and Practice of Commercial Sex Work Questionnaire” and an interview guide titled “Interview Guide on Nature and Practice of Commercial Sex Work”. The development and construction of the two instruments used were guided by the objectives of the study, reviewed literature, and observations from the pilot testing and guided by the eight guidelines for scale construction as stipulated by DeVillis (2017). Both data collection instruments were administered directly to the participants on one-on-one basis.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire had two sections: A and B and a total of 19 items. Section A - demographic characteristics of respondents (8 items) and Section B – reasons and motives for entering into commercial sex

work (11 items). The questionnaire was administered to only the Commercial Sex Workers.

The Interview Guide

Unlike the questionnaire, the interview guide was administered to only the selected persons in key positions in the key stakeholder institutions in the Metropolis. The interview guide had a brief introduction and a section on respondent's demographics as well as a section on questions that were asked. There were four main questions, however, follow up and/or subsidiary questions were asked as and when necessary to either elucidate some of the participant's responses or provided more clarity of some of their responses.

Pilot Testing

The questionnaire was pilot-tested in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis in the Western Region of Ghana. Reasons for their choice include the fact that the two Metropolis are identical in many respects. For instance, both are coastal metropolis with well-patronized landing beaches and fishing harbours. Also, both cities are Regional Capitals, Metropolitan administrative headquarters, and political heads (assemblies) and have had extensive contacts with early European merchants in the then Gold Coast. Additionally, both Metropolis have a history of commercial sex work and activities dating back to the colonial era; active commercial sex hotspots still exist in them.

Thirty commercial sex workers participated in the pilot study on two different occasions with an interval period of two weeks. The same participants were used in both instances for pilot testing the questionnaire. The feedback from the pilot study greatly assisted in effecting changes and making corrections in the instrument. Ambiguities identified and poorly worded items that were not clearly understood, together with irrelevant items that readily became exposed during the pilot study were carefully and appropriately dealt with. The pilot study provided useful information about deficiencies and elicited appropriate suggestions for improvement and modifications which ensured the content validity of the instrument. It also afforded first-hand experience and direction which greatly facilitated the smooth running and success of the main study (Creswell, 2012; Frankel & Wallen, 1993).

Validity and Reliability of the Research Instruments

The validity of the instruments was determined by five experienced professionals and three experts in the field of instrument development who thoroughly scrutinized and vetted them. The content validity of the instrument was determined by a team of three experts in the University of Cape Coast. The expert views and opinions of these were sought because the validity of an instrument is improved through expert judgment (DeVon et al., 2007). McDonald's omega or coefficient omega and the test-retest methods (DeVellis, 2017) helped in determining the internal consistency of the questionnaire. The reliability coefficients for sections A and B of the questionnaire ranged from .78 to .85 thereby suggesting a good level of reliability (Pallant, 2004).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Review Board, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast. Accessibility to the commercial sex workers in the Cape Coast Metropolis was arranged for and facilitated by WAPCAS Ghana with direct assistance from the office of the Ghana AIDS Commission, Central Regional Secretariat and the project officer for WAPCAS, Ghana, Central Regional Office. The officer-in-charge together with the peer educators and para-legal personnel fully assisted in the mobilization of the commercial sex workers within the selected sites and coordinated all the arrangements and processes prior to and during the administration of the questionnaire. They also facilitated all the arrangements for the actual administration of the data collection activities as well as providing other logistical support that resulted in smooth field research activities.

Respondents for both the quantitative and qualitative components were duly informed about the purposes of the study. Explanations on their selection and the procedures involved were also clearly communicated to them. Informed consent was also sought after they had been adequately briefed about the goals and benefits of the study. Participants were also informed that they could opt out of the exercise at any time if there was a strong need for that step to be taken. Opportunity was also given to commercial sex workers who voluntarily wanted to undergo counselling for assisting them to make certain informed decisions and life choices, especially their future lives. Research participants were given GHc20.00 (3.45 USD) each as

stipends to compensate them for their time. Finally, all the participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality of their responses.

Data processing and analysis

The study examined the reasons which motivate some females in the Cape Coast Metropolis into the practice. The research question had both quantitative and qualitative components. Hence, they were processed and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative analytical procedure. The quantitative data were processed with the assistance of the SPSS software version 25.0. The same SPSS was also used in carrying out the descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics, frequencies and percentages, were used in the analysis of data and discussions thereof. In each case decisions and conclusions were based on simple majority of responses. In addition to the quantitative analysis, data collected from the persons in key positions in the key stakeholder institutions via interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). Both quantitative and qualitative data were integrated during the data analysis stage.

Results

Demographic characteristics of female Commercial Sex Workers

Table 1: Age distribution of Commercial Sex Workers

Age	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Below 18 years	6	1.7
18 – 22 years	88	24.7
23 – 27 years	103	28.9
28 – 32 years	115	32.3
33 – 37 years	36	10.1
38 years & above	8	2.2
TOTAL	356	100.0

Source: Field survey (2019)

A total of 356 commercial sex workers were enrolled in the study as depicted by table 1 above. Their demographic characteristics are as follows: majority of the participants were between the ages of 28-32 years (n= 115 or 32.3%) followed by those between the ages of 23-27 years (n=103 or 28.9%), between ages 18-22 years (n=88 or 24.7%) and few (n=06 or 1.7%) below 18 years. The results did portray

vast majority of the participants in their youthful and most productive stages of life.

Distribution of persons in key positions by gender and institution

The eight persons selected from the key stakeholder institutions that were interviewed for the study were persons who have a great deal of awareness of commercial sex work, its related activities, and certain consequential outcomes of the practice within the Cape Coast Metropolis. Per table 2, the participants comprised five males and three females and five were from government institutions: Department of Gender, Cape Coast Metropolitan Directorate of Education, Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, Ghana AIDS Commission, and DOVVSU of the Ghana Police Service. The remaining three were selected from Oguua Traditional Council, WAPCAS (an NGO) and a Household/Family Community of a commercial sex worker.

Table 2: Persons in Key in Positions: Their Gender and Institution

Designation	Group	Freq.	%
Gender	Male	5	62.5
	Female	3	37.5
	<i>Total</i>	8	<i>100.0</i>
Institution	Government Institution	5	62.5
	Traditional Authority	1	12.5
	NGO	1	12.5
	Household/Family Community	1	12.5
	<i>Total</i>	8	<i>100.0</i>

Source: *Field survey (2019)*

The views of the persons in key stakeholder institutions were sought to either corroborate or disprove the responses of the commercial sex workers obtained from the administration of the questionnaire to the Commercial Sex Workers in Cape Coast Metropolis.

Commercial Sex Workers' Reasons for Entering into Commercial Sex

As presented in Table 3 below, majority (n=235 or 66%) of the respondents reported that no relative or family member is currently engaged in commercial sex work, while the remaining 121 (or 34%) reported otherwise. Also, majority (n=194 or 54.5%) of the respondents reported that no relative or family member had ever been engaged in the practice; however, remaining 162 (45.5%) responded in the affirmative. Most (n=220 or 61.8%) of the respondents indicated that they earned between GH₵ 201.00 – 500.00 per week from the practice, 64 (18%), however, earned below GH₵ 200.00

Table 3: Reasons for Engaging in Commercial Sex Work

Question(s)	Response(s)	Freq.	%	Rank
Is any of your relatives currently involved in CSW?	Yes	121	34.0	2 nd
	No	235	66.0	1 st
	Total	356	100.0	
Has any relative of yours ever been involved in CSW?	Yes	162	45.5	2 nd
	No	194	54.5	1 st
	Total	356	100.0	
How much do you make from CSW per week?	Below GH₵ 200.00	64	18.0	2 nd
	GH₵ 201.00 – 500.00	220	61.8	1 st
	GH₵ 501.00 – 800.00	35	9.8	3 rd
	GH₵ 801.00 – 1100.00	16	4.5	4 th
	GH₵ 1101.00 – 1400.00	14	3.9	5 th
	Above GH₵ 1400.00	7	2.0	6 th
	Total	356	100.0	
Do you have persons who depend on your income from commercial sex work?	Never	69	19.4	2 nd
	Occasionally	57	16.0	3 rd
	Almost every time	39	11.0	4 th
	Every time	191	53.7	1 st
	Total	356	100.0	
Who introduced you into commercial sex work?	Friends	325	91.3	1 st
	Siblings	16	4.5	2 nd
	Parent/guardian	8	2.2	3 rd
	Social media	1	0.3	6 th
	Television	2	0.6	5 th
	Video/movies	4	1.1	4 th
	Total	356	100.0	

Which of the following mostly attracts you into CSW?	Curiosity	7	2.0	
	Fun/amusement	22	6.2	3 rd
	Companionship	4	1.1	5 th
	Pressure	3	0.8	6 th
	Money-making	256	71.9	1 st
	Family demands	12	3.4	4 th
	Source of livelihood	52	14.6	2 nd
	Total	356	100.0	
What rewards do you get from engaging in commercial sex work?	Money	334	93.8	1 st
	Material gains	4	1.1	
	Sexual pleasure	7	2.0	3 rd
	Emotional comfort	1	0.3	5 th
	Fame/popularity	2	0.6	4 th
	Job satisfaction	8	2.2	2 nd
	Total	356	100.0	

Source: *Field survey (2019)*

Respondents (n=191 or 53.7%) further reported that they have people who depend on their income from commercial sex work every time. An overwhelming majority (n=325 or 91.3%) of the respondents indicated they were introduced into the practice by their friends.

A majority of the respondents (n=256 or 71.9%) massively indicated that they were mostly attracted by money, and similarly, money was the reward they get for engaging in commercial sex work (n = 334, 93.8%). The quantitative data revealed family background, economic needs, peer pressure, financial demands of family, and finding a source of livelihood as the major reasons motivated some females to venture into commercial sex work in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

Results of the Interviews

Responses from the qualitative components of the study clearly aligned with those of the quantitative because they both revealed similar reasons which motivate some individuals venture into the practice. Generally, the respondents were of the view that *socio-economic hardships, peer pressure and parental influence* are among the major reasons which push people into Commercial Sex Work. The following are some of the extracts from the responses of the participants to that effect.

“Basically, it all boils down to economic hardships, the need to survive and to make ends meet. If you take ten (10) people involved in sex work and ask them why they are in it, they will all say because of money. As normal human beings they want to do something to survive . . .”. (GACOH)

“The basis for it is poverty, poverty on the part of parents, because there aren’t many job opportunities here...mothers are forced into commercial sex work. . .”. (TCOM)

“...from my work space, one of the biggest things that I will cite as contributing to commercial sex work are financial problems and financial burden . . .”. (GRDO)

“Accommodation is a very big issue in the beach communities in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Inadequate accommodation for families, for example a man, wife and adult children occupying and sharing one bedroom. For the man to have space for intimacy with the wife the way he wants it, may result in either pushing the children out into the streets or asking them to find a place elsewhere to sleep.... sleeping on the streets... causes them to fall prey to the trade This is common in Amanful, Brofoyedur, Anafo, Ntsin, and other places”. (MCOWS)

“When they see their peers and the things they are using (flashy life styles) such as phones and dresses, and want to have same, and they get to know they have been able to acquire them through the money accrued from sex work, they are enticed to do same . . .”. (WCCM)

“...when they see everybody doing it and see the trade going on all around them, they naturally become enticed to commercial sex work.” (MCOWS)

“...if you want to see the end of your wife, look at her mother. So, you see, some children have gotten involved due to their parents’ participation in the trade”. (EGXW)

“Some of the adult sex workers have also had some of their children introduced to the commercial sex work. . . by copying or emulating what their parents do”. (TCOM)

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate reasons for entry into commercial sex work. The results of the study (both quantitative and qualitative components) revealed that certain reasons account for entry into Commercial Sex Work. The result of the study pointed to the following-economic hardships, parental influence, peer pressure, and accommodation challenges.

Key among the reasons for entry into commercial sex work comprise poverty, lack of employment opportunities, and peculiar personal circumstances such as lack of requisite qualification and employable skills. For instance, 71.9% of the respondents clearly indicated that they were mostly attracted by monetary considerations into the sex work, while 93.8% indicated monetary gains as the reward they obtain from engaging in commercial sex work. The money motive may generally arise from difficult and challenging life circumstances confronting these individuals in the society. Equally important from the finding of the study is that, 53.7% of the respondents reported they had some persons who depend on their income from sex work every time. Additionally, 61.8% reported they earned a substantial income (201.00 - 500.00) per a week from the practice which goes a long way to boost their financial capabilities. Thus, the socio-economic reasons appeared as compelling circumstances attracting people into the commercial sex work.

Another reason which motivates females to venture into the practice is peer pressure. The result of the study revealed that an overwhelming majority (91.3%) of the respondents admitted, entered into the practice not on their own accord. They were influenced by their friends or peers. This finding, to a large extent, amplifies the potency of peer pressure on individuals when it comes to decision-making and, in this case, entry into commercial sex work. Surprisingly, both data collected from the commercial sex workers and key stakeholders attest that peer pressure is one of the forces driving females into the commercial sex enterprise. The study showed that socio-economic reasons drive people into commercial sex work, probably as an easy and readily available way to make ends meet.

These findings commensurate with some previous studies (Nasir et al., 2010; Scorgie et al., 2012; Greenberg 2014; Martin 2019) which identified socio-economic, food insecurity, poverty, lack of

shelter and socio-economic inequalities as some of the reasons why some individuals enter into commercial sex. The findings of Nasir et al. (2010) indicated that one of the few crucial conditions that motivate women to venture into sex work is socio-economic reasons. Additionally, in a study carried out in Malaysia on Muslim and non-Muslim women, sex workers reported that low socio-economic conditions are a contributory factor responsible for their entry and participation in sex work. Greenberg et al. (2014) reveal that women go into the sex trade mainly to make money in spite of other conditions that may motivate them. Martin (2019) also underscored social and economic inequalities as one of the conditions that push people into the sex industry internationally.

Also, the findings of this current study supports that of Malarek (2011), and Platt et al. (2011), who reported that some persons enter into sex work as a means of survival, money-making, and an attempt to end poverty. Malarek (2011), indicated that many enter into commercial sex work not due to chance but for the paramount need to survive. On the other hand, this current study contradicts the findings of a study conducted by Ansah (2006) who documented that women go into commercial sex work due to shortage of available jobs because these women were uneducated. Based on the findings of the study, it can be said that poor socio-economic conditions are among the variables responsible for entry into and participation in commercial sex work.

The social identity theory by Tajfel (1981b) provided the theoretical framework for this study on two grounds. Firstly, it provides a framework useful for conceptualising the way of behaviour and therefore assists to explicate certain behaviours of commercial sex workers. For instance, behaviours such as group commitment and loyalty, compliance and attractions. Secondly, the findings of this study, the causalities for venturing into commercial sex work: socio-economic reasons, parental influence, and peer pressure, are clearly elucidated by the postulations of the social identity theory. According to the theory, social context is the main determinant of self-definition and behaviour.

Conclusion

The study concluded that commercial sex work in the Cape Coast Metropolis is a thriving one and the female commercial sex workers ventured into the practice due to reasons such as socio-economic hardships, accommodation challenges, peer pressure, and parental influences.

Recommendations

1. The Girl Child Division of the Cape Coast Metropolitan Education Directorate in collaboration with the Guidance and Counselling Center of the University of Cape Coast, should run relevant educational and skills training courses on regular basis for persons of school-going age to empower them not to venture into the practice. Such an initiative will also equip and empower them to venture into worthwhile employment for self-advancement and fulfilment.
2. The Oguaa Traditional Council in conjunction with the Guidance and Counselling Department of the University of Cape Coast should provide community-based guidance and counselling services in the Metropolis to assist Commercial Sex Workers who desire and need help to exit from the practice and become well-rehabilitated for easy reintegration into meaningful social and public life.
3. It is recommended that to effectively mitigate the practice in the Cape Coast Metropolis, the Department of Gender should role out carefully planned and well-coordinated social intervention schemes and strategies, especially at the Commercial Sex Work hotspots and community-based outreach centers to assist the commercial sex workers to make informed decisions and choices to facilitate responsible life choices and healthy living.
4. The Oguaa Traditional Council should engage the media houses and civil society organizations in the Metropolis to include regular public education, advocacy, and sensitization drive on the practice in the Cape Coast Metropolis into their corporate social responsibility agenda and initiatives to help effectively mitigate the spread of the practice.
5. Furthermore, the Cape Coast Metropolitan Education Directorate should provide their Schools' Guidance and Counselling Co-coordinators opportunities to undergo regular

refresher courses, sensitization and capacity-building workshops on commercial sex and its related issues. Such exposures will enable them become acquainted with modern trends in the commercial sex enterprise so that they in turn can provide the necessary guidance and counselling services to their pupils and students to assist them not to fall victims to the attractions and enticements of commercial sex.

6. The Department of Social Welfare and Community Development together with the Oguaa Traditional Council should collaborate with the University of Cape Coast through its Guidance and Counselling Department to procure logistical, technical and financial resources to undertake a comprehensive needs assessment, especially of commercial sex workers in the Metropolis. The objective is to help provide such individuals the platform to discover and appreciate their real life needs and to be guided to sharpen their skills and well-utilise their innate potentials and capabilities for productive social and economic lives.

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