

The Social Media and the Rise of Commercial Sex (Hook-Up) Among Students in Higher Institutions: A Study of University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study aimed to measure the influence of the social media on the rise of commercial sex (hook-up) in higher institutions of learning, using the University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State, Nigeria, as a case study. The cultivation theory was used as the theoretical framework for the study. The study adopted a descriptive research design to carry out the investigation. The population of the study is 1,583. The Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination table was used to determine the sample size. A self-designed questionnaire which was the primary instrument of data collection was distributed to 306 respondents. The study found that social media exposure was linked to increased engagement in commercial sex in universities. Also, the study discovered that certain motivating factors responsible for making students go into hook-ups include greed, poverty, the need for quick cash to settle bills, family pressure and the need for social media validation, amongst others. Finally, the study pinpointed some recent trends linked to the rise of commercial sex engagement by students in universities to include, the current poverty rate, show of opulence by the rich on social media, and social media trends, amongst others. The study recommended that universities should develop and implement educational programmes that focus on digital literacy and responsible social media use. It also recommended that universities should create judgement-free fora where individuals can openly discuss their issues and experiences without fear of being judged.

Keywords: Commercial Sex, Education, Higher Institutions, Hook-Up, Social Media

Introduction

Social media encompass online social networking platforms designed to unite individuals for various objectives. Ekeanyanwu and Kalyango (2013, p. 150) characterise these platforms as "the ninth Wonder of the world" due to their growing interconnectedness, interactivity, participation, integration, community orientation, pervasiveness, and digital nature. The surge in popularity of social media platforms followed the inception of Facebook in 2004. According to Guanah (2020), the comment feature in social media platforms provides veritable podiums for commenters to air their views on various burning issues they read online. This key affords citizens the opportunity to partake in interactions, public discussions, and to participate in decision making concerning their affairs. These interactions influence learning behaviour, which can either align with, or deviate from shared information, leading to the adoption of traits from these platforms (Wu, Li & Chang, 2016). Limitation of behaviours, positive or negative, occurs through this process, shaping societal norms. Nevertheless, social media's lack of controls, ethical guidelines, and gatekeeping mechanisms has given rise to problems like misinformation, unreliability, unprofessional conduct, false content, incitement, explicit material, privacy breaches, and other negative media practices (Suarez-Lledo & Alvarez-Galvez, 2021). Consequently, as social media's impact varies based on usage, students accessing diverse platforms are likely to acquire both favourable and adverse behaviours, including prostitution or hook-up (Wang, & Ding, 2022).

Prostitution (hook-up) is a sexually risky behaviour that involves trading sexual activity for money, a practice observed globally among higher education students (Mensah, 2020). 'Hook-Up' describes any form of intimacy with a member of the preferred sex that you do not consider a significant other. Usually, when used by modern youth, it means to make out, and when used by people between the ages of 20 and 35, it generally means to have sex. For instance, in the United Kingdom, an increasing number of students facing tuition costs are resorting to prostitution, sometimes considering it their sole option to fund education (Balint, 2021). It has become apparent to have an in-depth understanding of this phenomenon and take more effective measures to address risky sexual behaviours among young individuals, particularly university students who experience early independence and belong to the most vulnerable segments of society. One avenue for tackling this concern involves identifying the factors that contribute to such risks among youth, and establishing preventive strategies to mitigate them (Agbodo, 2017).

The need for systematic research on social networking platforms and their impact on students' sexual behaviours is necessary. Notably, previous studies by Owan, Owan and Eneje (2020); and Bozzola, Spina, Agostiniani, Barni, Scarpato, and Staiano (2022), link social media use to the initiation of various sexual activities and the spread of sexual messages. Kesten, Dias, Burns, Crook, Howarth, Mercer and Weatherburn (2019) suggest that these media could also influence sexual attitudes and behaviours, potentially leading to risky sexual practices with significant health implications. Social networking media encompasses digital communication forms, including websites and content accessible through digital devices like smartphones and Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs). It plays a substantial role in the digital realm, offering platforms for interactive learning and engagement with topics such as sports, romance, politics, drugs, and violence (Stoilova, Livingstone & Khazbak, 2021). However, these platforms are

also associated with deviant behaviours, including homosexuality, indecent dressing, premarital dating, pornography, and violence (Owan & Robert, 2019). Thus, this present study aimed to explore the connection between social media and the rise of prostitution among students in higher institutions. The study surveyed the University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State. Its depths also covered the examination of the motivations and dimensions of the trade. By so doing, it bridged the gap not covered by previous studies.

Statement of the Problem

Sexual content is highly prevalent on social media, and portrayals rarely depict the responsibilities and risks (e.g., condom use, pregnancy, abortion, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)) associated with sexual activity. Some scholars (Wen-Hsu, Lin., Chia-Hua, Liu., Chin-Chun, & Yi. 2020; Katherine, Mitchell, Morgan, Ellithorpe & Amy, 2021; Wusu, 2013) have determined that exposure to such content is generally associated with changes in attitudes about sex and gender, earlier progression to sexual activity, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted infection among adolescents. However, little information is available about moderators and mediators of these effects. We also know little about social media, their sex-related content, and their potential influence on teenagers.

Also, some studies suggest that adolescents who engage in sex report a wide range of social, emotional, and physical consequences, both positive and negative (Wana, Arulogun, Roberts, & Kebede, 2019). Data from a few studies (Carnes, Delmonico, & Griffin, 2009; Lee, Yuen Loke, Hung, & Sobel, 2018; Bozzola, Spina, Agostiniani, Barni, Russo, Scarpato & Staiano, 2022) indicate that sexual displays on social media sites are related to problematic beliefs and behaviours among those who post these contents, and among viewers, including increasing the likelihood of students engaging in sex-for-money. Likewise, online pornography appears to be more problematic for youth than offline sources (Nikkelen, van Oosten & van den Borne, 2019). Given the vast and increasing amount of time youth spend online, and their developmental openness to influence, more research attention to digital sexual media is needed. This research sought to address a notable void in the existing literature by examining the potential effects of social media engagement on university students, specifically investigating how it might influence their involvement in sexual activities for financial gain.

Objectives of the Study

These include:

1. To determine the extent to which social media exposure influences “hook-up” among students in higher institutions of education.
2. To investigate the various motivations behind engagement in “hook-up” activities facilitated by social media platforms.
3. To examine the trends and patterns linked to the utilisation of social media and the escalation of engagement in “hook-up” activities among students in higher institutions of education.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the Cultivation Theory. The theory was initially proposed by George Gerbner in the 1960s. The theory was developed and refined over several years in the latter half of the 20th century, with its key ideas appearing in academic literature in the 1970s and 1980s. According to Gerbner and Gross (1976), cultivation is a sociocultural theory

regarding the role of television in shaping viewers' perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and values. Cultivation theory suggests that long-term exposure to media content, particularly from television, can gradually shape an individual's perceptions of reality and influence their attitudes and behaviours. In the contemporary digital age, where social media are primary sources of media exposure, the theory extends to encompass new media platforms. It posits that continuous exposure to certain contents and themes on social media can lead individuals to cultivate beliefs, values, and behaviours. In the context of the study cultivation theory holds significant relevance. This theoretical framework can help researchers explore how constant exposure to commercial sex-related content or discussions on social media platforms may lead to the cultivation of specific beliefs and behaviours among students in higher institutions.

With the proliferation of social media, students are exposed to a wide range of content, including discussions, images, and narratives related to commercial sex and hookup culture. Cultivation theory allows researchers to investigate whether the portrayal of these themes on social media platforms gradually influences the perceptions and actions of students over time. It enables an examination of whether long-term exposure to such content contributes to the normalisation or acceptance of commercial sex practices and hookup culture among students.

Conceptual Review

Social media refer to online platforms and tools that enable users to create, share, or exchange information and content, including text, images, audio, and video (Appel, Grewal, Hadi & Stephen 2020). Social media have seamlessly integrated themselves into our daily routines, with compelling statistics revealing their pervasive influence. It is remarkable to note that 60% of the global population is actively engaged on social media platforms (Mavrodieva, Rachman, Harahap & Shaw, 2019). In the context of education, social media have been increasingly used as a tool for learning and communication. A study by Manca and Ranieri (2016) suggests that social media can enhance students' learning experiences, providing opportunities for collaboration, peer-to-peer learning, and engagement with diverse perspectives. In the same vein, another study by Guanah, Njemanze and Isa Derefaka (2023) found that the level of social media utilisation for academic purposes among university students at the University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayels State, Nigeria, was high (36.84%), and that the social media platform most frequently used by the students for academic purposes was the YouTube (25.26%), followed by WhatsApp (14.73%). It was also found that social media use impacts the academic performance of the students to a very great extent (29.82%). One of the primary challenges of social media use among students in Nigeria is exposure to harmful and inappropriate content. Young people may come across explicit or violent content, which can have adverse effects on their psychological and emotional well-being (O'Reilly, Dogra, Hughes, Reilly, George, & Whiteman, 2019). Additionally, they may be exposed to propaganda or fake news, which can misinform them and cause harm (Bozzola, et al., 2022).

Commercial Sex in the Era of Social Media

Instead of strengthening developmental efforts and social values, social media often present significant challenges to society. Despite this, they have gained immense popularity across various segments of the population, and university students, in particular, are recognised as heavy users of social media. Extensive literature suggests that these students employ social media for a diverse range of purposes (Rutherford, 2010; Duggan and Brenner, 2013;

Bridgestock, 2013; ScienceDaily, 2013). Shafique, Anwar, and Bushra (2010) and Utin (2016) support this notion, asserting that social media usage is more prevalent among college and university students than any other demographic. Memon, Sharma, Mohite and Jain (2018) have discovered that students frequently use social media for a variety of purposes, some of which are commendable, while others are not. For instance, Cascini, Pantovic, Al-Ajlouni, Failla, Puleo, Melnyk, Lontano and Ricciardi (2022) found in their research that some students use social media for negative purposes.

On the issue of prostitution, Zaman, Ardiansyah, Arviansyah, Syach, Naziro and Wibawa (2022) shed light on how many individuals exploit social media for the promotion of prostitution, or direct involvement in such activities. Nelson (2019) echoes this sentiment by emphasising the prevalence of prostitution facilitated by social media. The case of the United States serves as a prime example, where law enforcement agencies successfully dismantled prostitution rings that operated through social media in various cities. Nelson further elaborates that certain social media platforms provide essential information, aiding detectives from the Reno County Sheriff's Office in their efforts to combat prostitution (Nelson, 2019). Armed with this information, detectives conducted a sting operation at a local motel, resulting in the arrest of three women aged 30, 23, and 21, who were subsequently charged with prostitution-related offences.

Commercial Sex Behaviour among University Students

The surge in prostitution in Nigeria bears resemblance to challenges faced by Western societies where the sex trade poses moral dilemmas. This issue extends beyond the proliferation of brothels and sex worker hubs in urban centres; it includes the rise of prostitution rings in the country (Adesina, 2006). Traditionally, universities were bastions for students to acquire not only intellectual and technological skills but also character and moral virtues. However, in Nigeria, this tradition seems to be waning. Anadi, Egboka & Anierobi (2011) note a shift in the agenda of university students, deviating from these traditional values. Izugbara (2010) highlights the vulnerability of women and girls, who often face educational, economic, and social hardships, leaving them with limited options. For many, engaging in sex work becomes a means of escaping the deprivation and marginalisation they endure.

Initially perceived as a passing trend, prostitution is now ingrained in the lifestyle of Nigeria's higher learning institutions. Factors such as broken homes, parenting styles, peer influence, and gender preference contribute to this tendency among university students. Uzokwe (2008) places responsibility on parents, citing their lax approach to child-rearing and their disregard for the luxurious lifestyles their daughters adopt without questioning their sources. Campus prostitution stems from a desire to emulate affluent peers, particularly among students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. However, while mature women may willingly engage in such activities, young female undergraduates often lack awareness of the potential consequences (Jean, 2010). The modus operandi employed in campus prostitution vary widely, from seeking sugar daddies in nearby cities for substantial payments to soliciting customers on the streets or through intermediaries like pimps operating in beer parlours and salons (Oko, 2007). In October 2023, the Nigerian Police Force, NPF, arrested two females – Joseph Joy Adama (22years) and Vandora Davies Oreoluwa Favour (23 years) – for the robbery and murder of a prominent Kwara Socialite, and Managing Director of Water View Hotel, Ilorin, Mr Adeniyi Ojo (Oyekola, 2023). The suspects had invited the deceased for a “threesome” before tying him up and demanding for his valuables. When they saw he was not succumbing, they drugged him

and left with his phone and other valuables only to discover that he had died. This goes to show how risky it is to engage in sexual intercourse with hook-up girls. The culprits are said to be students of Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin.

Students and Prostitution (Hook up)

The constant advancement of technology has led to a sophistication in the landscape of prostitution. Commercial sex workers no longer confine their trade to brothels, hotels, or the streets; instead, they utilize the Internet and social media (Kennedy, 2016). This shift is attributed to the perceived safety and ease of conducting transactions through social media platforms. In particular, some social networking sites and platforms have been used as a means to carry out prostitution in secret. Students in schools can now reach out to a more sexually active clientele in their schools with applications like WhatsApp and Facebook. Recently, there has been a rise in student extracurricular groups, especially on WhatsApp. On these groups, it is expected that students will use them to pass the information on classes, projects, cancelled classes, and assignments, and have fun generally (Jones, 2008). However, something more sinister is going on in the underbelly. WhatsApp has now become a two-way market for prostitutes and their patronisers, as people engaged in commercial sex work communicate with the admins of these groups to tell them their services, offering some cut of their proceeds, if the admins could foster a successful meeting (Olojede, Ibikunle & Ajulor, 2020). On the other hand, people interested in the services of commercial sex workers approach these same admins to inform them of their search.

Furthermore, with the new development in WhatsApp status, saw a rise in people taking advantage to form what we call TV. On these WhatsApp TV, the organisers display memes, pictures, trends from other social media, and advertise businesses (like Hook Up) for a fee. They do this by either posting porn, sex toys, nudes of random porn stars, and nudes of some of these hook up girls. Then their subscribers proceed to request for the details of hook-up girls. Subscribers of these platforms cut across different demographics, so hook-up girls who take advantage of this platform can have unlimited reach – to students, lecturers, Sugar Mummies and even Sugar Daddies.

Empirical Review

Endurance and Ruth (2020) carried out a study titled “Social Media Use and Sexual Behaviour of Undergraduate Students in a Nigerian University, Creative Commons.” It aims to investigate the role of social media on sexual behaviour among 195 undergraduate students in the Niger Delta University, Amasoma, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The study adopted a cross-sectional study design in its method of investigation, while data for the study were generated using a structured questionnaire. The study found that the use of WhatsApp, Instagram, and time spent on social media were significantly associated with high-risk sexual behaviour. The study also found that students’ relationship status was associated with high-risk sexual behaviour. Additionally, the study ascertained that the use of social media influences the sexual behaviour of undergraduates, and therefore recommended that future planning of sexual and reproductive health needs to recognise the importance of social media in shaping the health of young people.

The findings of Endurance, Oyintoyo, and Ruth's study provide valuable insights into the impact of social media on the sexual behaviours of higher education students, particularly in the context of high-risk behaviours. This research highlights the role of popular social media platforms and the time spent on these platforms in influencing sexual behaviours, which is directly relevant to the present study. Understanding the influence of social media on sexual behaviours among university students is a key aspect of the current research. The study of Valentine (2020) focused on "Undergraduates' Utilisation of Social Networking Media and Sexual Behaviours in Higher Education: A Case Study, Pedagogical Research." The study examines how social networking media influence the sexual behaviours of university undergraduates in Nigeria. The survey research method was adopted, with a sample size of 396 students. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, and analysed using descriptive statistics. Findings show that undergraduates in Nigerian universities are exposed to a substantial amount of sexual content on various social media networks, which negatively influences their psychology towards sex, particularly in the area of dating before marriage. The study recommends the introduction of social media education in higher institutions to help students understand the responsible use of these technologies and minimise the negative effects while maximising their benefits.

The identified gap in the literature is that it primarily concentrates on general sexual behaviours rather than the specific context of commercial sex, emphasising the importance of the current research in filling this gap, and providing a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of social media on students' sexual behaviours.

Methodology

This study adopted the quantitative research method. The population comprised all 1,583 students enrolled at UAT (University of Africa, Toru-Orua UAT, Registry, 2024). The sample size of 306 was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determining sample size for the finite population. It was established at a 95 per cent confidence level and 5 per cent sampling error. According to them, when the finite population is between 1, 500 and 1,599, the required sample is 306. Purposive sampling technique was used to select students from three faculties of UAT, namely the Faculty of Social & Management Sciences, the Faculty of Basic & Applied Sciences, and the Faculty of Agriculture. The selection of the three faculties was due to the diverse opinions they offer. The technique employed aimed to capture the perspectives of students pursuing diverse career paths. A total of 102 students were chosen from each academic faculty. The questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. It was validated by two communication experts in the Department of Mass Communication at UAT before it was administered to the respondents. The reliability of the instrument was determined through the "Test-Re-test" method. 20 randomly selected final year students of the Department of Mass Communication, UAT, were administered the questionnaire. After an interval of two weeks, the same set of students were administered another set of the same questionnaire.

The outcomes were analysed to determine the reliability of the instrument using the Cronbach Alpha Method provided by Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 28.0). The value of Cronbach's alpha, 0.751, is indicative of the internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire. This coefficient measures the extent to which the items in the questionnaire are correlated with each other, reflecting their ability to consistently measure the same underlying construct. The distribution of questionnaire ensured an equitable representation of both male

and female students. Notably, a deliberate emphasis was placed on final-year students during the distribution process, with 50% of the questionnaire allocated to those in the 400-level or final year (153 students). The remaining 50% were evenly distributed among students in other academic levels, including 300-level (46 students), 200-level (61 students), and 100-level (46 students), to ensure a comprehensive and representative sample across various stages of academic progression. To gather data from the field, the researchers administered 306 copies of a structured questionnaire to the respondents. Out of these, only 271 (88.56%) were returned, and found usable for the study. The data were presented in tables of frequency distribution.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Extent to which social media exposure influences “hook-up” among students in higher institutions of education

Responses	Frequency	%
To a great extent	100	36.90
To a minimal extent	88	32.48
Difficult to say	6	2.21
To a little extent	41	15.13
To a very little extent	36	13.28
Total	271	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

KEYS: To a great extent- 90% - 100%; To a minimal extent- 89% - 70%; Difficult to say- 50% - 69%; To a little extent- 40% - 49%; To a very little extent- 1% - 39%.

The data from Table 1 show that students in higher institutions are greatly influenced by what they encounter on social media. The implication is that social media exposure influences “hook-up” among students.

Table 2: Various motivations behind engagement in “hook-up” activities facilitated by social media platforms

Responses	Frequency	%
Desire for casual physical intimacy	56	20.66
Pressure from family and peers	35	12.92
Societal norms and expectations	28	10.33
Alcohol and substance use and abuse	50	18.45
Greed	35	12.92
Desire for quick cash to settle bills	36	13.28
To fund expensive lifestyles	31	11.44
Total	271	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 indicate that there are multifarious motivations behind engagement in “hook-up” activities facilitated by social media platforms. This implies that students participate in hook-ups due to different reasons.

Table 3: Trends and patterns linked to the utilisation of social media and the escalation of engagement in “hook-up” activities among students in higher institutions of education

Responses	Frequency	%
Current poverty rate in the country and the show of opulence by the rich on social media platforms	56	20.66
Anonymity provided by social media.	33	12.18
Correlation between the frequency of social media use and students' involvement in "hook-up" culture	33	12.18
Ease of online messaging across various social media platforms	62	22.88
Correlation between increase in glorification of internet fraud activities on social media.	26	9.59
“Only fans” and the rise of other social media platforms that enable people to monetise their private media	31	11.44
Convenience of connecting with potential partners through social media.	30	11.07
Total	271	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 outlines some of the trends and patterns linked to the utilisation of social media and the escalation of engagement in “hook-up” activities among students in higher institutions of education.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of this study indicates that, to a great extent, that exposure to social media exert a considerable influence to “hook-up” activities among students in higher institutions of education. This aligns with the tenets of the cultivation theory which suggests that media exposure shapes individuals’ perceptions and beliefs over time. Also, Valentine, Mercy and Samuel (2020) had found previously that students in Nigeria universities are exposed to a substantial amount of sexual content on various social media networks. Likewise, Valentine (2020) may have provided a unique point that was not expressly covered by this study, which

is, the exposure of students to a substantial amount of social media content, it falls short in stating if the negative effect of students' exposure to the said social media, was commercial sex (hook-up) or transactional sex (dating, friends with benefits, flings, one night stands, etc.), both of which are vices to the average Nigerian. Secondly, the study identified the various motivations behind engagement in "hook-up" activities facilitated by social media platforms to include, pressure from family and peers, family background and economic motivation, quick cash to settle bills, alcohol intake and substance abuse, greed, and the desire for an expensive lifestyle. The finding resonates with the views of Agnew (as cited in Onyeme, 2024) which state that individuals engage in deviant behaviour (in this context, hook-ups), as a response to financial stress and the need to meet immediate economic demands. This also conforms with the finding of Lebni, Irandoost, Dehghan, Ziapour, Khosravi and Mehedi (2021) that lack of financial resources is a primary motivator for women to participate in sex work.

As seen in Ernst, Romanczuk-Seiferth, Köhler, Amelung and Betzler's (2021) finding, that although dismay (48.9%) is a frequent emotion mentioned by the sex workers they sampled, they still entered the industry for financial reasons (p. 5). Hence, the need for better finances (benefit) outweighs the feeling of dismay (cost) they experience by engaging in hook-ups. Thirdly, in determining the current trends and patterns linked to social media and the increased engagement in hook-up activities among students in institutions of higher education, this third finding provides some valuable insights into the complex dynamics at play concerning the association between social media engagement and increased hook-up activities in university settings.

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) states that 63% of persons living in Nigeria (133 million people) are multidimensionality poor, and 65% of the poor (86 million people) live in the North while 35% (nearly 47 million) live in the South (NBS, 2022). This trend coupled with the fuel subsidy removal, recession and inflation within the last year has made more young people engage in deviant behaviour to make ends meet. Given the evidence linking more traditional media use with initiation of various sexual activities, to the extent that new media contain relevant sexual messages, this study has found that social media are linked to developing sexual attitudes and behaviour that has affected sexual risk-taking and health in the university community. This echoes Landry, Turner, Vyas and Wood's (2017) findings that there is increased sexual risk among higher social media messaging users. The predominant consensus amongst the respondents is that platforms like "OnlyFans" and others that enable monetisation of private media have a significant impact on hook-up activities. Extant literature suggests that mainstream culture normalises selling yourself like a commodity. Freya (2023, as cited in Onyeme, 2024)) asserts that celebrities encourage girls to make/watch porn, be a slut, and get naked. For instance, TikTok has sex work influencers filming luxurious days in their life and teaching girls how to make millions. Thus, with increased activity on social media, students will invariably start making decisions based on what they see daily. This becomes more dangerous when the algorithm on social media platforms like TikTok places students in Digital Echo Chambers, and students are exposed to more shows of opulence by members of the sex work community. Other trends that influence hook-up culture are the need for social acceptance and validation on social media, online sharing of hook-up experiences and the convenience of connecting with potential partners through social media.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that social media influence the sexual choices of students in the University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State, Nigeria, which directly impacts the rise of hook-up activities in the university community. Also, the study found that pressure from family and peers, family background and economic motivation, quick cash to settle bills, alcohol intake and substance abuse, greed, and the desire for an expensive lifestyle are significant motivators of students in the university community engaging in hook-ups. Finally, it was discovered that the current poverty rate in the country, as well as the frequency of social media use, the show of opulence by the rich on social media, the impact of monetisation of hook-up activities on platforms like OnlyFans, the convenience of connecting with potential clients on social media, and the need for social acceptance and validation on social media, are current trends that are linked to increased hook-up activities in the university.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Universities should develop and implement educational programmes that focus on digital literacy and responsible social media use. Specifically, students within the university community should be provided with information on the potential consequences of engaging in hook-up facilitated by social media and promote healthier relationship choices.
- ii. Universities should create judgment-free fora, workshops, or counseling services for students to openly discuss family, friendships, relationships, and life challenges. This provides a supportive space for those feeling pressured to reconsider hook-up decisions and offers an avenue for individuals already involved to share experiences, fostering rehabilitation and a return to a healthier lifestyle.
- iii. Longitudinal and Qualitative studies should sample only students who have experience in hook-ups or are currently participating in the sex industry. This will provide a more nuanced perspective on the motivational factors, as well as the extent social media influences the rise of hook-up culture.

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