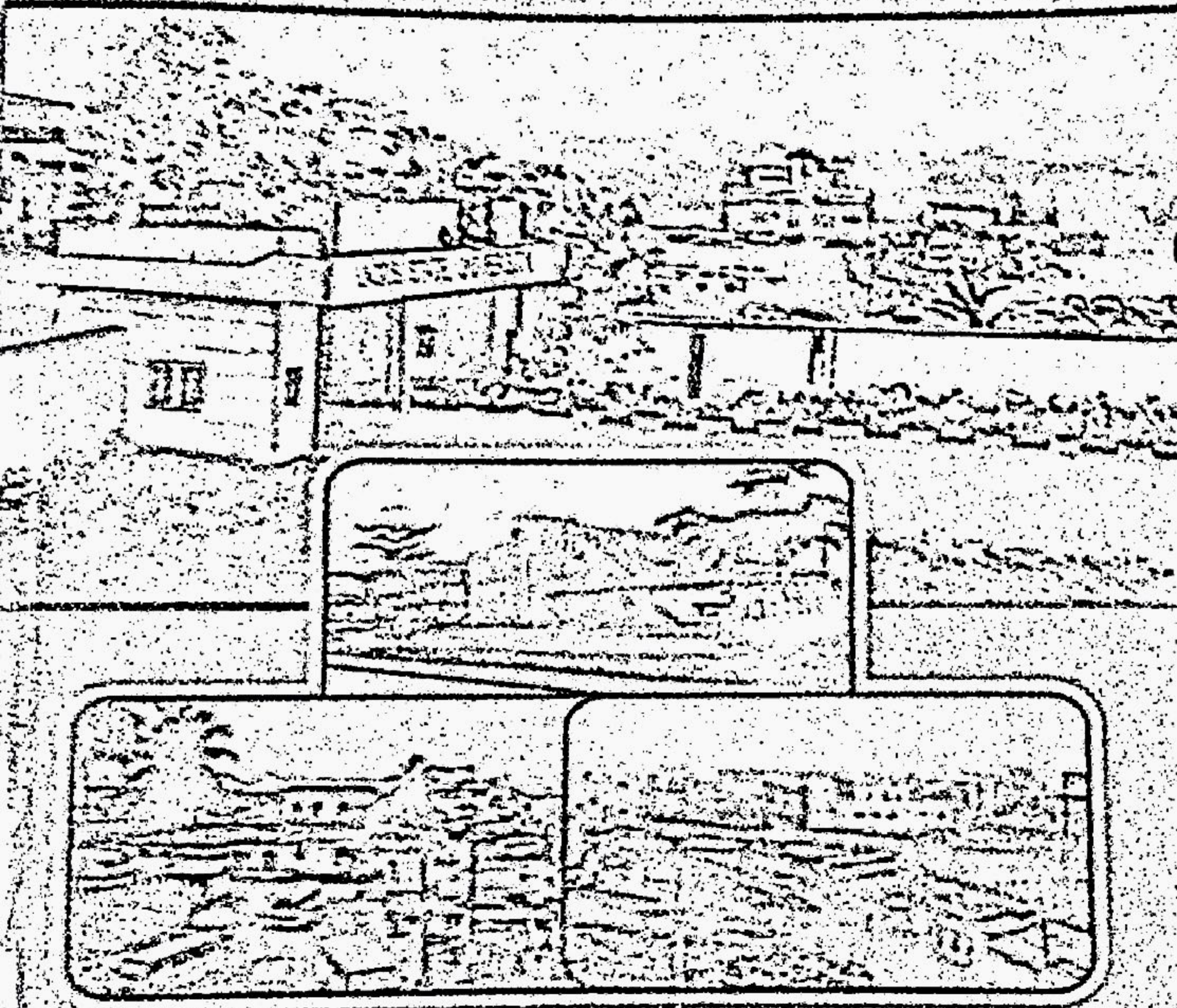


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A Study of
LASU
AND ITS
NEIGHBOURS



Lai O'urode

©

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ISBN: 978 - 978 - 908 - 039 - 7

Published by:

Department of Sociology,
Lagos State University,
Ojo, Lagos - Nigeria.

Printed by:

Irede Printers Ltd.
4, Alhaji Adenekan Street,
Off Okota Road, Okota, Lagos.
Tel: 01-6653577, 7911476.

Cover Designed by:

Toba Aluko
Tel: 08036460142

Editor:

'Lai Oluode

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DEDICATION

To Professor Lateef Akanni Hussain, Vice-Chancellor, Lagos State University (LASU).

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ISSUES AMONG UNDERGRADUATES

- Onipede Wusu

6.0 Introduction

Sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS epidemic remain deadly cyclones that continue to uproot lives in sub-Saharan Africa. Young people are the worst hit. In 2006, 40 percent of new HIV infections across the world among adults were estimated to be among young people (Moore, et al 2007). In Nigeria, although HIV/AIDS is spreading in the entire population, the youths are more infected. For instance, in 2005 sero-prevalence rate among young people age group 20-24 was 4.7 percent and 4.9 percent among age group 25-29 while the national rate was 4.4 percent (Federal Ministry of Health, 2006). The literature is replete with evidence that risky reproductive health behaviour predominant among young people accounts for their vulnerability to HIV and STIs (Guiella and Madise, 2007; Nwokocha, 2007; Wusu and Isiugo-Abanihe, 2007). In the context of this study, reproductive health is conceived as the situation where young people are free to manage and enjoy sustainable sexual life devoid of diseases as well as physical, social, and economic pains. Sexual intercourse has been identified as the prime mode of transmission of HIV (Dyson, 1990). Transactional sex is a risky reproductive health behaviour that escalates the rate of exposure of young people to these devastating infections. Since protection is not likely used in such sexual relationships. For instance, Moore, et al (2007: 45) "observe that exchanges may pressure young people

(women in particular) into sexual relationships with risky partners and into having sex without condom"

Risky partners are often highly placed individuals who are able to meet the material needs of young students who are vulnerable to being recruited as their sex partners. This category of individuals include lecturers who offer grades for sex (*quid pro quo*), young persons and others who have money and other materials that are attractive to their prey. More importantly is the fact that young people do not have what the risky partners can offer them and so they submit to risky, unsafe sex since they cannot influence their partners to use a condom. Bianchi, et al (2006) argue that when highly placed fellows offer gifts of money, material or grade to partners who are not of their status, it is difficult for such partners to have any form of leverage over relationships. In this case, young people are not likely to enforce the use of condom in transactional sexual relationship with partners who offer various kinds of gifts in exchange for sex.

Luke and Kurz (2002) argue that transactional sexual relationship is likely to undermine the use of condom to ensure protection against infections. Luke (2003) in a review of quantitative and qualitative studies on transactional sex submits that sexual relationships that involve economic transactions is associated with unsafe sex and increased risk of HIV infection. In their study, Madise, et al (2007: 83) report that "poor females are vulnerable to infections because of earlier sexual debut and non-use of condoms". However, Moore, et al (2007) did not find any association between condom use and engaging in sex for money or material/grade gifts. The foregoing suggests that the relationship between transactional sex and protection is mixed. Hence further studies are needed to

grasp proper understanding of the association between transactional sex and vulnerability to infections.

Swindler and Watkins (2006) argue that sex for gifts is a way of life in societies where uncertainties and inequalities are pervasive. This observation suggests that Transactional sex is predominant in poor regions of the world. A number of studies lend credence to the observation that sex for money or material gifts is highly prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia (Abraham and Kumar, 1999; Luke, et al 2003; Wusu and Isiugo-Abanihe, 2007; Moore, et al 2007, Nwokocho, 2007; Nzokwe, 2008). In a study in four African countries, Madise, et al (2007) argue that wealthiest girls had later sexual debut compared with their poorer colleagues in three countries. Rwenge (2003) reports that young people whose fathers were economically poor or who were living with parents who did not have sufficient means to meet their needs were likely to engage in poverty driven risky sexual health behaviour. Similarly, Karim et al (2003) reviewing previous studies on this subject in sub-Saharan Africa argue that the ability of men to present financial and material gifts to female partners is an inducement in sexual relationships. These reports imply that poverty is a crucial determinant of transactional or risky sexual behaviour.

In view of the devastating effects of transactional sex it is a worthy research goal to examine its prevalence and dimensions among a highly vulnerable population. This is the motivating factor behind this research. Most of the studies reviewed above were carried out among either in-school adolescents or those out of school. Little is known about transactional sex among undergraduates in the tertiary institutions. The present study seeks to explore the dimensions of transactional sex among

Lagos State University (LASU) undergraduates and the reciprocal effect on change in the use of space in the neighbourhood. Three main research questions are addressed: How prevalent is transactional sexual behaviour among LASU undergraduates? What is the strategy for initiation to transactional sex in the population? And how does the reproductive health behaviour of LASU undergraduates influence the emergence of hotels/brothels and conversion of some of them to hostels in the neighbourhood? In the following sections these questions are examined. The Herbert G. Mead interactionism theory is reviewed as the explanatory framework for the study, the sources of data and methods are explained, data are analysed and discussed and the major conclusions drawn are highlighted.

6.1 Herbert G. Mead Interactionism and Undergraduate Reproductive Behaviour

Perhaps the most imaginable way to begin is the description of human nature given by William James quoted in Martindale (1960: 340), one of the major personalities that exerted great intellectual influence on Mead. He describes the human nature as *plastic*. His concept of *plasticity* about the human nature connotes:

The possession of a structure weak enough to yield to an influence, but strong enough not to yield to all at once. Each relatively stable phase of equilibrium in such a structure is marked by what we may call a new set of habits.

James' statement is an epitome of the process of the gradual formation and transformation of human behaviour in a social context. In Mead's conceptualization, the self image of people is

population. As a result, there is likely a high prevalence of risky reproductive health behaviour among undergraduates.

6.2 Source of Data and Methods

The study location is Lagos State University (LASU). LASU came into existence in 1983. Until this year (precisely 2008/2009 academic session) the university operated a completely off-campus system. Students find accommodation in the neighbourhood of the university. The location of the institution connects three main traditional communities (as at then), namely Ojo, Iba and Okokomaiko (the neighbourhood of the University is represented in the kite in Figure 1). These are the main communities constituting the present Ojo Local Government Area (LGA). The LGA was largely rural with 'one of the worst slum in the state' (Odumosu, 1999: 159). The Aworis are the original settlers, who were farmers and fishermen. However, these communities now possess a good mix of almost all the ethnic groups and the population can no longer be described as purely agrarian. In other words, the communities have grown over the years in population and infrastructures such that they can best be described today as growing sub-urban areas of the state. The role of the University in the urbanization process unfolding in this area cannot be over-emphasized. Although, there are other organizations capable of facilitating this process, the transformation and growth began to be noticeable in the early 1990s when the University entered its consolidation phase.

IMAGE LASU NEIGHBOURHOOD

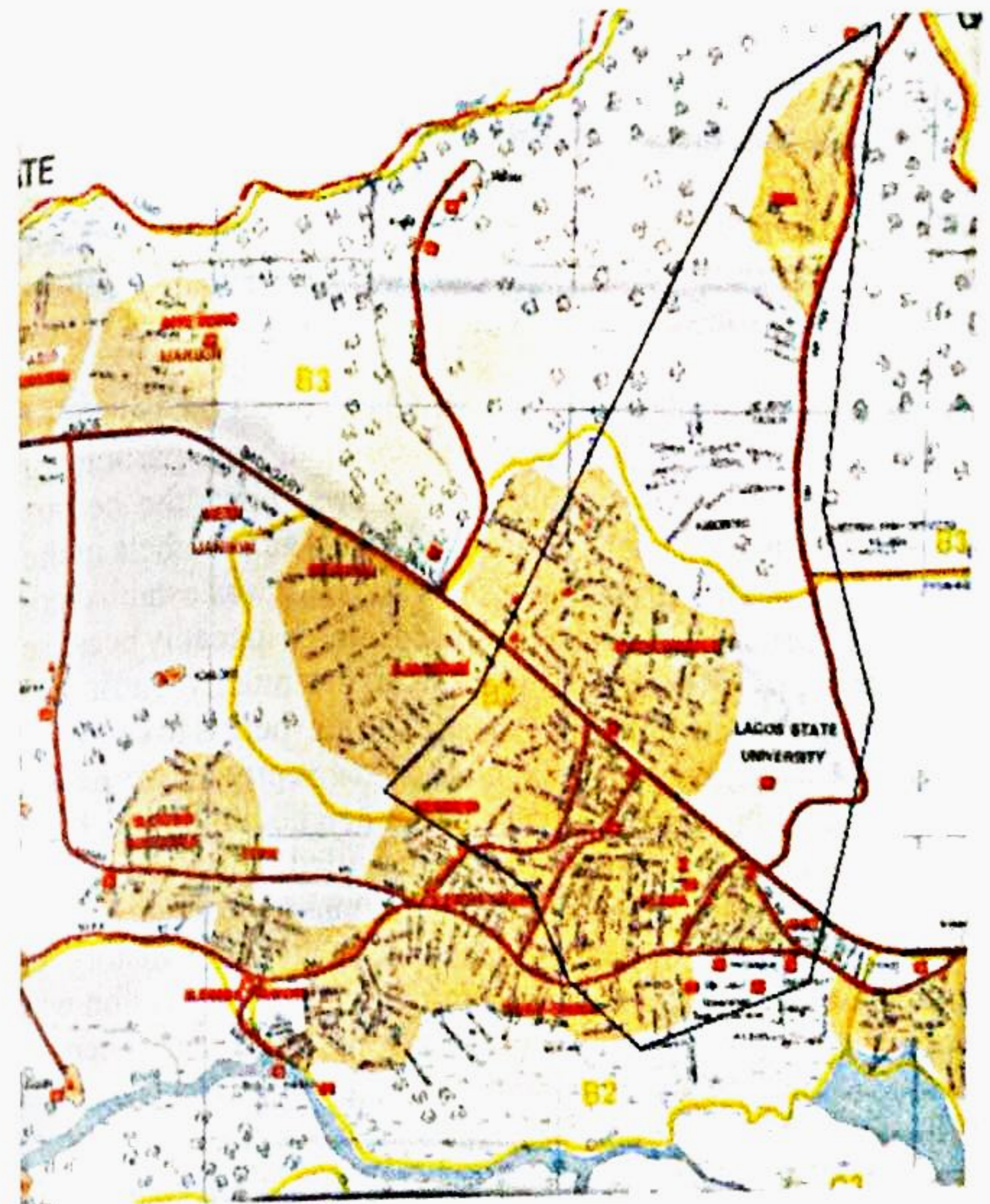


FIGURE 1: LAGOS STATE UNIVERSITY NEIGHBOURHOOD

The study population comprises of male and female undergraduates of the University. This category of people is best described as young adults in their twenties. Generally conventional University authorities every where give a kind of freedom to the student population. As adults, they are given the right to make their choices. This liberty creates an atmosphere where one could say a sub-culture exists. Most of the values are of western origin and they demonstrate high level of sexual permissiveness which some observers are describing as campus prostitution (Nzokwe, 2008).

This study employed three methods of data collection: census of hotels and brothels in the neighbourhood, non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews. First, the census elicited information on the established hotels and brothels in the neighbourhood before and after the university was established. Hereafter, hotel and brothel will be used interchangeably because the hotels play a dual role, which is as hospitality outfit and performing the functions of a brothel. The aim here is to carry out empirical assessment of the impact of the reproductive health behaviour of the undergraduates in the neighbourhood. A brief questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions was administered to the officials of the institutions to generate data on data and purpose of establishment, patronage and history of conversion. Second, a four day non-participant observation was carried out in three (but two are still existing, one has just been re-converted in 2008) hotels or brothels converted to female hostels. The main objective of the observation is to carry out an on-the-spot assessment of whether the hostels are hostels indeed or they are brothels branded as female hostels.

The third category of data was gathered through the conduct of 30 semi-structured and in-depth interviews mainly among fourth

year full-time undergraduates of the University to explore transactional reproductive behaviour prevailing on the Ojo Campus. Details of the distribution of the interview and basic demographic attributes of the participants are contained in Table 1. The interviewees were recruited with the assistance of three field assistants utilized in the study. We stressed that what was important was not whether they engaged in transactional sex but rather for them to express what was going on among their colleagues. This is to minimise instances of refusals. When we met a potential interviewee we endeavoured to brief the person on the objectives of the study before the interview was conducted. Questions were asked on the opinions of interviewees on the prevalence of various forms of sexual relationships and pre-marital heterosexual activities, transactional sex; the gender dimensions of reproductive health behaviour and factors influencing involvement in risky reproductive health behaviour. Notes were taken during the interviews.

Table 6.1
Distribution of the participants of the semi-structured interviews

S/N	Faculties	Number of males	Average age	Number of Females	Average age
1	Arts	2	21.5	3	20
2	Education	2	23	3	21
3	Law	2	20.5	3	19.5
4	Management	2	22	3	20
5	Sciences	2	21	3	20
6	Social Sciences	2	21	3	20.5
	Total	12		18	

Data analysis was handled manually. Notes from the semi-structured interviews were sorted and main themes were drawn out. Data were quantified by examining the frequencies of the

themes. This discussion in the next section is based on notes prepared from the interviews and the outcome of the quantification process which yielded simple descriptive statistic. Data from the census of hotels/brothels are summarized and presented in a table and the summary is represented using a simple percentage bar chart drawn with the aid of the Microsoft Excel software.

6.3 Results and Discussion

6.3.1 Reproductive health behaviour

The campus environment appears to present undergraduates with a platform for sexual interactions with little inhibitions. Heterosexual activity is pervasive on campus; about 93 percent of the interviewees support this assertion. This suggests that involvement in sexual interaction among students is a very common occurrence. It is also vivid from the data that the campus provides a fertile ground for multiple sexual partnerships to thrive. About two-third of the informants testified to this. In a similar vein, transactional sex is quite predominant in the study population. Almost all the interviewees are of the opinion that there are students whose survival on the campus depends on their involvement in transactional sex. The result shows that premarital sex is a common phenomenon among undergraduates and the findings are consistent with the results of earlier studies that transactional sex and multiple sexual partnerships are common risky reproductive behaviour among young people (Luke, 2003; Swindler and Watkins, 2006; Moore, et al 2007; Nwokocha, 2007).

Table 6.2
Prevalence of transactional sex or heterosexual activities among undergraduates in LASU, Ojo.

S/N	Reproductive Health Behaviour	Freq. (n=30)	%
1.	Prevalence of heterosexual activity among both male and female undergraduates on this campus	28	93
2.	I know my very good friends who have multiple sexual partners	19	63
3.	There are students whose survival on this campus depends largely on transactional sex	29	97

Source: Fieldwork, 2008

Table 3 shows the quantification of the responses of the interviewees on the nature of sexual relationships on the campus and the dimension of recruiting sexual partners. Sexual partnership is generally of two major categories. Fellow students engage each other in heterosexual relationships - horizontal and students also go into sexual relationship with rich, 'powerful', older opposite sex branded 'Aristos' (sugar mummies) and lecturers - vertical. Almost all the interviewees testify in the affirmative that the two patterns of sexual relationships exist. It is interesting to note the activities of pimps in the recruitment of sexual partners among the undergraduates. Pimps are fellow students who engage in arranging fellow students (females) for the 'Aristos' who pay them in return for service rendered. Over two-third of the interviewees support the existence of pimps who facilitate the recruitment of sexual partners for mostly outsiders for the purpose of transactional sex. A few of the interviewees indicated that they have friends whose survival on the campus depends on the proceeds from pimping activities. These observations had earlier been reported by other studies (Wusu and Isiugo-Abanihe, 2007; Nzokwe, 2008).

Table 6.3
Dimensions of sexual relationships among undergraduates in LASU, Ojo.

S/N	Reproductive Health Behaviour	Freq. (n=30)	%
1.	Sexual relationships occur between fellow students and between students and 'Aristos'	28	93
2	There are pimps among male and female undergraduates who arrange their female colleagues for the 'Aristos' mostly from outside	23	77
3	I know my class mates who live on the proceeds from the activities of pimping	10	33

Source: Fieldwork, 2008

As shown in Table 4, transactional sex is more common among female undergraduates. Almost all the interviewees support the assertion that transactional sex is more prevalent among female undergraduates. This confirms the findings of earlier studies that young females are more likely to engage in sex for money or material gifts (Moore, et al 2007). This suggests that young ladies may have different reasons that motivate them into this type of sexual relationship. Luke's (2003) three categories of benefits females derive from transactional sex: "(1) assistance with economic survival; (2) a way to secure longer-term opportunities; and (3) a means of increasing status among one's peers" may suffice (this includes grades from lecturers).

Table 6.4
Gender differentials in the prevalence of Transactional sexual behaviour among undergraduates in LASU, Ojo.

S/N	Reproductive Health Behaviour	Freq. (n=30)	%
1	More of male students engage in Transactional sex	7	23
2	More of female students engage in Transactional sex	27	90

Source: Fieldwork, 2008.

Figure 2 shows the frequencies of different factors advanced by interviewees that influence the involvement in risky sexual health behaviour among their colleagues. Among the factors frequently mentioned by the interviewees are poor financial background, influence of friends, desire to make cheep money and greed or love for luxuries as well as originating from broken homes. It is note worthy that poverty and peer influence are of particular mention. As explained in the interviews, many poor young people, especially females, seek financial resources to fund their education and take care of themselves through transactional sex. Earlier studies had reported that poverty is a driving force influencing young females to engage in transactional sex (Rwenge, 2003; Karim et al, 2003; Moore, et al 2007; Guiella and Madise, 2007). Peer influence is also most frequently mentioned. In many studies of young people's sexuality the influence of friends has always been mentioned as a crucial factor. Peer influence underscores the significances of interactionist argument that the human nature is plastic and it can be influenced through interaction. One of the interviewees narrated the experience of one of her friends:

She was a room mate to two of her friends who were having nice time with their Aristos. When this lady got admission, she was a very decent girl who did not believe in having sex to make money. However, her room mates would always bring the money made out of their 'sugar daddies' into the room. They dangled thousands of naira before this innocent girl from day to day. Along the line she began to accompany her friends out, sometimes their Aristos would buy things for her too. Gradually, she developed interest and she joined them in patronizing men who offered money for sex.

A year four female English undergraduate, aged 23

This excerpt epitomizes the fact that friends could exert tremendous influence on their colleagues to get involved in risky sexual behaviour. This finding is consistent with the reports of earlier studies that peer behaviour and influence is a strong predictor of sexual behaviour among young people (Karim et al, 2003).

More than three-quarter of the respondents mentioned that greed or love for luxuries push young people into sex for money. This is not surprising in a society where materialism takes the central place and almost everybody concentrates on how to amass wealth. Some studies argued that young people, especially females, use transactional sex to garner financial resources from older partners and to raise their social status (e.g. Luke, 2003). Family background in terms of broken homes also enjoyed frequent mention among the interviewees. This factor becomes important in view of the fact that the sexual orientation given to young people by their parents especially by the example they show their children impart on their sexual perceptions which tend to influence them greatly. Broken homes expose young people to early sexual debut or encourage risky sexual behaviour because

children raised by single parents rarely live a sexually decent life (Rwenge, 2000; 2003 and Karim et al, 2003).

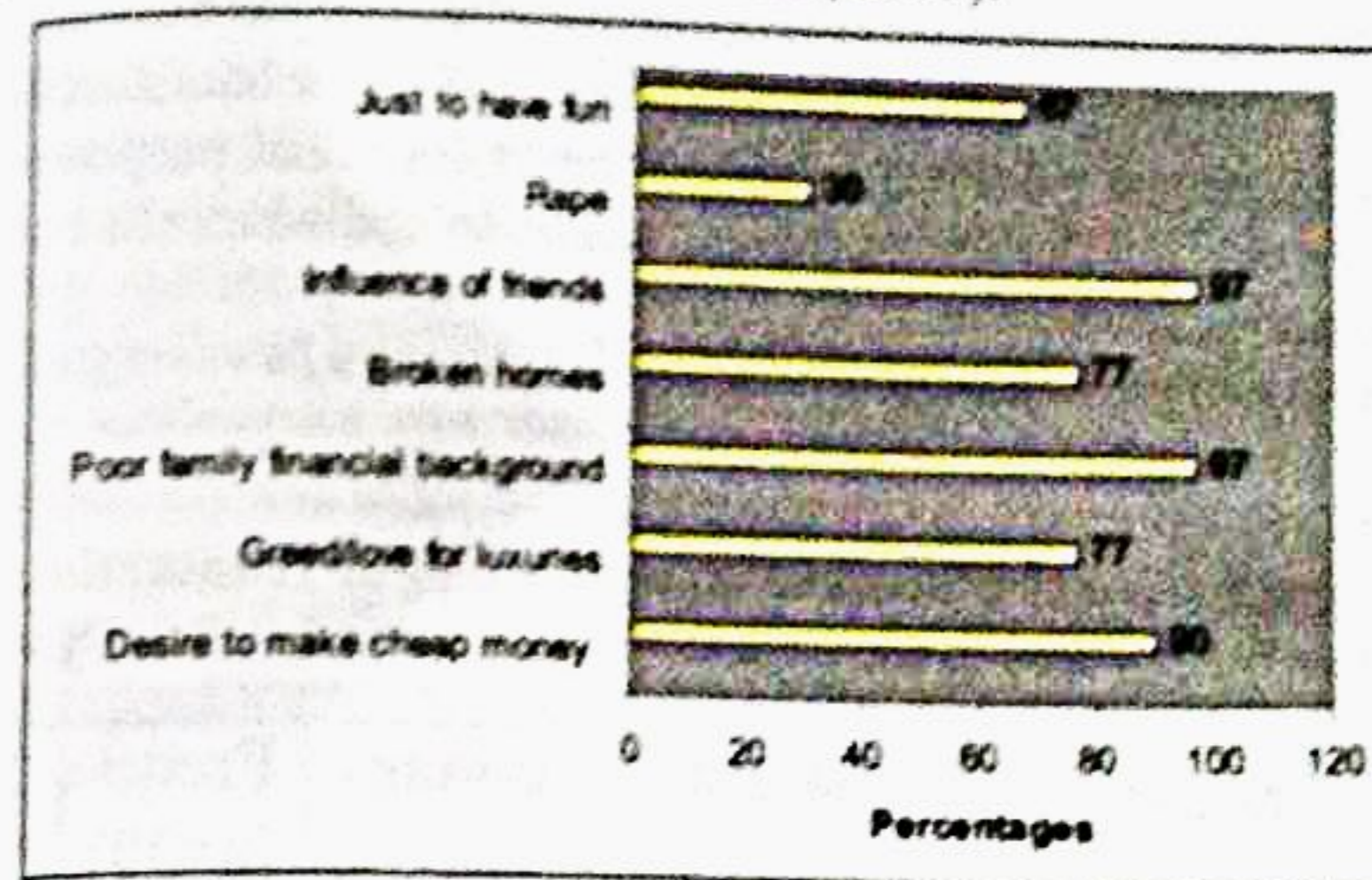


Figure 2: Factors influencing involvement in Transactional sex among LASU Undergraduate

One could imagine that maybe young undergraduates are not conscious of the consequences of contracting STIs and HIV in view of the predominance of risky sexual behaviour among them. According to Table 6, it is surprising that 90 percent of the interviewees mentioned it that most of those who engage in transactional or risky sexual behaviour are fully aware of such consequences. Yet the practice is so common among the students (Nwokocha, 2007). It becomes more pathetic if we consider the fact that only 40 percent of the participants mentioned the possibility of using condoms in such sexual relationships. Studies have established that it is difficult to negotiate condom use in such situations, especially for females (Luke, 2003; Moore et al, 2007). Beside STIs and HIV/AIDS, some of the students who engage in transactional sex fall victim of ritual killers who offer them money to have sex with them. One of the interviewees

explained:

Many of the ladies who engage in transactional sex with Aristos are usually drugged through soft drinks. While they are under the influence of the drug their Aristo partners use white handkerchief to clean up the private part of the ladies for ritual purposes. I know a friend who went out with an Aristo and when she came back she bled to death.

A year four female Sociology undergraduate, age 24

Table 6.5

Condom use and Perceived consequences of Transactional sexual activities among undergraduates in LASU, Ojo.

S/N	Reproductive Health Behaviour	Freq. (n=30)	%
1	Students use condom for protection	12	40
2	Contraction of STIs and HIV	27	90

Source: Fieldwork, 2008.

6.3.2 Change in use of Space

Based on the assumption that the number of hotels/brothels in an environment is an indication of the level of sexual activities going on there, data were gathered on the number of hotels/brothels established in the neighbourhood before and after LASU was sited in the present location of its Ojo Campus. Table 7 shows the list of hotels/brothels generated from the census of the institutions conducted in the neighbourhood. A total of 16 hotels/brothels were sited and counted in the three communities surrounding the University. Figure 3 shows that only 18 percent of these hotels/brothels were in existence before the main campus - (Ojo Campus) of the University was sited and 75 percent of the 16 institutions came into existence after the birth of the University.

Although, one could mention the presence of Alaba International Market as another possible factor that might have influenced the location of the hotels/brothels, it is striking to note that 75 percent of them were only established after 1983. There is no doubt that the patronage of both staff and students may be significant. The officials of all the hotels/brothels interviewed indicated that they enjoy patronage from LASU's population. Some of the undergraduate interviewed opined that they know that some of their colleagues use the hotels/brothels during examination periods. By and large the picture painted by the difference in the proportion observed before and after LASU was established may also suggest a reflection of the reciprocal effect of the University and reproductive health behaviour of the students on the use of space in the University neighbourhood.

Similar observations have been made about other University neighbourhoods. For instance, Stamler (1997) observed the presence of prostitutes in various locations around New York University; and Hoffmann (2006) also made a similar observation about the neighbourhood of the University of Minnesota in the United States. Nwokocho (2007) observed the preponderance of transactional sexual behaviour in some Nigerian Universities he studied. Therefore, the data suggest that most of the hotels/brothels in the LASU's neighbourhood likely emerged in response to either demands by the University's population or by outsiders (maybe the 'Aristos') who patronize the institutions because of LASU undergraduates, especially females.

Table 6.6
Location and date of establishment of
hotels/brothels in LASU neighbourhood

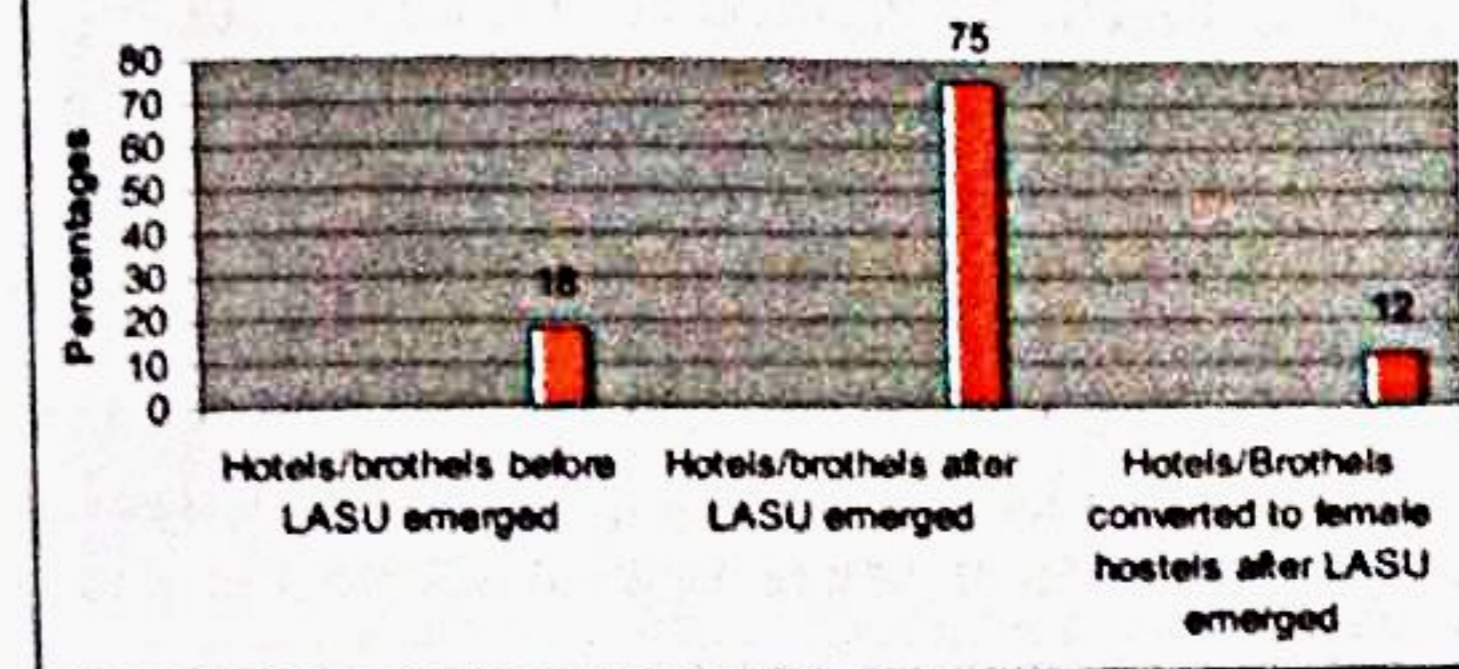
Name of hotels/brothels	Location of Hotel/Brothels	Year of establishment
1. J. Joker Hotel	Iba Town	1996
2. Royal Crown Hotel	Iba Town	1982
3. Adoff International Hotel	Iba Town	1990
4. Jolag International Hotel	Okokomaiko	2002
5. Starjen International Hotel	Okokomaiko	1999
6. Ibuoye International Hotel	Iba Town	2007
7. Nice Time Guest House	Iba Town	2006
8. Happy Days Hotel	Ojo Town	1995
9. Toyin Hotel	Ojo Town	1980
10. Rega Hotel	Ojo Town	1991
11. Paragon Hotel	Ojo Town	1996
12. Freelings Hotel	Ojo Town	2005
13. Adidas Hotel	Ojo Town	1980
14. Onward Guest House	Ojo Town	1994
15. High Taste Hotel	Ojo Town	1994
16. Kay's Place Hotel	Ojo Town	1980

Source: Fieldwork, 2008.

It is interesting to note that three of the hotels/brothels established before LASU were converted to female hostels around year 2000 (Toyin, Kays and Adidas hotels/brothels). Though Kays hotel/brothel has been reconverted, the other two are female hostels till date. These hotels/brothels were all established in 1980, before the establishment of the University.

Perhaps, the high prevalence of transactional sex among young people (Moore, et al 2007) facilitated the conversion of the hotels/brothels to female hostel may only be for the purpose of branding whereas the students' tenants engage in more of transactional sexual activities. To dig deeper, we conducted non-participant observation around the two existing ones for four days. It was observed that more of men come to visit the occupants. It was very common for some men to park their cars and go into the hostels for some minutes and later come out with ladies, get into the car and drive away. The traffic of such men soared at weekends. Therefore, these hostels may be serving two functions: they provide accommodation to the students and also simultaneously facilitate refined transactional sexual activities in the neighbourhood. This motive might have informed the conversion.

Figure 3: Proportion of hotels established before LASU and after, and converted to female hostels



6.4 Conclusion

The nature of reproductive health behaviour of young people is a matter of serious concern in sub-Saharan Africa because this is where the prevalence of HIV/AIDS is highest besides the devastating effects of STIs. Since sex is the main mode of transmission, a good understanding of reproductive health

behaviour is certainly a major way by which we can develop policies and programmes to check further spread of the epidemic. In the light of this, this study has sought to describe the dimensions of transactional sexual health behaviour among undergraduates in LASU within the interactionist framework, highlighting changes in the use of space as a function of reproductive health behaviour of the student population of the university.

Generally, heterosexual activity thrives among undergraduates. Transactional sex is also common; it is more prevalent among females. Sexual relationships could exist between two fellow students (horizontal relationship) or between student and non-student. Lecturers who exchange grades for sex, non-academic staff and outsiders who offer monetary reward or material gifts to have sex with the students constitute non-student partners (vertical sexual relationship). At the national level, about 10 percent females and 26 percent males aged 15-24 years engaged in transactional sex in 2005 (Federal Ministry of Health, 2006). Factors influencing undergraduates involvement in risky reproductive health behaviour includes poverty, broken homes, peer influence and desire to make cheap money. But according to the interactionist framework, opportunity for continuous social interaction provided by the University environment is cardinal in the initiation to and sustenance of transactional sexual behaviour. It provides the platform where new members are shown the reward of transactional sex thus igniting their own interest. This is the process accounting for the wide spread of this nefarious behaviour among undergraduates.

The data suggest that most students who engage in transactional sex rarely use measures of protection such as condoms. This is not surprising. Most of the partners who engage students in risky sexual behaviour are of higher social and economic status, they

are more powerful to dominate scene of sexual encounters. Inequality in social and economic status makes it very difficult for the students to negotiate safe sex (Bianchi, et al 2006). Hence, they are vulnerable to STIs and HIV as well as ritualistic manipulations in the hand of some of their sexual partners, especially the 'Aristos' and 'sugar mummies'. A crucial implication of this pattern of sexual behaviour among the undergraduates for the neighbourhood may be rapid spread of HIV and STIs in the neighbourhood and even beyond it.

Prevailing reproductive health behaviour may be one of the crucial factors that have attracted over 75 percent of the hotels/brothels in the three communities constituting part of the neighbourhood of the University. It should be noted however that other factors such as the drive to provide hospitality services for the benefit of the growing population of the University community for purely economic reasons may partially account for the increasing number of the hotels. The three hotels which were converted to female hostels could be considered as change in the use of space traceable to LASU's significant impact on the neighbourhood. The converted hotels (to female hostels) may actually retain the attributes of a brothel where the occupants engage in all forms of transactional sexual activities. A fundamental question that arises is why were all the three converted to female hostels and non to male hostel? So the name female hostel may be for the purpose of re-branding to seem decent.

This study was purely qualitative and therefore generalization may be difficult. The insightful findings it has generated could be useful as a preliminary assessment of the prevailing reciprocal relationship between the University and the neighbourhood with respect to reproductive health behaviour. Further studies may be needed on this subject-matter across a sample of the Universities

in the country. However, in view of the potential devastating consequences of the nature of risky reproductive health behaviour observed here, the following policy actions are recommended. All stakeholders must invest deliberate effort to assist this vulnerable population. Parents are strongly advised to regularly visit their wards, sometimes without notice. It will also be rewarding if the University could embark on more intensive campaigns targeting the entire University community, especially the female folk on the dangers of transactional sexual behaviour. The need to use protection device may also be publicized in the University community with special emphasis on the student population. It is also important that the University develops a kind of part-time job scheme for indigent students with females being giving special consideration.

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