

**A Study of Public Perception on the Causes and Consequences of Prostitution among
Single Females in Bauchi State, Nigeria**

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Abstract

Prostitution is not a new phenomenon in human history. However, recent decades have witnessed a new trend where some single women engage in commercial sex while residing in their parental homes. This study analysed the emerging trend of prostitution among single Muslim females in Bauchi State, Nigeria. The study adopted Differential Reinforcement Theory, which provided a framework for understanding how social and economic rewards, peer influence, and environmental reinforcement encourage and sustain involvement in commercial sex among single Muslim females. Using a survey research design, the study employed multi-stage cluster, availability, and purposive sampling techniques to collect data from 180 respondents. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires, while qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews. The findings indicate that prostitution among single Muslim females is driven by interconnected socio-economic and psychosocial factors, including poverty, peer influence, poor *socialisation*, street hawking, and the desire luxury lifestyle. These factors particularly affect vulnerable groups such as female hawkers, students, school dropouts, and illiterate women, increasing their likelihood of engaging in commercial sex during routine economic and social activities. Consequently, involvement in prostitution exposes them to significant health, social, and physical risks, including sexually transmitted diseases, stigmatization, and violence. The study concludes that the persistence of prostitution among single Muslim females is primarily driven by interconnected socioeconomic and family-related challenges, posing significant public health and social concerns. Therefore, effective responses should focus on strengthening family supervision, improving socioeconomic opportunities, and promoting value-based *socialisation* to address both the root causes and consequences of the problem.

Keywords: Causes; Consequences; Females; Prostitution; Public Perception

INTRODUCTION

Prostitution is one of the oldest women professions. History revealed that both men and women who offer sex for money or other forms of gain have existed and continue to exist in many societies. In Nigeria, prostitution has been documented among different categories of women. Prostitutes have been known to operate in certain settings such as brothels, streets, hotels, and other informal environments. However, there is now an emerging trend of prostitution in which some single women engage in commercial sex work while residing in their parental homes. Some

women now continue to remain within their families while using socially acceptable activities and routine movements to conceal their involvement in prostitution. School attendance, wedding ceremonies, visits to friends or relatives, and other legitimate social engagements provide opportunities for meeting clients without attracting parental or community attention. This concealed form of prostitution is significantly an issue of concern in Bauchi State, which is a predominantly Muslim environment where sex out of marriage is religiously prohibited and socially stigmatised.

Evidence confirms that prostitution in general is a recognized social phenomenon in Bauchi State. For instance, Bakam (2022) found that the Bauchi State Government, through the Hisbah Department of the State Sharia Commission, initiated skills training for 575 prostitutes in various parts of the State in order to discourage prostitution and provide alternative livelihoods to them. More recently, Oyewole (2025) also noted that livelihood support was provided to 100 former sex workers in Misau Local Government Area, including young girls whose education had been interrupted. These interventions reveal that prostitution is not merely a hypothetical social problem in Bauchi State but a phenomenon that has attracted institutional and community responses. However, the emerging trend of prostitution among single Muslim females in Bauchi State should be understood in terms of its changing nature and increased concealment rather than as evidence that prostitution among single women is entirely new.

Many interconnected socioeconomic and psychosocial factors are responsible for women involvement in prostitution. For instance, poverty, unemployment, inadequate financial support, family instability, poor parental supervision, poor socialisation, peer influence, and the desire for material possessions or a luxury lifestyle may create incentives for some young women to engage in commercial sex. These factors are particularly relevant among students, school dropouts, female hawkers, and economically dependent young women whose daily activities expose them to diverse social networks. Despite the documented existence of prostitution in Bauchi State, there remains limited empirical understanding of this concealed dimension among single Muslim females. Existing literature and interventions have largely focused on prostitution generally. Less attention has been given to the interaction between economic vulnerability, family circumstances, peer influence, material aspirations, and reinforcement processes that explain why some single Muslim

females engage in prostitution while maintaining an outward appearance of conformity to family and religious expectations.

Against this background, this study investigates the emerging trend of prostitution among single Muslim females in Bauchi State. It examines the factors responsible for the phenomenon, the modes and patterns through which the prostitution is organised and concealed, its effects on individuals and society, and possible solutions. Overall, the study seeks to provide a more comprehensive explanation of this emerging and concealed dimension of prostitution in Bauchi State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the emerging trend of prostitution among single Muslim females in Bauchi State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. Examine the factors responsible for prostitution among single Muslim females in Bauchi State.
- ii. Examine the modes, patterns, and nature of prostitution among single Muslim females in Bauchi State.
- iii. Assess the effects of prostitution among single Muslim females in Bauchi State.
- iv. Identify possible solutions to prostitution among single Muslim females in Bauchi State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Prostitution: McCaghy (1976) viewed prostitution as an act of granting non-marital sexual access, established by mutual agreement among prostitutes, their clients, and employers for remuneration. Prostitution is also defined as the business or practice of providing sexual services to another person in exchange for payment (Qayyum *et al.*, 2013). Dylewski and Prokop (2018) viewed prostitution as sexual activity provided by women, men, and transgender persons in exchange for payment. In the context of this study, prostitution is defined as the provision of sexual services for money, material benefits, or other forms of economic gain, particularly where the sexual relationship is primarily motivated by commercial considerations. This definition is appropriate to the present study because it focuses on the transactional and commercial dimensions of sexual activity rather than characterising the behaviour in moral or judgmental terms. Prostitution differs from other forms of sexual relationships primarily in the presence of an explicit or implicit exchange of sexual services for financial or material benefits, rather than being based principally on emotional or relational considerations.

Empirical Review

Factors Responsible for Prostitution

The factors responsible for women's involvement in prostitution are multidimensional and vary across social, economic, cultural, and individual contexts. However, some of the major factors are categorised as follows:

Poverty: Poverty is one of the major factors frequently associated with women's involvement in prostitution. Earlier studies identified economic deprivation as a major motivation for women offering sexual services for financial rewards (Hong & Li, 2006, 2008; Qayyum *et al.*, 2013). More recent empirical evidence from Nigeria also demonstrates the importance of socioeconomic conditions. Nwangwu, Ayuk, and Chukwujindu (2022) found that commercial sex workers in Enugu state were widely perceived as vulnerable women whose involvement was closely associated with poverty. Similarly, Essien, Vite, and Harry (2022) found that some prostitutes in Akwa Ibom State regarded prostitution as an income-generating activity because of their disadvantaged economic positions and limited alternative employment opportunities. However, poverty alone does not explain why all economically disadvantaged women do not engage in prostitution. This suggests that economic vulnerability need to interact with other factors such as peer influence, family circumstances, and individual aspirations.

Unemployment: Unemployment and inadequate access to legitimate income-generating opportunities constitute another important factor associated with commercial sex work. Aral *et al.* (2003) and Prakash (2013) previously identified unemployment as a factor encouraging women to enter prostitution. More recent Nigerian evidence provides further support for this relationship. Essien *et al.*, (2022) and Nwangwu *et al.*, (2022) observed that young women with limited access to legitimate employment opportunities turn to prostitution as a means of generating income. However, unemployment does not automatically lead to prostitution, as many unemployed women pursue other forms of informal employment or livelihood activities. Rather, unemployment may increase vulnerability when it occurs alongside poverty, low educational attainment, weak family support, and limited opportunities for economic advancement. This study therefore examines unemployment within the broader socioeconomic context of prostitution.

Peer Influence and Social Networks: Peer influence is another factor contributing to women's involvement in prostitution. Dalla (2001), Okafor and Duru (2010), Shillah (2011) and Eke (2012)

found that some women were introduced to or encouraged to engage in prostitution by friends and social networks. Although these studies provide useful evidence, much of the evidence is relatively dated. Thus, there is a need for more contemporary research to examine how peer networks operate within changing social environments. Peer influence may be particularly important among young women because social relationships can provide information about potential clients, venues, financial opportunities, and methods of entering prostitution. Peer groups may also normalize the practice where prostitution is presented as a means of obtaining money, material possessions, or social status. However, peer influence should not be interpreted as an independent or deterministic cause. Rather, peer influence becomes more significant when combined with economic hardship, family problems, unemployment, or a desire for material improvement.

Illiteracy: Educational attainment may also shape women's opportunities and vulnerability to prostitution. Prakash (2013) associated illiteracy with prostitution, suggesting that limited education may restrict access to formal employment opportunities. Illiteracy does not necessarily cause prostitution, but it reduces access to employment and economic opportunities, thereby increasing vulnerability when combined with poverty and other social pressures. Recent Nigerian studies have similarly emphasised the importance of limited educational and employment opportunities in understanding women's involvement in prostitution. Essien *et al.* (2022), for instance, found that prostitution is connected to disadvantaged economic position of young women and their limited alternatives for legitimate employment. However, rather than assuming that illiteracy directly causes prostitution, this study examines whether illiteracy operate through reduced economic opportunities, unemployment, or exposure to particular social environments.

Family Factors: Family conditions can also influence women's vulnerability to prostitution. Eunice (2015) argued that parental neglect contributes to women's involvement in sex for money. Prostitution has also been associated with broken homes, inadequate parental supervision, and family instability. Nevertheless, family factors should not be treated as deterministic. Many women from unstable or economically disadvantaged families do not engage in prostitution, while some women from relatively stable families may become involved. This indicates that family factors are likely to interact with economic, peer, and individual factors.

Desire for Luxury Lifestyle: The desire for a luxury lifestyle and material possessions has also been identified as a possible motivation for prostitution. In contemporary Nigeria, young women

may be exposed to lifestyles involving expensive clothing, mobile phones and other consumer goods. Such exposure may generate aspirations that cannot easily be satisfied through available legitimate sources of income. However, treating all women who engage in prostitution as motivated by luxury would oversimplify the phenomenon and overlook the structural conditions that may shape their choices. Essien *et al.*, (2022), for example, demonstrated that economic disadvantage and the absence of alternative employment opportunities were important in understanding prostitutes' motivations.

Modes, Patterns and Nature of Prostitution among Single Muslim Females

The modes, patterns, and nature of prostitution have evolved over time due to changes in social settings, communication technologies, and women's socioeconomic conditions. Prostitution can broadly be categorised into brothel-based and non-brothel-based forms. Okafor *et al.*, (2017) noted that brothel-based prostitutes operate within established brothels, often under the supervision of managers. On the other hand, non-brothel-based prostitutes solicit clients and provide sexual services in homes, hotels, restaurants, and nightclubs. The non-brothel-based form is important to this study because prostitution among single Muslim females in Bauchi State is characterised by concealment. Prostitutes in this category continue to reside with their parents while concealing commercial sexual activities through ordinary educational, social, and economic engagements, which make them less visible to family and community institutions.

Use of Intermediaries and Social Networks: Another dimension of prostitution involves intermediaries and social networks that connect prostitutes with clients. The intermediaries may include brothel managers, pimps, friends, acquaintances, or other individuals who facilitate access to clients and venues. Okafor *et al.*, (2017) noted that non-brothel-based prostitutes have different relationships with pimps and intermediaries. Social networks may therefore provide access to clients, information, and meeting locations. This dimension is relevant to the present study because some single Muslim females may rely on friends, acquaintances, or intermediaries to facilitate client contact while minimizing exposure.

Use of Social Media and Emerging Digital Platforms: The development of smartphones, social media, and digital communications has created new avenues for connecting sex workers with clients. Essien *et al.*, (2022) observed that smartphones, electronic devices, and digital platforms facilitate the emerging forms of prostitution through phone-based and technologically mediated

sex work. Digital platforms such as Twitter, WhatsApp, Tik Tok and Instagram may increase concealment by enabling private communications and arrangements without public solicitation.

Use of Routine Social and Economic Activities as Cover: Concealed prostitution may involve using legitimate daily activities such as schooling, hawking, weddings, social visits, or skill-acquisition programmes to leave parental homes and meet clients without suspicion. Many existing studies such as Okafor *et al.*, (2017) and Essien *et al.*, (2022) have documented prostitution in brothels, streets, hotels, bars, and other commercial venues. However, limited empirical attention has been given to how single Muslim females integrate commercial sexual activities into ordinary routines such as schooling and social outings. Therefore, the nature of concealed prostitution extends beyond the location of sexual transactions to include the strategies used to disguise commercial sexual activities within legitimate educational, economic, and social engagements.

Possible Solutions to Prostitution among Single Muslim Females

The persistence of prostitution has generated different responses involving families, government agencies, educational institutions, community organisations, religious institutions, and civil society organisations. Below are some of the possible solutions to address the menace of prostitution among single Muslim females:

Proper Socialisation and Parental Supervision: Proper *socialisation* and effective parental supervision are important preventive measures for young unmarried women. The family transmits social values, self-control, behavioural expectations, and acceptable social interaction. Earlier literature linked parental neglect and inadequate supervision to women's involvement in prostitution. However, effective supervision should go beyond restricting movement to include emotional support, awareness of social networks, monitoring of activities and guidance.

Sex Education and Counselling: Education and counselling are important strategies for preventing prostitution and reducing its consequences. Prakash (2013) identified sex education as a possible intervention, while school-based counselling can address sexual health, peer pressure, exploitation and decision-making. Counsellors can help young women recognize exploitative relationships, develop coping skills, and access legitimate support. However, counselling should go beyond moral condemnation by addressing socioeconomic and psychosocial vulnerabilities.

Educational interventions should also incorporate life-skills development. Such integrated interventions are more effective than ordinary awareness campaigns.

Employment and Economic Empowerment: Economic empowerment is an important strategy for addressing prostitution as poverty, unemployment, and limited livelihood opportunities encourage prostitution. Providing viable alternatives can reduce economic pressures and promote financial independence. Nwangwu *et al.*, (2022) recommended empowerment opportunities as part of responses to prostitution, emphasizing that interventions should move beyond awareness toward practical livelihood support. Evidence from Bauchi State further demonstrate the relevance of livelihood interventions. In 2022, the Bauchi State Government, through the Hisbah Department of the State Sharia Commission, provided vocational training in tailoring and hairdressing 575 to prostitutes as alternative source of livelihood (Bakam, 2022). However, effective empowerment should include startup capital, market access, financial literacy, monitoring and follow-up to promote sustainable economic independence.

Community Awareness and Media Campaigns: Public education and media campaigns can help prevent prostitution and reduce its health and social consequences by increasing awareness of associated risks and available support services. However, campaigns based solely on fear, stigma, or moral condemnation may have limited effectiveness as prostitution is also associated with poverty and unemployment. As such, effective interventions should combine awareness with information on economic opportunities, counselling, and support services.

Religious and Community-Based Interventions: Given Bauchi State's predominantly Muslim context, religious institutions can support prevention and rehabilitation through value-based *socialisation*, premarital guidance, family counselling, and community awareness. Their role should extend beyond moral condemnation to include referrals for skills acquisition, welfare assistance, counselling and rehabilitation, particularly where poverty and family instability contribute to prostitution. The Bauchi State Sharia Commission's reported vocational training of commercial sex workers illustrates this integrated approach (Punch, 2022). Combining religious guidance with livelihood support may be more sustainable than just punitive measures.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study adapts Differential Reinforcement Theory as its theoretical guide. Differential Reinforcement Theory was developed by Ronald Akers in 1985. According to the theory, the process of learning crime begins with differential association of individuals with others who provide a model of criminal behavior to be imitated with favorable definitions and social reinforcements for it. Akers (1985) opined that differential association, favorable definition of the act and imitation explain an individual's initial participation in criminal behavior. However, whether the person will continue with that behavior or not is determined by differential reinforcements. Differential reinforcement consists of actual, anticipated, tangible, intangible and/or symbolic consequences of engaging in a specific behavior.

With regard to prostitution, most of the single Muslim females are influenced by their prostitute friends who take advantage of their socio-economic and emotional conditions. Such friends teach the new recruits some sexual habits and techniques that will aid them to be outstanding in the profession. Most of the single Muslim females in prostitution were initially introduced into the act either by associating with or being persuaded and convinced by friends already in the profession. Supporting this theory, some in-depth interviews conducted by Qayyum *et al.*, (2013) revealed that a number of prostitutes were introduced into prostitution by their friends who were already in the act. In essence, differential association explains the initial involvement of single Muslim females into commercial sex, while differential reinforcement determines whether they will continue with the behavior or not.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Bauchi State, Nigeria. The sample size included only individuals who had resided in the State for at least 12 months at the time of the study. The study adopted a survey research design and a mixed-method approach involving quantitative and qualitative data collection. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires, while qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews (IDI) to provide detailed explanations of the factors, modes and patterns, effects, and possible solutions to prostitution among single Muslim females in Bauchi State.

For the quantitative element, a multi-stage cluster sampling technique was used to organize the study area into the three senatorial districts of Bauchi State, which served as geographical clusters.

Availability sampling was subsequently employed to select 150 respondents who were accessible and willing to participate. Respondents were eligible if they had resided in Bauchi State for at least 12 months, were available during data collection, met the study requirements, and voluntarily consented to participate. Individuals who had resided in the State for less than 12 months, were unavailable, declined participation, or did not meet the eligibility requirements were excluded.

For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was used to select 30 key informants for in-depth interviews, with 10 participants selected from each senatorial district. The participants were drawn from five categories: Hisbah officials, community leaders, police officers, religious leaders, and traditional leaders. These categories were selected because they possess relevant institutional, security, religious, traditional, and community-based knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation. Participants were required to have resided in Bauchi State for at least 12 months, belong to one of the identified categories, possess relevant knowledge or experience, and voluntarily consent to participate. Those who did not meet these criteria or declined participation were excluded. Quantitative data were coded, processed, and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 22. Frequencies and percentages were also used to summarize the quantitative data, which were presented in tables and interpreted according to the study objectives. Qualitative data from the interviews were manually coded, analysed and used to complement the quantitative findings.

Ethical principles were observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, and no identifying information was disclosed. Given the sensitive nature of the study, reasonable measures were taken to minimize potential physical, psychological, social, or religious harm to the participants, and all information collected were used strictly for academic purposes.

RESULTS

During the field work, only 122 questionnaires were valid and utilized as the remaining 28 were lost due to non-return cases. Respondents' opinions vis-à-vis factors responsible, effects, modes of operation and solutions of prostitution among single Muslim females in Bauchi State were analysed.

Table 1: The Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	89	73
Female	33	27
Age		
10-19	18	14.8
20-29	51	41.8
30-39	26	21.3
40-49	16	13.1
50 and above	11	9.0
Marital Status		
Married	43	35.2
Single	64	52.4
Separated	2	1.6
Divorced	13	10.7
Religion		
Islam	86	89.6
Christianity	9	9.4
Traditional	1	1.0
Others	0	0.0
Educational Level		
Primary	3	2.5
Secondary	26	21.3
Tertiary	93	76.2
Others	0	0
Occupation		
Civil servants	39	31.9
Entrepreneurs	13	10.7
Self employed	23	18.9
Unemployed	47	38.5
Others	0	0.0
Total	122	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 1 above presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. It revealed that whereas 73% of the respondents were males, only 27% of the respondents were females. This may be attributed to the dominant culture and religion of the study area which make males more mobile than their female counterparts. Respondents' age indicated that 41.8% were within the age bracket of 20-29, while 21.3% were within the range of 30-39 years. Whereas 14.8% of the respondents fell within the range of 10-19 years, only 13.1% of the respondents were within the age bracket of 40-49 years, with additional 9.0% who were between 50 years and above. This showed that majority of the respondents were youth who are expected to provide relevant and contemporary

information about prostitution among single Muslim females. Also, 52.4% of the respondents were single, while 35.2% were married. Divorced respondents were 10.7%, and only 1.6% of the respondents were separated. This means that the highest percentage of the respondents were single, which may be associated with youth's highest tendency of mobility than their married counterparts. Regarding religion, 89.6% represents the Muslims, while only 9.4% of the respondents were Christians. This is not surprising being Islam the dominant religion in Bauchi.

Furthermore, 76.2% of the respondents acquired tertiary qualifications and 21.3% attended secondary school with only 3 respondents having primary certificate. From the above, it is clear that majority of the respondents obtained tertiary educational qualifications. Hence, they are more likely to know much about prostitution among single Muslim females in Bauchi State due to their literacy level. Unemployed respondents constituted 38.5%, while 31.9% were civil servants. Also, 18.9% were self-employed with 10.7% in entrepreneurship. This showed that the highest percentage of the respondents were unemployed, which may be due to the current situation of the Nigerian economy.

Table 2: Respondents' Awareness of Prostitution among Single Muslim Females

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	105	86
No	17	14
Total	122	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 2 above indicated that 86% of the respondents were aware of prostitution among single Muslim females, while the remaining 14% were not aware of it in the study area. It can be established therefore; prostitution among single Muslim females exists in Bauchi State. This is supported by 53-year, male traditional ruler who opined that:

Not only me...because I can say many of us are fully aware of this problem in our various communities. Meanwhile, I personally believe that adultery and fornication in general become so pervasive in our today's societies due to poor *socialisation*, peer influence and frequent contact with sex-related movies, pictures and write-ups (IDI with traditional leader, 2026).

Table 3: Perceived Extent of Prostitution among Single Muslim Females

Perceived Extent of Prostitution	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Very high	33 (27)	89 (73)	122 (100)
High	64 (52.5)	58 (47.5)	122 (100)
Low	17 (13.9)	105 (86.1)	122 (100)
Very low	9 (7.4)	113 (92.6)	122 (100)
I don't know	5		4.1

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 3 above depicted that 52.5% of the respondents revealed that the extent of prostitution among single Muslim females is high, while 27% held that it is very high as oppose to 13.9% who said that it is low. More so, 7.4% maintained that it is very low, while 4.1% said that they didn't know about the extent of the problem in the study area. Therefore, it can be established that the extent of prostitution among single Muslim females in Bauchi state is high. This is complemented by a 36-year Hisba Official who said that:

Prostitution among our single Muslim females is now getting out of hand. Even last week, we recorded about three cases. The culprits involved one 19year female hawker with her 33year regular business customer, one 24year internally displaced lady with 38year truck driver and one 20year lady with her 26year neighbor who said that such incident was their first time (IDI with Hisba Official, 2026).

Table 4: Factors Responsible for Prostitution among Single Muslim Females

Factors Responsible for Prostitution	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Poverty	75 (61.5)	47 (38.5)	122 (100)
Peer influence	67 (54.9)	55 (45.1)	122 (100)
Broken home	26 (21.3)	96 (78.7)	122 (100)
Desire for luxury life	70 (57.4)	52 (42.6)	122 (100)
Unemployment	26 (21.3)	96 (78.7)	122 (100)

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Regarding the factors responsible for prostitution among single Muslim females, Table 4 above showed that poverty attracted 61.5%. Peer influence had 54.9%, desire for luxury life attracted 57.4%, broken home and unemployment magnetized 21.3% each. This indicates that, although all the stated factors are relevant, poverty is the most influential followed by peer influence, desire for luxury life, unemployment and broken home. This is supported by a 47-year religious leader who said that:

Poverty when combined with bad company and desperate need for ostentatious life can lead to prostitution, theft, homosexuality and other social vices. Poverty, in particular, is what pushes many

parents to send their daughters out for hawking to earn a survival. By implication, some evil people take the advantage of hawking and get the young ladies involved in commercial sex in exchange for money or what they normally call *Juye* (IDI with religious leader, 2026).

Table 5: Category of Single Muslim Females that Mostly Engage in Prostitution

Categories of Females	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Working class females	11(9)	111(91)	122(100)
Domesticated females	14(11.5)	108(88.5)	122(100)
Female students	79(64.8)	43(35.2)	122(100)
Female hawkers	84(68.9)	38(31.1)	122(100)

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 5 above depicted that 68.9% of the respondents opined that single Muslim female hawkers are mostly involved in prostitution, while female students attracted 64.8% of the respondents' opinions. Domesticated females were identified as another category of single Muslim females that involve in prostitution by the 11.5% of the respondents. Also, 9% of the respondents said that the problem is mostly found among the working-class females. Therefore, it can be established that single Muslim female hawkers engage in prostitution the most followed by single Muslim female students. This is supported by a 33-year vigilante officer who said that:

Despite that prostitution now cuts across all categories of females including the married ones, I can say the problem is more prevalent among students and hawkers who usually spend more time outside the sight of their parents. In most cases, the hawkers have no stipulated time of coming back to home. They are sometimes not subjected to rigorous investigation or questioning even if they come back to homes at very late hours (IDI with vigilante officer, 2026).

Table 6: Modes Operation Used by Single Muslim Female Prostitutes

Modes of Operation	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Use of school	74(60.7)	48(39.3)	122(100)
Use of pimps	23(18.9)	99(81.1)	122(100)
Social media	13(10.7)	109(89.3)	122(100)
Hawking	91(74.6)	31(25.4)	122(100)
Events	38(31.1)	84(68.9)	122(100)
Sneaking out of home	29(23.8)	93(76.2)	122(100)

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 6 above displayed that hawking attracted 74.6% of the respondents, use of school had 60.7%, events had 31.1%, sneaking out of home had 23.8%, use of pimps magnetized 18.9% and the remaining 10.7% said that the prostitutes use social media. Hawking and schooling, therefore, are

the modes of operations employed by single Muslim females to leave their parental homes and engage in prostitution. When interviewed, a 53-year community leader said that:

Many ladies use hawking and school hours to engage in extra life activities that otherwise would not be allowed to do by their parents. Our tertiary institutions now serve as centers where young ladies are taken for sexual gratification in exchange for money. In fact, prostitution may be why many people have the mindset of not wanting to marry hawkers or ladies who attended higher educational institutions (IDI with community leader, 2026).

Table 7: Effects of Prostitution among Single Muslim Females

Effects of Prostitution	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Unwanted pregnancy	27(22.1)	95(77.9)	122(100)
Spread of Sexually Transmitted Diseases	80(65.6)	42(34.4)	122(100)
Illegal abortion	31(25.4)	91(74.6)	122(100)
Loss of life	13(10.7)	109(89.3)	122(100)
Social stigmatization	63(51.6)	59(48.4)	122(100)

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 7 above portrayed the respondents' views on the effects of prostitution among single Muslim females. Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) had 65.6%, social stigmatization magnetized 51.6%, illegal abortion attracted 25.4%, unwanted pregnancy had 22.1% and loss of life attracted 10.7%. From the above, it is evident that prostitution among single Muslim females leads to spread of STDs and social stigmatization. When interviewed, a 44-year Hisbah official supported the above numerical data. He said that:

You will not know the extent of STDs especially HIV among people until you visit hospitals where the patients see the doctors. Despite that there are other ways of acquiring HIV, 80% of its patients got it through sexual intercourse. In fact, I thank God for these STDs because the fear of contracting them has been among the reasons why many people tend avoid illegitimate sexual affairs (IDI with Hisbah official, 2026).

Table 8: Possible Solutions to Prostitution among Single Muslim Females

Possible Solutions to Prostitution	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Sex education	26(21.3)	96(78.7)	122(100)
Parental supervision	82(67.2)	40(32.8)	122(100)
Provision of employment opportunities	25(20.5)	97(79.5)	122(100)
Preaching	19(15.6)	103(84.4)	122(100)
Marriage at early adulthood stage	93(76.2)	29(23.8)	122(100)
Media campaign	13(10.7)	109(89.3)	122(100)

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 8 above revealed that 76.2% of the respondents maintained that marriage at early adulthood stage is the possible solution to prostitution among single Muslim females. Parental supervision had 67.2%, sex education attracted 21.3%, provision of employment opportunities magnetized 20.5%, preaching had 15.6% and media campaign attracted 10.7%. This means that marriage at early adulthood stage and parental supervision followed by sex education, provision of employment opportunities and preaching are the possible solutions to prostitution among single Muslim females in Bauchi state. More so, a 49-year police officer said that:

What I will suggest is that young ladies should be married at their early stage of adulthood as recommended by Islam. This is because marriage can serve as a protection to them because their husbands will take care of their sexual, health, social and economic life (IDI with police officer, 2026).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings revealed that poverty, desire for a luxury lifestyle, peer influence, poor *socialisation*, and hawking were major factors responsible for prostitution among single Muslim females in Bauchi State. This supports Differential Reinforcement Theory, which explains that behaviour may be learned and sustained through rewarding consequences and social reinforcement. Essien, Vite, and Harry (2022) and Nwangwu, Ayuk, and Chukwujindu (2022) similarly identified economic hardship and limited livelihood opportunities as factors associated with prostitution in Nigeria. From the theoretical perspective, financial and material rewards may reinforce prostitution by providing immediate economic benefits, while peer approval, encouragement, and information may further sustain the behaviour. Poor *socialisation* weakens conventional behavioural controls and hawking increases exposure to social networks and opportunities for reinforcement.

Regarding the effects of prostitution, the findings revealed that sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) were the most common effects, followed by social stigmatization and physical assault. Ekama *et al.* (2025) reported considerable sexual health risks among prostitutes in Lagos. Similarly, Nwosu *et al.* (2024) identified continuing health vulnerabilities among HIV-positive female sex workers in Nigeria. Ikuteyijo, Akinyemi, and Merten (2022) also reported exposure to violence, aggressive behaviour by clients, and harassment among prostitutes in Lagos and Ibadan. Differential Reinforcement Theory suggests that immediate financial rewards may sustain participation despite delayed consequences such as infection, violence, and stigma.

The study further found that female hawkers, students, illiterate women, and school dropouts constituted prominent categories involved in prostitution. Okolo *et al.* (2024) reported emerging forms of prostitution among female university students, while Ogunyemi *et al.* (2021) identified sexual vulnerability among female adolescent hawkers. Differential Reinforcement Theory also suggests that financial and social rewards may reinforce participation, making prostitution increasingly concealed within routine activities such as schooling, hawking, and social visits.

Finally, early marriage, effective parental supervision, proper *socialisation*, and good upbringing were identified as possible solutions. Positive family guidance and approval can reinforce socially acceptable behaviours and reduce attraction to alternative behaviours offering immediate rewards. Collective intervention involving families, government agencies, religious leaders, and communities should provide counselling, skills acquisition, economic opportunities, moral guidance, and sustained support. Thus, addressing prostitution requires integrated family, socioeconomic, religious, and community-based interventions.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that poverty, desire for a luxury lifestyle, peer influence, poor *socialisation*, and hawking were major factors responsible for prostitution among single Muslim females in Bauchi State., especially female hawkers, students, illiterate women, and school dropouts. The problem leads to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), social stigmatization and physical assault. However, early marriage, effective parental supervision, proper *socialisation*, and good upbringing were identified as possible solutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For the recommendations, the study offers the followings:

- i. Parents, media, religious leaders and community stake-holders should sincerely enlighten, re-orient and re-socialise young Muslim females on the effects of prostitution on their health, social wellbeing and religious life.
- ii. Parents should properly socialise their daughters and put all necessary measures to ensure that they associate with good friends to avoid bad company that may lead to deviant and immoral behaviors.
- iii. People should know that solving the problem of prostitution among the single ladies goes beyond parents to include all members of the society. This is because these ladies do not engage in such act in the presence of their parents, but rather in the larger community.
- iv. Poverty alleviation programmes are highly essential in reducing female hawking and addressing the problem of prostitution among young ladies.
- v. School managements should put measures to restrict unnecessary movements of their female students within and outside campus to reduce the menace of prostitution.

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