

Why do male students in higher education buy sex? A Phenomenological Exploration

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Abstract

Background

Epidemiological and behavioral studies have concentrated on female sex workers. There's a crucial ought to focus equivalent attention on the activities of male clients as has been directed towards female sex workers. In Ethiopia, where higher education students considered as the most at-risk population for human immune deficiency virus, the transmission of infection may occur within networks composed of female sexworkers, their clients and the other sexual partners of the latter. However, there is a huge gap in qualitative studies on the exploration of why higher education male students buy sex.

Objective

The purpose of this study was to explore why higher education male students buy sex.

Methods

A qualitative phenomenological approach was used. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 higher education male students who had a history of visiting female sex workers during their stay on campus. Inductive coding was used to determine invariant constituents reduce constituents to sub-themes, and cluster sub-themes into themes. Dependability and credibility were achieved through an audio recording, bracketing, and member checking.

Results

Through the use of thematic analysis two common themes and five sub-themes were identified from motives of male higher education students to buy sex. These themes are motives associated with desires including emotional and experiential; and motives associated with context including academic, time and money context, socio-environmental context and family, romantic partner and campus girl context.

Conclusions

In this study, Sexual need, sexual fantasies, experiential desire, Peer pressure, substance use, low academic result, availability of time and money, break up with a romantic partner and demanding nature of campus girls were the reasons reported by participants when they were asked about why they visited female sex worker. Therefore, addressing higher education male students' motives related to their desire and context is vital.

Background

Key populations are defined groups who, due to specific higher-risk behaviors, are at increased risk of Human immune deficiency virus irrespective of the epidemic type or local context. Also, they often have legal and social issues related to their behaviors that increase their vulnerability to HIV, Hepatitis B and C, and syphilis [1].

Studies conducted in African countries found that the HIV prevalence among FSWs varied between 19% and 60% [2–5]. Available limited evidence indicates that HBV and HCV infections are endemic in Ethiopia where HIV and syphilis are also prevalent [6, 7]. In Ethiopia, higher education students have been identified as one of the highest-risk populations for HIV and other Sexual transmitted infections [8].

The belief that FSWs might play a key role in the heterosexual transmission of HIV and other STIs infections has led to attention being focused on the activities of women who sell sex. Therefore, epidemiological and behavioral studies have concentrated on such topics [9, 10, 11]. However, by focusing so much attention on the activities of the female sex worker, as opposed to the activities of men who buy sex, an impression is created that such women are the sole contributors to commercial sexual exchanges when, in fact, they compromise only one-half of those exchanges. Though, there is an important need to focus equivalent attention on the activities of male clients as has been directed towards FSWs [10, 12, 13]. Gaining depth understanding of why do male students in higher education buy sex is very helpful for public health professionals to design the appropriate health promotion and prevention strategies.

Therefore, as far as the researcher knowledge this study is the first in Ethiopia which viewing commercial sex from female sex worker's clients' side and tries to find out why do male students in higher education buy sex. Through this paper, the researchers contribute to the future direction of the contemporary public health system in Ethiopia. Furthermore, the researcher ambitious to be the first in the introduction of a new concept that is called **“male reproductive health”**.

Methods

Study design

A qualitative phenomenological approach was used in this study.

Sampling and participants

A sample of 12 higher education male students participated in this study based on information saturation. Snowball sampling was used to identify higher education male students who have experienced the phenomenon of buying sex. The participants were recruited from all higher education institutions in Dessie City, Ethiopia.

This exploration was approved by the Internal Review Board of the School of public health, Addis Ababa University. After a detail explanation of the purpose of the study and how it safeguards the privacy of participants, verbal and written consent was obtained from each study participants. Participants who

were refused to participate in the study were not being forced and participants can withdraw from the study at any time.

Data collection

The principal investigator collected the data. A semi-structured interview protocol was developed by the principal investigator, reviewed by the experts, and edited based on feedback. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain the data to document the participants' reasons to buy sex. The interviews were audio-recorded and were transcribed within the actual words of the participants (to maintain the integrity of the data). The participants were told concerning the aim of the interview, and time was put aside at the top of the interview for reflection on the method of the interview.

The interview protocol enclosed five main queries regarding why educational activity male students obtain sex. Throughout the course of the interviews, probes and follow-up queries were added as required to encourage rationalization and clarify replies. Detailed questions were added as the interview process steps forward in response to rising themes.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis which helps for recognize, investigate and report patterns (themes) within data was used to develop the themes. The following steps were followed to analyze the data as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006): (a) familiarization with the data, (b) generation of tentative codes, (c) elucidation of themes, (d) review of themes, (e) delineation of themes and (f) production of the written report. These steps were repeated several times to further group and reduce categories.

Dependability and Credibility

Field notes, an audio record, inter coder agreement, bracketing, member checking were used to assure dependability and credibility of this study findings and interpretations. Final themes, as well as subthemes, were shared with all participants for review. Participants were asked to examine these themes and reflect on the accuracy and reported that the identified themes and subthemes accurately reflected their motives.

Results

Socio-demographic and related profile of participants

The average age of the higher education male students interviewed during this study was twenty three years with vary being from twenty one to twenty six years. Exactly half of the respondents, 6 out of 12 were followers of orthodox Christianity, 3 were Muslim and 3 were Protestants. Three of this study participants said that they had not used a condom on the last occasion of having paid for sex. The majority (10) of this study participants reported having paid for sex for the first time when there were first-year students (See table 1).

Table 1-Socio demographic and related profile of study participants

					During their first visit of FSW						
Relig	Resi	Yr in ca	Stream	Poc-M	H-GF	Ag	H.P.S.E	yr in Ca	location FSW	Use Con	No visit
Musl	Rur	2nd Yr	Natural	600	Yes	20	No	1st yr	Club	yes	once
Orth	Rur	2nd Yr	Natural	700	No	18	No	1st yr	club	yes	once
Musli	Rur	2nd Yr	Natural	700	No	21	No	1st yr	Club	yes	once
Prot	Urb	5th Yr	Natural	1000	No	21	No	1st yr	Club	No	Frequent
Orth	Urb	5th Yr	Natural	700	No	22	Yes	1st yr	Club	No	once
Prot	Urb	5th Yr	Social	1000	Yes	24	Yes	4th yr	Club	No	once
Prot	Urb	3rd Yr	Natural	1000	Yes	21	Yes	1st yr	Club	yes	Frequent
Orth	Rur	3rd Yr	Social	700	No	22	Yes	2nd yr	Street	Yes	Once
Orth	Urb	1st Yr	Natural	2000	No	21	Yes	1st yr	Club	yes	Frequent
Orth	Rur	4th Yr	Social	2000	No	22	No	1st yr	Club	No	Frequent
Musli	Urb	5th yr	Natural	700	No	22	No	1st yr	Home	yes	Frequent
Orth	Urb	3rd yr	Social	1500	No	22	Yes	1st yr	Home	yes	Frequent

*Ag-Age,Reli-Religion,Resi-Residence,Yr in Ca-Year in campus,Poc-M-Pocket money,H-GF-Having girlfriend,HPSE- History of previous sexual experience, Use Co-Use condom, FSW-Female sex worker

Theme: Motives of male higher education students to buy sex

Through the use of thematic analysis two common themes and five sub-themes were identified from motives of male higher education students to buy sex. These themes are motives associated with desires including emotional and experiential desire, and motives associated with context including academic, time and money; Socio-environmental, and family, romantic partner/ Campus girl context. Findings throughout this paper use pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality of study subjects.

Theme1: Motives associated with desires

The participants described motives associated with desire that impacted on involvement in visiting female sex workers. Two sub-themes emerged from participants' motives associated with desire that impacted higher education male students' involvement in visiting FSWs in this study, including emotional and experiential.

Sub-theme1: Emotional desire

In describing the reasons for visiting FSWs many of these study participants cited the fact that **sexual need, loss of control, pleasure and sexual fantasies** as what motivates them to purchase sex. Some say they turn to FSWs to satisfy their sexual need and loss of control: "...if my family sends money, I will eat and drink;so I need sexI have no mechanical work here to reduce my sexual need...."[Geresu: 4th-year social science student, aged 25].

Four of these study participants expressed the desire for FSWs because they have lost control of their sexual urges: "...am addicted for sex..." [Esmael: 4th-year social science student aged 26]. The same kind of story heard from 24 years old, 4th-year social science student who described "...after the first occasion....when I finish chewing khat, ready to goes tonight club.... the first thing that comes into my head is sex with female sex worker...."[Nega:4th-year social science student, aged 24]. In addition, one of this study participant believed his inability to control his sexual need will affect his future relationship by saying "...I may have a wife in the future, yet if get female with the same physical attributes as appearance my wife, I am sure I will decide to have sex with her..." [Yechelale, 3rd-year natural science student, aged 23].

For some higher education male students (5 study participants) buy sex seemed to be valued principally in that it enabled them to satisfy their sexual pleasure and sexual fantasies. When asked why visited FSWs they were immediately cited the desirability of sexual pleasure and sexual fantasies:"...as long as you paid female sex worker may give you the service as you want including different sexual positions [Mekuriawe, 1st-year natural science student, aged 21] and "...my previous girl friend didn't have experience so just I finished my feeling nothing else, but when you see the sex with female sex worker they are different persons ... they make you more pleasurable in sex due to their different techniques and skills to satisfy"[Esmael: 4th-year social science student, aged 26].

Sub-theme2: Experiential desire

For some males in higher education the principal motive of visiting FSWs seemed to lie in the potential to try and learn new things. Amongst those males who drew explicit attention to the appeal of sex with for experiential purposes would sometimes be made to lifestyles that had been enjoyed before they were married or when they were younger. Sex with FSWs was regarded as one way in which it was possible to experience again such behavior:[Abel, 2nd-year natural science student, aged 19]the youngest participant of this study said "...They talked a lot about female sex workers, the night clubs, the dancing with girls and other many things so I took the positive side of their talk and it seemed to be a new thing to try..."

Notably, none of these study participants cited any form of love and affection with FSWs as a reason for buy sex, except Yechelale who reported "...She [sex worker] tell me her touching story; I care for her, She

cares for me, besides, to share our sexual feelings...”.

Theme 2: Motives associated with context

In this study, higher education male students’ motives for buying are principally related to a specific context. Three sub-themes emerged from contexts that higher education male students describe as motives to visit sex workers, including (1) Academic, time and money context, (2) Socio-environmental context (3) family, romantic partner/ Campus girl context.

Sub-theme 1: Academic, time and money context

For four of these study participants, a low academic result was given as one of the reasons for their involvement in buying sex. [Hassen, 2nd Year Natural science student, aged 22] said “I didn’t acknowledge lady [sex worker] ...It’s all concerning failure on certificate of competency exam, I had smart manner before that...”. Others describe academic workload related tension is the reason to buy sex.

In regarding with time aspects, some of this study participants said they turn to FSWs when they have spare time particularly during the end of the exam, holy day and semester break to entertain: ‘.....after we finished an exam, we said “nothing is left” and let enjoy with FSWs” [Geresu: 4th-year social science student, aged 25].

The other very important context associated motives of visiting FSWs described by this study participants is the financial situation: ‘...I was decided to have sex with her because I have money so.... as long as you have the money you will think about it (sex with FSWs) ...” [Mekuriawe: 1st-year natural science student, aged 21].

Sub-theme 2: Socio-environmental context

Almost all (9 out of 12) study participants during this study stressed the robust influence of peer pressure on their involvement in buying sex. This is evidenced by 26 years old 5th-year natural science student study participant named Abel, who said: ‘...I started everything with him he showed me many things....including buying sex... He was a famous guy around night club...”.

Another most frequently mentioned reason was Alcohol influence and FSWs easily accessibility: ‘...I never remembered whether she was black or white because we were drunk too much....” [Eyob: 5th-year natural science student aged 26]. Mekuriawe [1st-year natural science student, aged 21] was expressed: ‘...once you are in the campus you should focus on your studysimply go there [FSWs] for sex... it is easier, yet with girl friend it takes time ...”.

Sub-theme 3: Family/Romantic partner/campus girl context

The motives associated with context are related family especially being far and loss of family control: "...I knew nothing before I came here, I learn several things here within the university like chewing chat, alcohol drinking and sleeping with FSWsyet, if I used to be home, nothing happens like this.....I learn at school and back home...they monitor me.."[Geresu: 4th-year social science student aged 25].

Three of this study participants were declared breakup of love relationship and loss of trust on women as a reason to go to female sex worker:"...When I was here in campus ...they inform me that she(my girl friend) started with another young man who came from south Africa.... so we have a tendency to quarrel one another and after I finished first semester , I was backed to Hosana, I attempted to talk with her she told me as others told to me ...after that, when I back to campus, I couldn't find myself and acted differently...I don't trust girl anymore, that's why I prefer female sex workers..." [Mesfine, 5th-year natural science student, aged 25].

Demanding nature of Campus girl is another important reason that higher education male students reported when they asked why you buy sex:"... beautiful females in the campus need money from a rich person we are students we don't have that money ..."[Geresu: 4th-year social science student, aged 25] and "...as my feeling, I am telling you that it is very easy to get female from campus ,but I don't have much interest on them because they are demanding... I prefer to enjoy with my friends and enjoy at night club ... have sex with FSWs ...by the way, I was tried to have a girlfriend when I was fresh but she always said let us meet ...every morning and afternoon which I hate much ...though, we separated..." [Nega: 4th-year social science student, aged 24]

Discussion

This study explored why higher education males students buy sex in the context of phenomenology, providing an in-depth understanding of higher education male students' motives to visit female sex workers.

Through the utilization of thematic analysis 2 common themes and 5 sub-themes were known from motives of male higher education students to buy for sex. These themes are motives associated with desires including emotional and experiential desire and motives associated with context including academic, time and money context; Socio-environmental context and family, romantic partner/ campus girl context.

The first sub-theme identified was motives associated with emotional desire. The participants cited the fact that sexual need, loss of control, pleasure and sexual fantasies as reasons to purchase sex. They explained that they turn to FSWs to satisfy their sexual needs and pleasure. This finding was in line with a study conducted in India [9] and United Kingdom [14] which indicated that, sexual need as men appealed to visit commercial sex. This might be due to the fact that when there is a sexual need, the brain releases a neurotransmitter known as acetylcholine. This, in turn triggers the release of nitric oxide into

the arteries of the penis, causing them to expand and rapidly fill with blood, which urges the need for sexual intercourse. To satisfy this needs higher education male students may visit female sex workers.

The second theme was the participants' motives related to experiential desire. In this study a number of the study participants discovered their principal motive of visiting FSWs seemed to lie in the potential to undertake and learn new things. Amongst those males who drew specific attention to the attractiveness for sex with experiential functions would generally be created to lifestyles that had been enjoyed before they were married or once they were younger. This finding has supported by a report of the book referred to as "The Continuum Complete International encyclopedia of Sexuality' that discovered fifty fifth of male students signed to the concept that men ought to have some sexual expertise before wedding [15].The high experiential need for sex in these study participants can be because of the very fact that half of them hadn't previous sexual history.

The third theme elucidated from the data was motives associated with academic, time and money context. Some participants believed that their motives to buy sex were aligned with their academic, financial and time context. They expressed turning their face to FSWs when they had tension, disgusting academic result, money and time. This confirmed the findings of the study on gender relations and risks of HIV transmission in South India [9] which revealed that there is a relationship between academic stress and the motives of visiting female sex workers. This might be due to the fact that, sex helps to relieve stress by raising endorphins and other hormones that boost mood and as a form of exercise, it can also help calm you down.

The fourth sub-theme was motives associated with Socio-environmental context, which encompasses peer pressure, alcohol influence and easy accessibility of female sex workers. Almost all study participants stressed, the strong influence of peer pressure on their involvement in buying sex. They explained peer pressure was always tough to deal with, especially when it comes to sex. Some higher education male student decided to have sexual relationships with female sex worker because their friends think sex is cool. This might be because of some higher education male students find it easier to give in and have sex than to try to explain why not.

Furthermore, participants reported Alcohol consumption and female sex workers' accessibility were also cited as reasons for buying sex. Similarly, researches indicated how much alcohol a person can drink directly affects how likely they are to have unsafe sex. On average, every 0.1 milligrams per milliliter increase in study participants' blood alcohol levels raised their probability of getting unprotected sex by five percent, the studies found[15]. Consistently, a quantitative study conducted in the southern region of Brazil about the association between the risk of alcohol use and unprotected sex in adolescents indicated 47.3% of adolescents stated that alcohol use before having sex [16]. Easily accessibility of FSWs also another socio-environmental context that pushes male higher education students to buy sex which is in line with finding of the study conducted in India [9]. This may be the reflection of the characteristics of shortcut obsessed generation.

The fifth sub-theme that known as family/romantic partner/campus girl connected context include the loss of family management, break up of a romantic relationship, loss of trust on female, demanding nature of campus girl were the explanations of male higher education students urges to go to a female sex workers. This finding was in line with the study finding that showed association between family management and sexual behavior of youths [17]. This may flow from to the actual fact that at a personal level, parenting and family structure was found to have an effect on young people's sexual behavior by influencing children's self-assurance and mutual ability.

Regarding the breakup of love relationships and loss of trust in females, higher education male students indicated they bought sex to forget their previous partner. This may well be due to the idea that, having sex with as many ladies as attainable could be a great way to urge over a breakup.

Limitation of study

Due to sampling design drawing inference is impossible

Conclusions

In this study, sexual needs, sexual fantasies, experiential desire, peer pressure, substance use, low academic result, availability of time and money, loss of family control, break up with a romantic partner, loss of trust on girls and demanding nature of campus girls were identified and reported by the participants as the reasons why they visited female the sex worker. Therefore, the major implication of these study findings is giving attention to the reproductive health of higher education male students is curial.

List Of Abbreviations

FSWs-Female Sex Workers, HBV-Hepatitis B Virus, HCV-Hepatitis C Virus, HIV-Human Deficiency Virus, STIs-Sexual Transmitted Infections

Declarations

Ethical approval and consent to participate

Ethical clearance was obtained from Addis Ababa University, School of public health ethical review board. After a detail explanation of the purpose of the study, verbal and written consent was obtained from each study participants. Participants who were refused to participate in the study were not being forced and participants can withdraw from the study at any time. Confidentiality of the study subject was maintained.

Consent for publication

Not applicable

Availability of data and material

All relevant data are within the manuscript

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests

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Self

Authors' contributions

NE; carried out the research drafting, design, statistical analysis, interpretation and manuscript writing as well as coordinating all activities in the research, MK; commented and did relevant correction on the draft manuscript. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Authors' information (optional)

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