

Lagos Casual Sex Market and Same Sex Hook-ups

Prostitution, devoid of religion, tradition, morality, or cultural beliefs is a profession that experts believe to be the oldest in the world. In modern times, the profession has not died due to lack of patronage. Instead, the primal demand for pleasures of the flesh has evolved and drifted into the space of technology, harnessing that potential, and blowing up into what many know today as 'hookup'. In this investigative report, TOMI FALADE takes a deep dive into the risky lifestyle of Nigerian youths engaged in hookup as a means of survival.

In the case of semantics, those that sell sex through hookup believe they differ greatly from street sex workers, prostitutes. But for all intents and purposes, and based on research, they are one and the same thing. Mairo, a 25-year-old girl got into what has become accepted as "hookup" as far back as 2015, just before clocking 18. Her entry into the trade was just for the purpose of getting money to abort an unwanted pregnancy.

She tells her story: "When I started in 2015, initially it was survival in a way. I had all the basic things that I needed but my boyfriend impregnated me. Of course, I couldn't tell my parents, so I had to do hookup and then use the money for an abortion. After the abortion, I broke ties with him. "I do not see a future in hookup, and yes, I plan to stop, but hookup has become a part of me; it is no longer about the money, it is something that I have to do to feel complete. It means that if I don't do it, I don't feel complete. I plan to stop, but it is difficult."

Adetoun has a little more pathetic story, after stumbling into hookup when her marriage collapsed. But her story makes the words of the Bible in Matthew 5:32 that, "... anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery..." Conversing in a mix of Yoruba and pidgin, the mother of one recalled: "I started (hookup) in 2019 after I gave birth to my daughter. I had an issue in my marriage and things were very difficult. At that time, I had a job, but it was not enough to feed my daughter and I, until a friend introduced me to this hookup job. I didn't have any other option than to go into it so as to feed myself, pay my rent, feed my baby, enroll her in school, and see her grow up like other children. "Right now, it's not like I am making a lot of money. Sometimes I do contribution, 'ajo' to enable me pick some bills... It's not paying that

much but one must do something to survive in this country where there is no job. "Before I ventured into hookup, I was working as a sales representative. I would suffer, go into the sun, and do a lot of things. But after working for a month, I would get my salary almost at the end of another month, which was why being introduced to hookup was like someone doing me a favour.

In the case of Adesuwa, whom her family calls Ada, heartbreak was her path to hookup which she started in 2021, also after her marriage plans collapsed. Her words: "I was supposed to get married, but I didn't because of tribal issues. He was an Igbo guy, and I am from Edo State. His parents did not want me to marry him. Thank God for the naughty groups I joined, I decided to go into hookup. After I narrated what happened to me to a very good friend of mine that was also a victim of marriage break up, she showed me the way.

"This person I was supposed to marry was rich, and that would have been my escape route from poverty. But since the marriage did not work, I had to go into runs. I had to get money to feed myself and my family," she stressed.

It was not all about failed marriages or plans, at least not in the case of IK, a little more innocent young man who got into hookup at the age of 18, three years ago. His naturally attraction to older women, he confessed, led him to Tinder, the world's most popular dating App. "I met this beautiful woman in her late 30s on Tinder. She was quite successful, and she told me she has a son, but her man did not live in Nigeria. We talked for a few weeks before we decided to meet. "She gave me a bus stop location to meet her in Ikoyi. I was scared for my safety because I had heard all kinds of stories, so I was happy with the location. She came to meet me in her car, and we sat there for about 30 minutes to get more comfortable. "I liked what I saw, and she also liked me, so it was easy. I got to her house around 4pm, and we were in her bed till about 7 or 8pm. Before I left, she took me shopping and bought me clothes worth about N100,000. She wanted me to stay the night, but I told her I was afraid, and she understood. Aside from the clothes, she gave me N10,000 for transportation, and then transferred N40,000 to me when I got home. And that was how I got hooked. I saw her for six months, sometimes



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two or three times a week. We met in hotels mostly though."

While many frown at the hookup profession simply because it is trading sex for material and financial favours, Gloria Allred, an American feminist attorney popular with controversial cases involving the protection of women's rights asks that "Why is it immoral to be paid for an act that is perfectly legal if done for free?"

A cursory look into the said payment for these young man and women may help answer the question on whether the debate is worth it. Mairo, for example, says that while hookup is no longer about the money for her, the extra income is like cherry on the cake. "I mean, you are having sex with somebody and then after the sex, you get a reward. The reward makes it difficult to stop. That is the basis of the whole thing; have sex, enjoy the sex, make money. So, it is three forms of enjoyment for me. Good sex is a reward, that's why returning customers are the best. "I can't categorise my income daily though, because I don't do hookup day in and day out. On average, in a week, it could be N100,000. "I also get money from pimping people, though it depends on the amount that the person is willing to pay, and it depends on the kind of girl and the service that the person is looking to get. But on the average, I make N5,000 per person from the client."

Adetoun, on her part revealed that she prefers threesomes and foursomes, because the money is better. She said, "It does not make me feel good, but it is extra money, less job, and less strength. Having a week, I can see more than three or four men. In a week, if I go out very well, I can make up to N50,000 or sometimes N70,000."

For Ada, hookup pays her bills even when she has a day job. "I don't do hookup on weekdays, only weekends. In one weekend I can see five or six men. If I go for 'shorties', they pay me close to N20,000 or even N25,000. If I go for nighties, they pay me close to N30,000, or N35,000. 'Shorties' can just be an hour or two of sex, and all night will just comprise of two rounds of sex or more. I don't like returning clients because I feel I am probably looking so cheap, or my importance will soon wear out."

In IK's case, the income and reward are really good. "I meet most of my clients in good hotels of Radisson (Blu) standard. So, that is an added advantage. In a slow month, I make about N300,000 plus other gifts and perks. "The truth is that guys make more money than girls. If my client really likes me, I can use her house for

parties, or even use her car as I like. My normal charge per session is about N60,000. But if it is overnight, it is between N80,000 to N100,000." It is, however, not all roses for these youngsters, just as in any other job or profession with hazards. In may wonder, in this case if the risks do not far outweigh the benefits and reward. Recalling her worst experience, 25-year-old Mairo told Saturday Independent she detest Yahoo Boys and fraudsters. In her words: "Not getting paid was my worst experience ever, which is one of the reasons I don't like Yahoo Boys.

"I met one at a party, and we got chatting via social media. He kept asking me to hang out and meet him in a hotel. One day I asked him what I am coming for, if it is a hotel... because if I come meet you in a hotel, it means we will end up having sex. I told him I will charge him for sex because he is not my boyfriend. He offered me N50,000, and we set a date. On the fixed day, I went over with a cab and I met two other guys in the room. I got chatting with them and they told me what they do, which is a code name for Yahoo Boys. I texted the guy I came to see that I was not comfortable being the only female there, so he asked his friends to leave.

"After they left, I confronted him about the Yahoo thing, but he denied it. In my mind, I thought since I was in this house already, I can as well as just do this and get out of the house, because what if I don't do it and then they harm me or something.

"Halfway through the sex he removed the condom and started begging me that he wanted to do raw. I told him I can never have sex with him without protection, but he kept insisting that he will not spill inside. I refused, so he asked for head (blowjob). We were on it for over one hour, so I told him I didn't want to continue again. He insisted that I should at least make him 'cum', and I told him that I am not obligated to make him 'cum' at this point.

"He said if I don't let him finish, he won't pay me. I ignored him and went to clean up to leave. While I was dressing up, he came to coerce me into having unprotected sex with him. That was when I put my foot down and told him no, that this is business."

Continuing, she explained that "having sex with somebody doesn't mean that you must make them orgasm. If they don't, it is their business. Everybody hustles for his or her pleasure. I was very hurt because he didn't pay me. Though, when I was leaving, he said, 'send your account details, I will send you something,' but I knew that would never

happen."

In Adetoun's case, her worst experiences are when she is unable to see her client after transporting herself to a distant meeting point. "There was also a time I got to a client who kept begging me to do raw. He kept saying 'I am safe'. I know this job is not forever and I have to be protected, so I declined. He took offense and when it was time for me to leave the following morning, he transferred just N4000 to me even though we discussed N20,000. He told me that he will transfer the rest.

"I knew he wouldn't do it because I didn't agree to unprotected sex. I don't like embarrassment, so I left him alone. Some guys don't have joy, he can make a video of me and release online just to embarrass me. That is why I like returning clients. You can go to them when you need money, and they would render help without doing anything. "I once got to a hotel at Mobolaji Bank Anthony (Way) in Lagos very late," Ada said, narrating her worst nightmares on the job. "The client told me he wanted me to come early because he wanted to have sex with me in front of his friends. I didn't think I would be able to do it. I intentionally got there late to prevent that. When he opened the door, he made a gesture to his friends that I was around. I told him that I could not have sex with people watching, and he took me into another room to have sex. But he was not happy.

"Immediately after one round of sex, he turned to me and told me to get out. This was around 11pm. Where I came from was far from Ikeja. I begged him but he didn't listen. Instead, he took my things and threw it down the stairs. I was stupefied. I felt like probably I should just end the runs life, but I gathered momentum and went downstairs. Some guys there saw me, and I told them what happened, they understood and took me with them, and I forgot about it. It was really my worst experience. I still made N20,000 that night from the other guy I met downstairs," she said consoling herself.

"I have also had very good experiences. One was when I did video sex with a client from abroad and the client sponsored my birthday. He told me that when he comes to Nigeria, he is going to meet me and discuss how to make my life better. He sent me N250,000. He hasn't come to Nigeria since then, but he sends me money in exchange for nude videos and sex video calls."

While IK's worst experience differs from not getting paid, his experience is even worse. "I once had a client who tried to use juju on me.

Usually, when I get into a room with my client, I take excuse to go ease myself. While in the bathroom, I peep into the room to see what she does in my absence and that is how I caught this woman. She was whispering some words into her bag, so before I came out of the bathroom, I made a noise to alert her. She also took excuse to freshen up, which is normal. While she was in the bathroom, I looked into the bag and saw something wrapped in a black cloth. I didn't need anyone to tell me it was juju. Immediately she came into the room, I acted as if someone called me for an emergency and left. She never called me again after that day. Of course, I have had other bad experiences like a woman that has terrible body odour, and another woman whose body was badly scarred. But the juju woman scared me into almost giving up the work.

do? Nothing. I just overlook it and get over it. I keep my daughter with my mother in Ibadan while I work in Lagos.

"In a relationship, they say you must sacrifice. The person you are in a relationship with may not be offering you much or what you want. And as a single mother, you must keep up, you cannot fail your child and you cannot fail yourself.

"I am taking care of the guy also. I am spending the hookup money on the guy too. It's just about sacrifice. You know it is difficult for men to be with a single mother these days," she said.

For Adesuwa, maintaining a boyfriend is a form of protection for her. "I try to tell him every time I go out because of security reasons. And in the relationship, I am the donor, and he is my recipient; I go out, take care of him, sort out his

proposals for same-sex intercourse in all its forms and all except IK willingly do it.

According to IK, "the first time I was propositioned was in church after I started doing hookups. I used to sell pastries in church, and I noticed a particular guy coming to sit with me and help me sell. He was slightly older, had more money, and was respected in church, so I was open to the friendship.

"One day, he invited me to his house, and I went eagerly. I was seated on his couch when he suddenly grabbed my ass and leaned to kiss me. I was shocked and quickly moved away. He asked me if I didn't know that was the reason he invited me, and I said no. He apologised and let me leave. Since that day, once I notice you are about to ask, I tell you that I am not gay, no matter how much you want to pay."

Meanwhile, the girls are more open to same-sex hookups with some like Ada even charging lesser for it because it is believed to be easier, safer, and in demand

The culture around hookups is almost unspoken, but these youths paint such a gory picture of the harsh descent of what is deemed moral that it needs to be brought to the limelight.

Ada, for example, is almost proud of her achievements. She believes that girls that do hookups are better than prostitutes on the street, because "those on the streets don't have a choice, they have to take any price given to them. But we on social media negotiate our prices with terms and conditions before we go on any outing."

Taking things a notch higher, Ada says she "invests" in herself weekly to make sure her clients have the best time with her. "When I started, I didn't use to 'cum,' but I got introduced to drugs.

Now, when I go on drugs like weed or tramadol, I reach orgasm, and it makes my clients happy. Since I discovered that, whenever I am going for a sure deal, I go on drugs to 'cum.'

"When I feel I am getting addicted, I go online to read the effects of drugs."

Hookup in modern definition is used to describe a sexual encounter (vaginal, anal, or oral sex) between two persons not dating, or into any serious relationship and do not expect anything further from each other. The term encompasses a pay-for-sexual activity arrangement.

For women, they join naughty social media groups on Whatsapp, Telegram, Facebook, and



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Surprisingly, all our interview subjects are in relationships, but with different dynamics. Mairo explains that she maintains relationships outside hookups but keeps the hookup part of her life away from them. These days, because she only sees about five men in a month, she can still have sex with her boyfriend without the work affecting her relationship. Unfortunate may be the best word to describe Adetoun's relationship outside hookup. "I have a boyfriend, but I am not planning to get married. I don't want him to know what I do for a living. When I go out for my runs and come back to have sex with him, it is not that I am happy," Adetoun said in tears, "but what can I

bills, and in return, he gives me love. I feel loved and appreciated around him.

"I am not worried about him leaving me when he has money because life can be full of surprises, I just want to be happy in the meantime until I meet the right person," she declared.

IK in his relationship is the provider though. "I love my girl and that's the only reason I considered leaving the hookup life. She is a good girl and doesn't know what I do. I also spend my money on her too.

Just as hookup is done with the opposite sex, the market for same-sex hookup is just as vast, and all of our interview subjects get regular

even Twitter to get clients.

While in these groups, they post nude pictures and videos of themselves to advertise, and their clients come calling in their Direct Messages, or through referrals. While these groups are free for girls and women, men pay in some cases.

In other instances, like on Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat and the likes, a dirty post or comment under someone's post is enough advertisement. For men in the hookup trade, the standard is to join dating Apps like Tinder, OkCupid, Badoo, eHarmony, Flickr, and create a dating profile with pictures.

Contrary to popular beliefs that prostitution in whatever form is the sole department of women, research has shown that it is just as common with young men. "There are just as many male prostitutes as women," according to a former 'hookup guy turned chef. "We are just more subtle than the ladies, because we do not necessarily need to dress the part," he told Saturday INDEPENDENT

Aside from understanding the backgrounds and the mindset around hookups, it is important to understand the standing of the law on this new age form of prostitution. For many lawyers, the belief is that the law is yet to catch up with the realities of modern living, and the inconclusive nature of the law as quoted by two Nigerian lawyers reveal that.

According to feminist lawyer and gender advocate, Omowunmi Ogunrotimi, commercial sex work or involvement is largely seen as an infraction of societal norms, moral standards, and legal ethos in Nigeria. "Over and beyond moral leanings and normative practices, which completely lack the requisite force, determining the legality or otherwise of commercial sex work in Nigeria requires a holistic interaction with the Nigerian legal system- generality and source of laws in Nigeria and the mechanisms of enforcement and implementation. This encompasses the Customary Law, Sharia Law and English Law. Some of these laws have geographical limitations in terms of applicability. "However, the aggregate position of the different streams of laws when interpreted conjunctively indicates an alignment in terms of the legality or otherwise of commercial sex work. Without any element of ambiguity, the combined provisions of Sections 225A 225B 226 of the Criminal Code Act and the relevant sections of the penal code criminalise commercial sex work otherwise known as prostitution. The relevant sections further declared criminal any business carried out for the purpose of promoting prostitution including running a brothel. Every occupier of such premises is liable to a fine or imprisonment term.

"Despite the position of the law, it is instructive to know that there is a growing consensus across geographies to legitimise commercial sex work and recognise the rights of sex workers as human rights, given the several violations and barriers they are subjected to," she explained. Pelumi Olajengbesi, another accomplished lawyer, shared the same position but had even more to say. "Prostitution is criminalised under the law. The activity of pimps in Nigeria is also criminalised strongly. Section 223, 224 and 225 of the criminal code strongly criminalises the offense of pimps and activities relating to pimps. But the caveat is that; pimp as it relates to underage, is criminalised up to the extent of the age

"In some states of the federation, there could be certain laws peculiar to the state that criminalise such activities. The standing on those states, there is a law there that bans the activities of hotels, motels, and pimps generally. For example, operating a brothel is also penalised under the law when it comes to the northern parts of the country like Abuja. In the southern part of the country, prostitution is not a crime. But under-age prostitution and trafficking is a crime." Going further, Olajengbesi posited that "I think for us to sanitise our society and to have a decent society, the laws functionality needs to be clear on such activities in order to protect a lot of people who are vulnerable.

"Our laws are so flexible that when you have issues like that, it depends on where you are standing. If you're defending or prosecuting, you will prefer to use the shortcomings or inadequacies of the law to your advantage.

"I will not support absolutely criminalisation of prostitution in Nigeria and the reason is because we will be doing injustice to a lot of people. If you can't criminalise adultery, why would you want to criminalise prostitution? When you even criminalise prostitution in Nigeria, because of the level of exposure, the law will just be a direct attack on women. Simply because we have a society that can misjudge people.

"If you criminalise prostitution, then the laws should be looking at the practice involved with the activity and not just a particular person. The fact that when you talk about prostitution now, society is looking at women and ladies. When you talk about adultery, society is actually looking at women, but the nature of adultery is not about women, it is not a gender-based offense. It is an offense that can be committed by both genders. So, Nigeria as a country is not yet mature enough to criminalise such an offense because it will be used badly against a particular gender.

"More so, you will also need to recognise the fact that when people are adults, they should

live their lives the way they want to live it. We need to be careful about regularising things like that, because if you understand the concept of power, when people have power, it can make them corrupt and you know absolute power at times corrupts people absolutely. The implication is that when you empower the police to investigate adultery and prostitution, the police can just look at a guy or a lady that they do not like tomorrow and arrest the person for prostitution.

"Prostitution is also subjective. A lady can be approached, or a guy can be approached for a relationship on the promise of a consideration. People get married for so many reasons, so now if you promise a woman that 'come to bed with me, come and marry me, I am going to give you this,' and tomorrow the person voluntarily agrees to do this thing and you refused to do your own part of the bargain, if you look at the law properly, it is even rape because the new justification for rape right now is; when you have sexual intercourse with someone without the persons consent or when the consent is obtained by fraud or false representation.

"For example, if I promise to give a lady N100,000 and I sleep with the lady, and after that I now say 'No, I am not doing prostitution,' you have committed rape under the law because you obtained that lady's consent with fraud. So, when you begin to look at the law in different perspectives, then the question about what is prostitution? What is rape? What is pimping? What is adultery? will become serious questions. And it is the person who is now presiding over the matter that will use his own opinion to determine what prostitution is or whatever it is that the case may be.

"So, for me, I do not align with the fact that prostitution should be criminalised in Nigeria and if yes, the activities of pimps can be criminalised, it is fine, because should be at liberty to do what they want to directly do themselves not through an organised system because it is also an attack on the morals of society."

In Nigeria, people in the profession have been known by different names. For the women, they are sometimes tagged 'runs girls', 'oloshos', 'small girl big god', and more. On their part, the male folk are sometimes called sweet boys, a term that may mean other things also. In the last couple of years though, the all-encompassing term used with both genders is 'hookup'.

Four Nigerian youths in exclusive interviews revealed to our correspondent how they got into the trade, and the journey so far. To protect their identities, names have been changed.