



Social Media and Transactional Sex among Jamaican Females Ages 18+ years: Post-COVID-19

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Abstract

Introduction: No studies have emerged on the role of social media on transactional sex post-COVID-19 in Jamaica. This gap in the literature requires urgent attention, which is provided by this study.

Aim: This study aims to identify and comprehend the impact or relationship between transactional sex and social media among women.

Materials and methods: This quantitative research utilizes a cross-sectional descriptive research design to collect data from 1,123 Jamaican females ages 18+ years using a systematic random sampling technique (every fifth female) was used to collect the data. A standardized web-based survey was designed and self-administered by selected respondents was used. The Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN, nd) released the female mid-year population for Jamaica as of 2019. There were 1,387,023 females were living on the island. Of the 1,387,023 Jamaican females, there were 1,159,553 females ages 18+ years. The sample size for this study was based on 1,121,475 female's ages 18+ years and older. Using a 95% confidence level and a 2.923% margin error, the calculated sample size was 1,123 females ages 18+ years and older.

Findings: The results revealed that, of the sampled Jamaican females ages 18+ years, 38.0% of them indicated that they have asked their partners for money/gifts after sex and 32.1% of them stated that they have done this at least once. Most practice transactional sex because of multiple reasons (59.9%), with pleasure accounting for 13.4%, 9.8% for material gains, and 5.0% for status.

Conclusion: Social Media and Transactional Sex is a new reality in that the economics is creating changes in the sexual behaviour of Jamaican females ages 18+ years and that must be used in planning social intervention programmes and not focusing on social media which is highlighting the glaring socioeconomic disparities in the society.

Keywords: Social Media, Transactional Sex, Uses and Gratifications Theory, Conceptual Framework of Transactional Sex Risks, Jamaica,

Introduction

The desire for communication among people and the development of digital technology have both contributed to the significant evolution of social media (Maryland University, 2023; University Canada West, nd). Traditional word-of-mouth networks have expanded and merged with social media. Currently, anyone with internet access and a point of view can participate in social media for a wide array of reasons. Social media is now considered the best and most reliable method of spreading information (Maryland University, 2023). Some studies claim that the transmission of electronic dashes and dots sent by Samuel Morse from Washington, DC, to Baltimore over an experimental line on May 24, 1844, may have been the first concept of social media (Bektas, 2001; Carre, 1993; Library of Congress, nd; Pathak, 2020; Sajithra, et al., 2013). The first genuine social media platform was born in 1997 when Six Degree, a profile upload service, was launched (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Jones, 2015; Maryland University, 2023). In the last decade, there has been a proliferation of social media applications and web pages catering to various individuals with varying interests. Some of the more distinguished social media platforms of this era include Mark Zuckerberg's Facebook; Jack Dorsey, Biz Stone, and Evan Williams's Twitter; Kevin Systrom's Instagram; Jan Koum and Brian Acton's WhatsApp, now owned by Mark Zuckerberg; Byte Dance's TikTok; and Snapchat, founded by three Stanford University students (Britannica, 2023; National Federation of Self Employed & Small Businesses Limited, 2022; Maryville University, 2023).

Social media is used for various reasons including dating and transactional sexual encounters (Bekalu, et al., 2019; Christensen, 2018; Gutzmann, 2018; Hall, 2018; Landry, et al., 2017). This means that romantic relationship has changed with the advent of the digital era (Landry, et al., 2017; Vogels & Anderson, 2020; Yarger, et al., 2021). In 2018, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and STRIVE defined transactional sex as *"a non-marital, non-commercial sexual relationship motivated by an implicit assumption that sex will be exchanged for material support or other benefits"* (UNAIDS, 2018). Due to personal and environmental factors, people have resorted to engaging in transactional sex after being influenced by an assortment of stimuli. Though the practice is not limited to just one group of

individuals, it is most common among women of a certain age group. In this situation, the individual that is involved in transactional sex does not identify as a sex worker. This is because, in transactional sex, the idea that money, goods, or services will be exchanged is implicit, as opposed to in sex work, where such an idea is straightforward or explicit (Wamoyi, *et al.*, 2019).

Several reasons have been proposed in studies on women's motivations for engaging in transactional sex (Duby, *et al.*, 2021; Ranganathan, *et al.*, 2017; USAIDS, 2018). Historically, the literature has emphasized that basic survival or subsistence needs drive transactional sex (Ranganathan, *et al.*, 2017; Ranganathan, *et al.*, 2018; Swidler & Watkins, 2007). Recent evidence also suggests that young women with limited opportunities may use transactional sex to elevate their status in youth cultures that prioritize sexual success and conspicuous consumption (Ranganathan, 2015; Ranganathan, *et al.*, 2017, 2022). Furthermore, motivations for engaging in transactional relationships are not mutually exclusive, and young women are frequently motivated by both subsistence and consumerist desires. Many young women also embrace romantic notions of love and security, which can lead to relationships characterized by the material exchange in exchange for sex (Haag, 1992; Ranganathan, *et al.*, 2017) and this explains the proliferation of the OnlyFans (Litam, *et al.*, 2022).

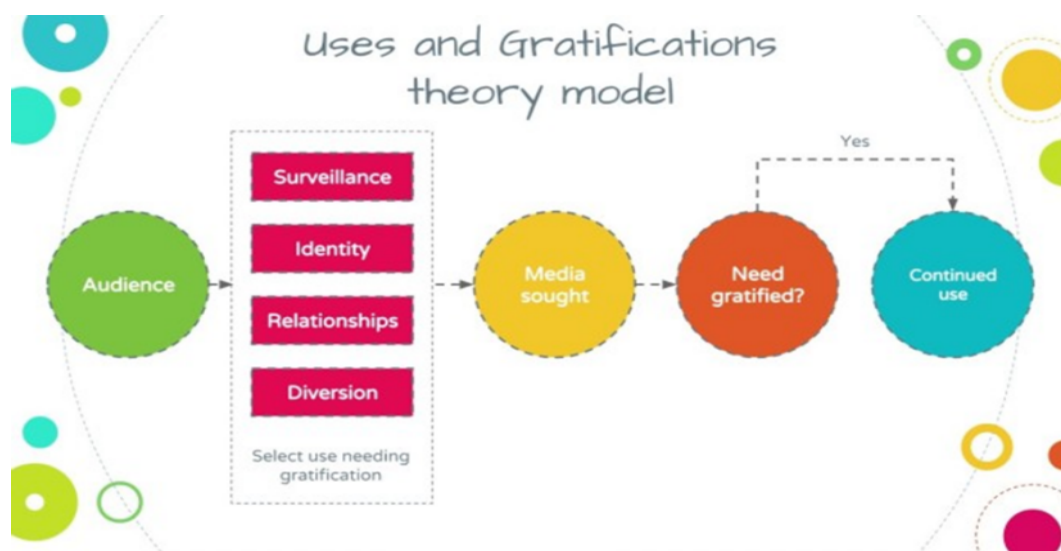
COVID-19 saw the restructuring of the global economies including the economic downturn and labour displacement (Gopinath, 2020; Stiglitz, 2020). Studies have shown that there is a rise in pornography use and OnlyFans since March 2020 (Awan, *et al.*, 2021; Bridges, *et al.*, 2003; Lau, *et al.*, 2021; Pornhub Insights, 2020). Pornhub Insights (2020) opined, "Worldwide traffic to Pornhub continues to be much higher than it was before the Coronavirus pandemic spread worldwide. The peak increase of 24.4% happened on March 25th after we offered Free Pornhub Premium to encourage people to stay indoors and distance themselves socially." It continued that, "[The] Traffic in the United Kingdom continues to remain much higher than before the Covid-19 outbreak. On May 22nd, traffic was still 24.3% higher, close to the peak increase on March 25th when free Pornhub Premium was offered. An interactive chart can be found below, which has traffic data for each country in the U.K. and several cities." The rise in pornography use has been accommodated as a result of social media (Bridges & Morokoff, 2010), and the economic reality of people can account for this fact. News Americas News Network (2021) indicated that there has been an increase in transactional sex in Jamaica between young women and older men, and Serju (2021) wrote that Jamaican sex workers have shifted their businesses online.

No studies have emerged on the role of social media on transactional sex post-COVID-19 in Jamaica. This gap in the literature requires urgent attention, which is provided by this study. The purpose of this study is to identify and comprehend the impact or relationship between transactional sex and social media among women. As a result, there is a hypothesis that social media platforms have influenced or encouraged the practice of transactional sex. We now turn to the method and measures we used to ascertain the possible relationship between transactional sex and social media.

Theoretical Frameworks

Uses and Gratifications Theory

According to Ying (2018), “The uses and gratification theory investigates the effects of people on media to comprehend why people actively seek out various media forms for gratification.” The audience is actively participating and has the power to do what they want with the media (Blumler & Katz, 1974; Katz, et al. (1973). Personal relationships can form from social interaction with others as well as substitute companionship and pleasure. One of the pleasures is transactional sex based on the individual's needs and the media used. Katz, et al. (1973) opined, “The roles of the media in reinforcing traditional values, providing feedback for the performance of social roles, and satisfying creative and recreational impulses are also examined” (p. 509). However, a limitation of this theory is that it does not explain why the audience uses it for transactional sex. Hence, another theory is needed.



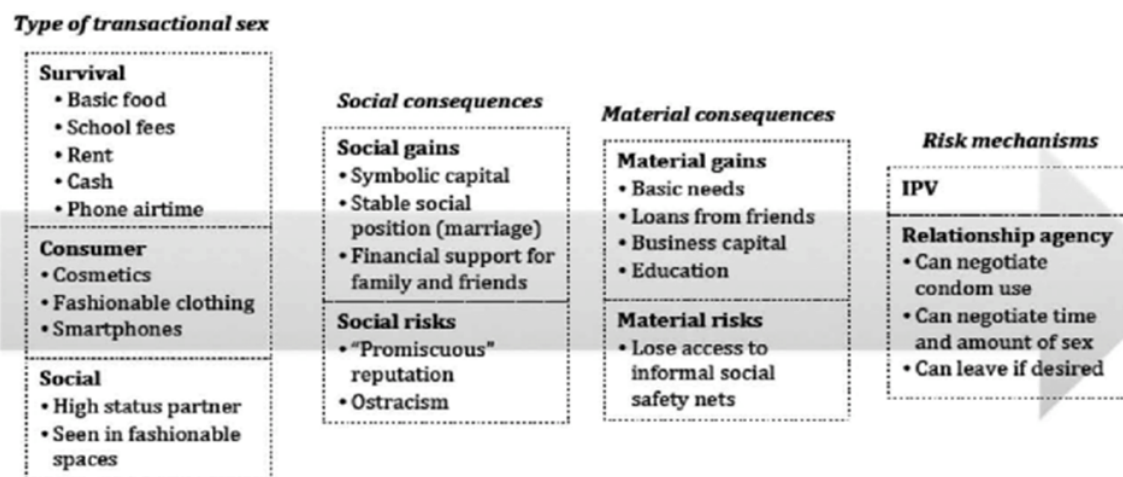
Source: Ying (2018)

Figure 1: Uses and Gratification Theory Model

Figure 1 shows the Uses and Gratifications Theory Model, which connects the audience on the left to the different gratifications on the right. The audience might want to acquire knowledge (surveillance), search for a sense of belonging (personal identity), provide social interaction with others (relationships), or provide an escape from reality (diversion). They use the media sought for their needs and to test if the need is gratified or not.

Conceptual Framework of Transactional Sex Risks Fielding-Miller

The primary focus of the Conceptual Framework of Transactional Sex Risks is on the types of transactional sex, their social and material consequences, and the risk mechanisms. A thorough examination and evaluation of underlying consequences and risk mechanisms provide insight into the various risks that transactional sex poses. In this analysis, the causes of transactional sex must be considered alongside the benefits to fully comprehend the situation (Fielding-Miller, et al., 2017).



Source: Fielding-Miller, et al., 2017, p. 7

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework of Transactional Sex Risks

Figure 2 shows the types of transactional sex, such as the survival type, consumer type, and social type. All of these types have social and material consequences. Social gains such as symbolic capital and marriage have social risks such as a “*promiscuous reputation*” and ostracism. Material gains, such as basic needs and loans from friends, have lost access to informal social safety nets as their material risk. Transactional sex has risk mechanisms such as intimate partner violence (IPV); hence, they have a relationship agency that can negotiate condom use, time, and amount of sex and can leave if desired.

Literature Review

To embark on a discussion about the evolution of social media, it is necessary to first know what is meant by the term "social media." Social media is a form of computer-mediated communication. Social networking sites are "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) generate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Josanov, et al., 2016). Social media has seen significant growth over the years. The evolution of social media has only been made possible by the human intellect and its desire to communicate with one another, which has been fueled by technological advancements. Users were introduced to the true essence of digital communication through CompuServe, Prodigy, and America Online. The "Uprising" enabled millions of people to register for email accounts and online chat rooms, using these services for sending emails, online chat sessions, and bulletin-board messaging services over the internet.

Social media platforms such as Mark Zuckerberg's Facebook found in 2004, are one of the most prominent social media platforms of this era and have almost 3 billion active users worldwide. This platform provides users with several features, such as online chat and media sharing; marketing and page creation; and fundraising. It also has certain security features, such as vanish mode, two-step verification, and an unsent message option, that allow users to protect certain information (Facebook, 2022). Jack Dorsey, Biz Stone, and Evan Williams found Twitter in 2006, and statistics show that there are over 1 billion active users. It is

popular because it has a retweet option that allows users to share the entire message without any strings attached. This application also allows its users to share intimate pictures and videos without being censored once the guidelines are maintained (Twitter, 2021 Did some did this Twitter is too wide). Another widely used social media platform is Instagram, which was founded by Kevin Systrom in 2010 but was later acquired by Facebook. It began as a photo-sharing website but has since evolved into the world's most popular photo- and video-sharing website. Getting famous on Instagram has its advantages, and buying Instagram likes and comments is an option that everyone has. Instagram also allows vanishing messages and view-once options in direct messaging. These options, once enabled, can notify the sender if a screen recording or screenshot has been taken (Instagram, 2022 Put the name of the person who put out this information). Jan Koum and Brian Acton found WhatsApp, which is now owned by Mark Zuckerberg. This application allows users to have end-to-end encryption, which is a security feature that prevents third-party personnel and WhatsApp from viewing or listening to messages or calls. It also allows disappearing messages and one-view-only options that are also end-to-end encrypted (WhatsApp, 2022).

Then there is Byte Dance's TikTok, found in 2016, which has approximately 1.5 billion users and is growing. This application allows its users to create and share short videos that can be graphically enhanced and autotuned with the world or through private messages. TikTok provides several privacy features that can restrict people from contacting and commenting on your posts and profile (TikTok, 2021). Finally, Snapchat is a social media application founded in 2011 by three Stanford University students. This social media app has a wide range of personalized filters, stickers, and audio that is popular among its users. It was originally a video-sharing platform in the form of stories that expired after 24 hours. Snapchat allows its users to be notified if a screenshot or screen recording is taken of their stories or chats (Snapchat, 2021). These security features are utilized by people who engage in transactional sex activities online to stimulate conversation, entertain, or, in a sense, attract the person towards them. These security features are beneficial to both parties as they protect their self-interest and identity.

On that note, social media has developed into the medium that young people use for enjoyment, to show off their accomplishments, and to give an insight into their daily lives, regardless of the content or activities. Intimacy or sexual practices are one such activity that is widely shared and embraced on social media. It is now recognized that social media platforms have evolved into a feature that is of great essence in current times. Similarly, the “sugar baby” mentality, which involves engaging in sexual activities that are motivated by the possibility of receiving resources in return, is also becoming increasingly prevalent (Deep, 2022). According to Chatterji et al., (2005) unmarried young men and women are the ones usually engaged in transactional sex, and from other studies done, the adolescent age group is the leading group that is involved in the mentioned sexual relationship (Chatterji, et al., 2005). This is because of the economic and consumer privileges that are expected from involvement in transactional sex. But with this privilege comes the inability to have a voice because the privilege comes with limited negotiating power (Luke, 2003). That is, to get the gifts, money, and/or status, the females would get involved with an older, more capable man

who could provide what they required and, as such, fulfil the requirements of the man as stated in Caldwell et al. (1989). On the other hand, there are survival needs that women are desperate to meet, hence their involvement in transactional sex. These women are sometimes the providers for their families, and in adverse economic conditions, engaging in sexual activities for monetary compensation is the family's source of income (Formson & Hilhorst, 2016).

The norm across several diverse cultures is that the men would provide for the female, and exchange materialistic things such as gifts, especially as a romantic gesture when in a sexual relationship. Therefore, men are usually the ones to give and women receive in the relationship, which is no different in a transactional sexual relationship. Women who are motivated by the notion of entering into relationships for the gift may subsequently transition into becoming sex workers.¹⁹ At the same time, due to gender inequality that gives men the upper hand economically and socially, along with the societal expectations that derive from the men's upper hand or power, females especially adolescents and young women, enter into sexual relationships expecting to receive gifts from the men (Sajithra & Patil, 2013).

Methods and Materials

This research utilizes a cross-sectional descriptive research design to collect data from 1,123 Jamaican females ages 18+ years. A standardized web-based survey was designed and self-administered by selected respondents. The Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN, nd) released the female mid-year population for Jamaica as of 2019. There were 1,387,023 females were living on the island. Of the 1,387,023 Jamaican females, there were 1,159,553 females ages 18+ years. The sample size for this study was based on 1,121,475 males ages 18+ years and older. Using a 95% confidence level and a 2.923% margin error, the calculated sample size was 1,123 females ages 18+ years and older.

A systematic random sampling technique (every fifth female) was used to collect the data. Systematic sampling is a probability sampling method in which a random sample, with a fixed periodic interval, is selected from a larger population. The research team collected data from females ages 18 years and older across the 14 parishes of Jamaica. The sample was based on the probabilities for the population of each parish.

The parishes were listed and assigned sequential numbers, and clusters were selected using a sampling interval. This sum was totalled as follows: 669,978 females are living in Kingston, with a sample size of 262; 94,968 females in St. Thomas, with a sample size of 37; 82,669 females in Portland, with a sample size of 32; and 114,902 females living in St. Mary, with 45 females in the sample. St. Ann had a population of 174,256 females with a sample size of 68, followed by Trelawny with a population of 76,005 females and a sample size of 30; St. James had a population of 185,753 females and a sample size of 73; Hanover had a population size of 70,287 females with a sample size of 27; and Westmoreland had a population size of 145,673 females with a sample size of 57. At the time, St. Elizabeth had a population size of 151,885 females, and a sample size of 59 was used. While Manchester had a population size of 191, 940 females with a sample size of 75, Clarendon had a population of

247,778 females and a sample size of 97, and St. Catherine had a population of 521,409 with a sample size of 205.

Questionnaires are one of the most widely used data collection methods in survey research. A questionnaire with eighteen (18) open-ended and closed-ended questions was made using the Google Forms platform. It was distributed at random to females who appeared to have reached sexual maturity in the fourteen parish town centres. This process, which began on October 7 and ended on November 25, 2022, took six (6) weeks to complete. Microsoft Excel and IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 28.0.1.0, were used to analyze the data.

Definition of terms

Social media: According to Tufts University (2023), “Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks”.

Findings

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the sampled Jamaican females ages 18+ years. Of the sampled Jamaican females ages 18+ years, most of them were less than 23 years (27.5%), semi-professionals (50.7%), single (59.2%), and resided in Kingston and St. Andrew (23.4%).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sampled Jamaican Females ages 18+ years (n=1,123)

Details	% (n)
Age groups	
18 - 22 years	27.5 (309)
23 - 27 years	24.2 (272)
28 - 32 years	16.7 (188)
33 - 37 years	12.1 (136)
38 - 42 years	7.1 (80)
43 - 47 years	5.3 (59)
48+ years	7.0 (79)
Occupational class	
Professional	33.3 (374)
Semi-professional	50.7 (569)
Unprofessional	7.2 (81)
Unemployed/Retired	8.8 (99)
Marital status	
Single	59.2 (665)
Married	21.3 (239)
Divorce	3.9 (44)
Common-Law	15.6 (175)

Parish of residence	
Kingston & St. Andrew	23.4 (263)
St. Thomas	3.3 (37)
Portland	2.8 (32)
St. Mary	4.0 (45)
St. Ann	6.9 (77)
Trelawny	4.4 (49)
St. James	6.6 (74)
Hanover	2.9 (33)
Westmoreland	5.7 (64)
St. Elizabeth	5.3 (59)
Manchester	6.7 (75)
Clarendon	9.1 (102)
St. Catherine	19.0 (213)

Table 2 presents social media usage among Jamaican females ages 18+ years. Of the sampled Jamaican females ages 18+ years (n=1,123), 88.3% (n=992) have a social media account. Most of them have a WhatsApp account (97.5%) followed by Instagram (81.7%), TikTok account (66.9%), Snapchat (60.1%), and Facebook (59.2%). However, few of them normally use their Facebook account (22.8%), and Snapchat (24.7%).

Table 2: Social Media Have and Used

Details	Have	Mostly Used
	% (n)	
WhatsApp		
No	2.5 (28)	11.7 (131)
Yes	97.5 (1095)	88.3 (992)
TikTok		
No	33.1 (372)	53.1 (596)
Yes	66.9 (751)	46.9 (527)
Instagram		
No	18.3 (205)	41.9 (470)
Yes	81.7 (918)	58.1 (653)
Twitter		
No	59.8 (672)	86.1 (967)
Yes	40.2 (451)	13.9 (156)
Snapchat		
No	39.9 (448)	75.3 (846)
Yes	60.1 (675)	24.7 (247)
Telegram		
No	78.5 (881)	95.7 (1075)
Yes	21.5 (242)	4.3 (48)
Facebook		

No	40.8 (458)	77.2 (867)
Yes	59.2 (665)	22.8 (256)

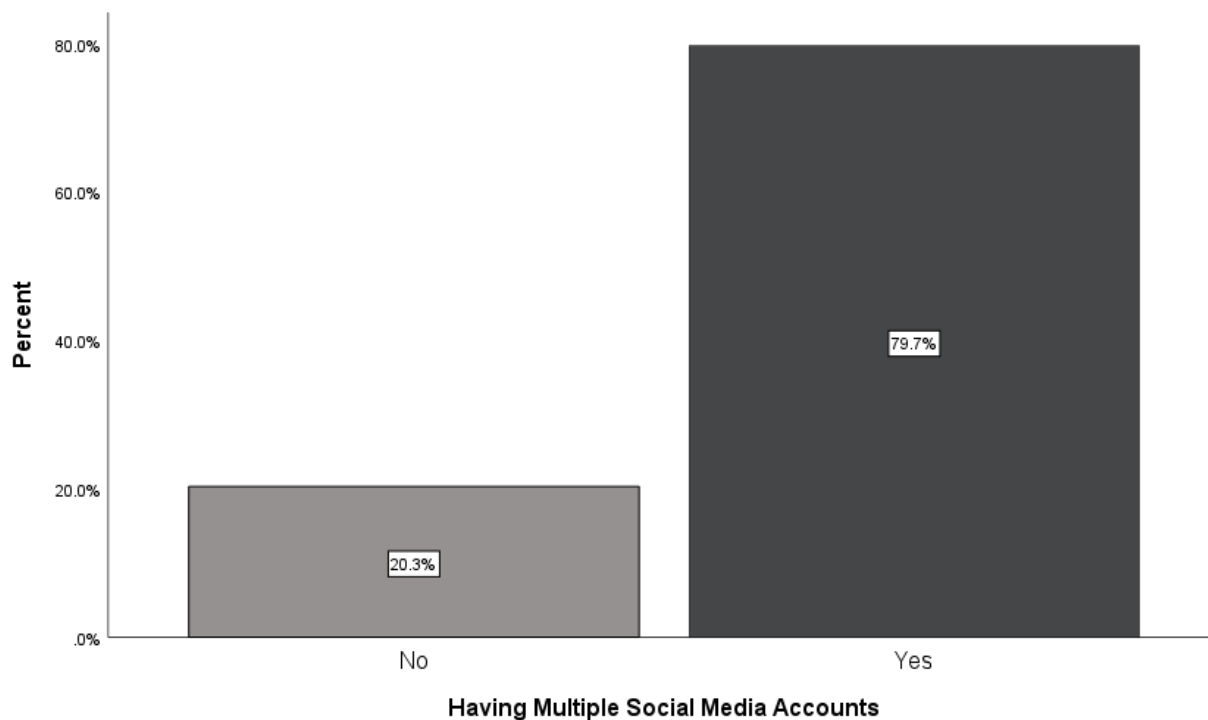


Figure 3: Using Multiple Social Media Accounts

Most of the sampled Jamaican females ages 18+ years use multiple social media applications (79.7%; Figure 3)

Table 3 presents the self-reported sexual behaviour of sampled Jamaican females ages 18+ years (n=1,123). Most of the sampled Jamaican females 18+ years were sexually active (81.1%). Seventeen and four-tenth per cent of the sampled Jamaican females 18+ years have no sexual partner, and 25.6% have at least two sexual partners.

Table 3: Self-reported Sexual Behaviour

Details	% (n)
Sexually Active	
Yes	81.1 (911)
No	18.9 (212)
Number of sexual partners	
0	17.4 (195)
1	57.1 (641)
2	12.4 (139)
3	6.2 (70)
4	3.2 (36)
5	2.2 (25)
6	0.4 (5)
7	0.4 (4)

8	0.4 (4)
10	0.2 (2)
11	0.2 (2)
Last time you engaged in sexual activity	
Never	7.3 (82)
1 - 5 days ago	36.9 (414)
Within the last two weeks	20.1 (226)
Within the last month	12.2 (137)
Within the last 2 - 5 months	10.3 (116)
5 - 12 months	5.3 (59)
1+ year	7.9 (89)
Frequency of engagement in Transactional sex	
Never	67.9 (762)
Once	6.1 (69)
Rarely	12.3 (138)
As often as possible	6.1 (68)
Very Often	7.7 (86)
Ever asked a partner for money/gift after sex	
Yes	38.0 (427)
No	62.0 (696)

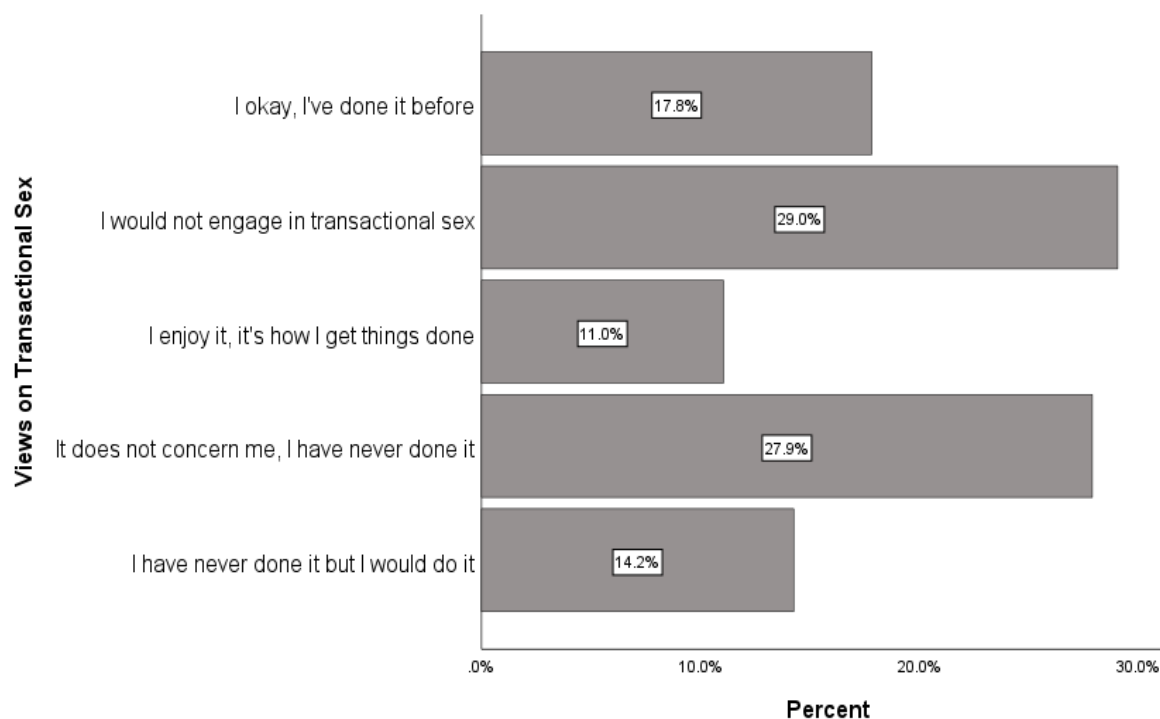


Figure 4: Perception of Transactional Sex

Figure 4 depicts the perception of the sampled Jamaican females ages 18+ years on transactional sex. Of the sampled Jamaican females ages 18+ years, most of them indicated

that they have not engaged or done transactional sex (43.2%). However, 28.8% of the sampled females have engaged in transactional sex.

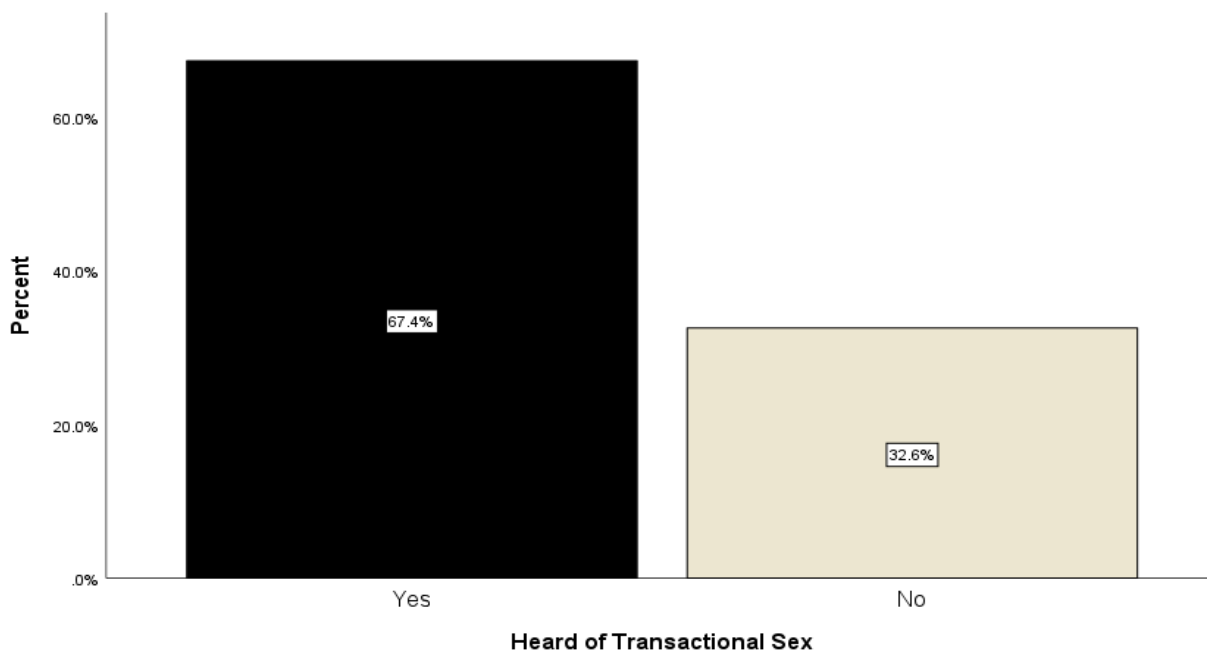


Figure 5: Know of Transactional Sex

Figure 5 depicts the perspective of females on 'knowledge of transactional sex. Of the sampled Jamaican females ages 18+ years old (n=1,123), most of them were knowledgeable of transactional sex (67.4%)

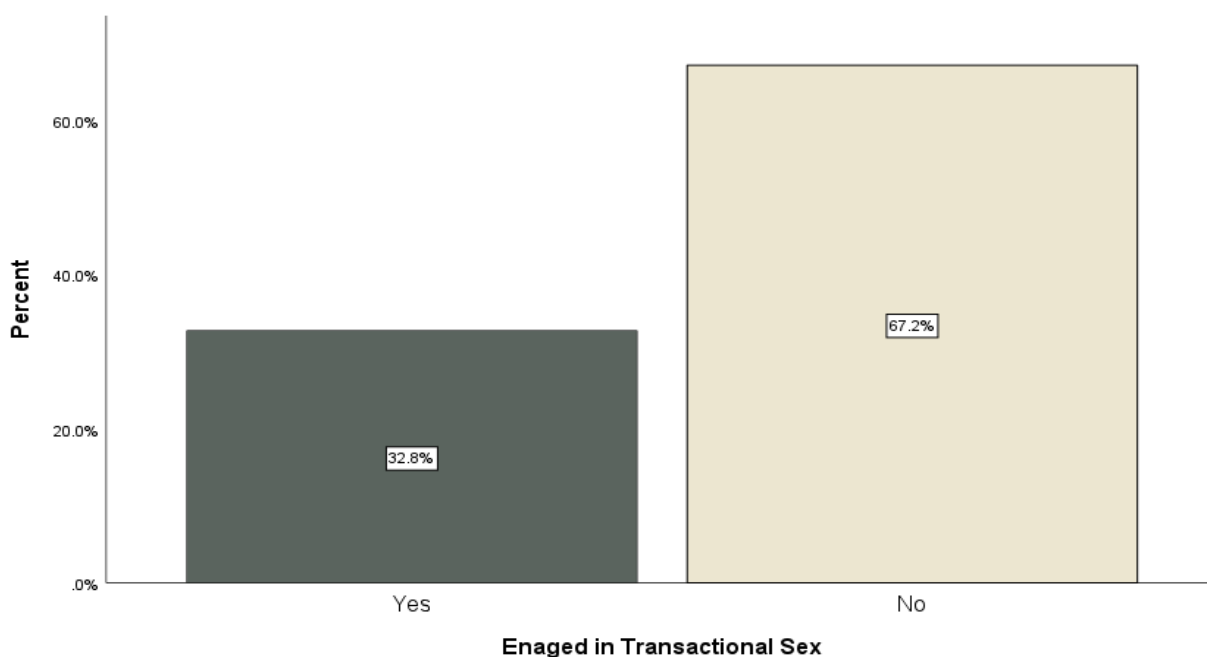


Figure 6: Engaged in Transactional Sex

Figure 6 depicts the perspective of females on their engagement in transactional sex. Of the sampled Jamaican females ages 18+ years old (n=1,123), only 32.8% were engaged in

transactional sexual. Furthermore, 76.3% (n=857) of the sampled Jamaican females ages 18+ believe that social media is influencing transactional sex.

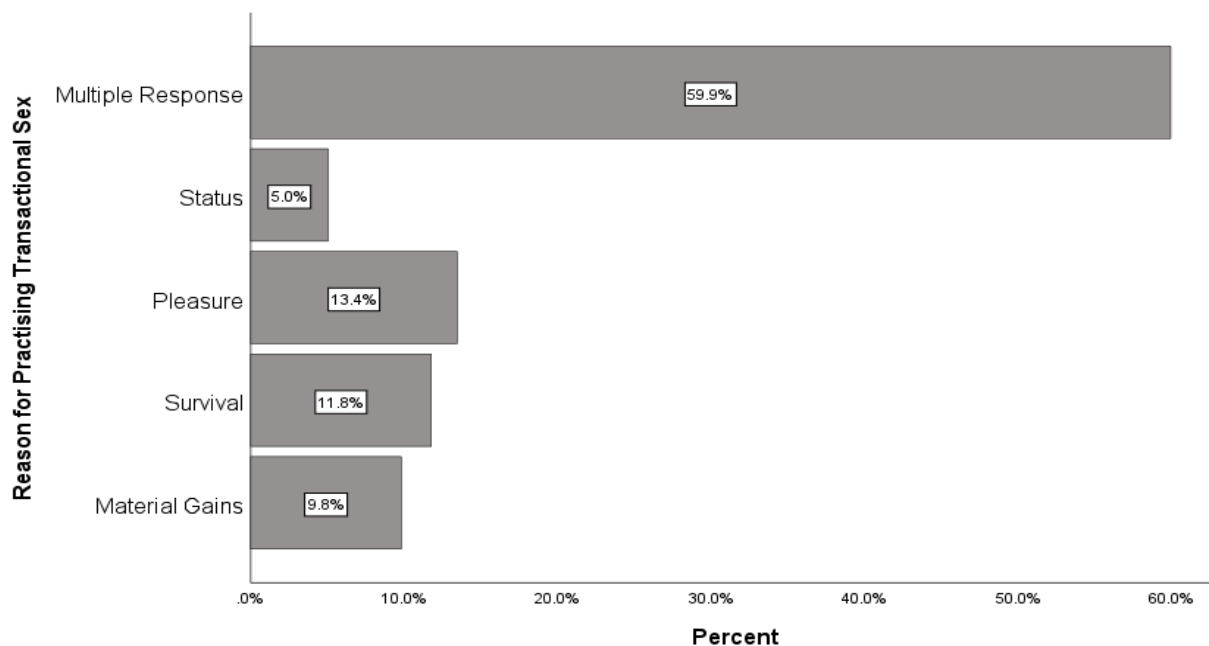


Figure 7: Reasons for Practicing Transactional Sex

Figure 7 shows the reasons why Jamaican females ages 18+ years practice transactional sex (n=357, 31.8%). Most of the sampled Jamaican females who are ages 18+ indicated that they practice transactional sex because of multiple reasons (59.9%), with pleasure accounting for 13.4%.

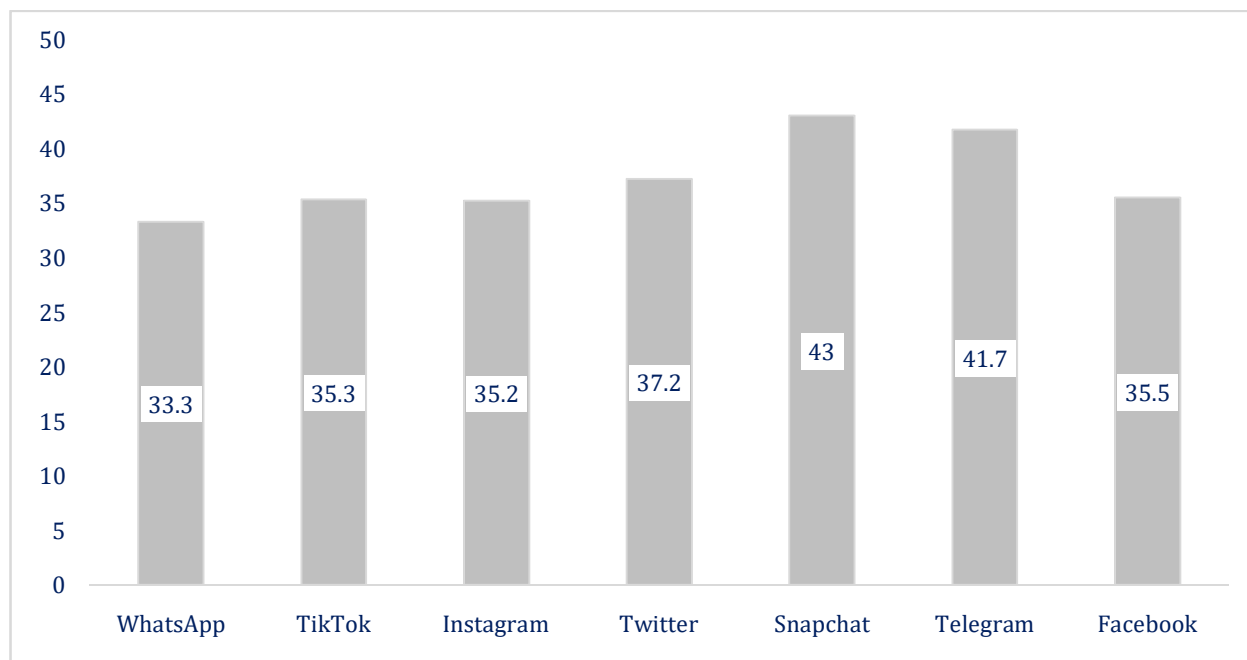


Figure 8: Engagement in Transactional Sex by Normally Use of a Social Media Application

Figure 8 depicts the percentages of Jamaican females ages 18+ years who use a particular social media and are engaged in transactional sex. Forty-three per cent of those who use

Snapchat were engaged in transactional sex compared to 41.7% of those who normally use Telegram and 37.2% of those who mostly use Twitter.

Table 5 presents a cross-tabulation between Age Groups and Engagement in Transactional Sex. Using Chi-square analysis, a significant statistical relationship exists between the two previously mentioned variables ($\chi^2(df = 6) = 25.722, p\text{-value} < 0.001$). The findings revealed that of those who were engaged in transactional sex, 21.5% of them were aged 18-22 years compared to 30.5% who indicated that they were not involved in this behaviour. Four and one-tenth per cent of those who were engaged in transactional sex were ages 48+ years.

Table 5: A cross-tabulation between Age Groups and Engaged in Transactional Sex, n=1,123

Details	Engagement in Transactional Sex		Total
	Yes	No	
	% (n)	% (n)	%(n)
Age Groups			
18 - 22 years	21.5 (79)	30.5 (230)	27.5 (309)
23 - 27 years	29.9 (110)	21.5 (162)	24.2 (272)
28 - 32 years	19.8 (73)	15.2 (115)	16.7 (188)
33 - 37 years	12.8 (47)	11.8 (89)	12.1 (136)
38 - 42 years	7.6 (28)	6.9 (52)	7.1 (80)
43 - 47 years	4.3 (16)	5.7 (43)	5.3 (59)
48+ years	4.1 (15)	8.5 (64)	7.0 (79)
Total	368	755	1123

Table 6 presents a cross-tabulation between marital status and engagement in transactional sex. Using Chi-square analysis, a significant statistical relationship exists between the two previously mentioned variables ($\chi^2(df = 3) = 11.448, p\text{-value} < 0.010$). The findings revealed that of those who were engaged in transactional sex, 60.5% of them were single females compared to 58.4% who were not engaged in transactional sex. Seventeen and nine-tenths per cent of those who were engaged in transactional sex were in common-law unions compared to 14.4% who were not engaged in transactional sex behaviour.

Table 6: A cross-tabulation between Marital Status and Engagement in Transactional Sex, n=1,123

Details	Engagement in Transactional Sex		Total
	Yes	No	
	% (n)	% (n)	%(n)
Marital status			
Single	60.9 (224)	58.4 (441)	59.2 (665)
Married	16.0 (59)	23.8 (180)	21.3 (239)
Divorce	5.2 (19)	3.3 (25)	3.9 (44)
Common-Law	17.9 (66)	14.4 (109)	15.6 (175)
Total	368	755	1123

Table 7 presents a cross-tabulation between social media and engagement in transactional sex. Using Chi-square analysis, no significant statistical relationship exists between the two

previously mentioned variables ($\chi^2(df = 3) = 0.326, p\text{-value} = 0.624$). This means that social media usage is not influencing the sexual behaviour of Jamaican females ages 18+ years.

Table 7: A cross-tabulation between Social Media Usage and Engagement in Transactional Sex, n=1,123

Details	Social Media Usage		Total
	Yes	No	
	% (n)	%(n)	%(n)
Engagement in Transactional Sex			
Yes	30.6 (41)	33.1 (441)	32.8 (368)
No	69.4 (93)	66.9 (662)	67.2 (755)
Total	134	989	1123

Table 8 presents a cross-tabulation between social media and the number of sexual partners. Using Chi-square analysis, no significant statistical relationship exists between the two previously mentioned variables ($\chi^2(df = 3) = 5.858, p\text{-value} = 0.119$). This means that social media usage is not influencing the number of sexual partners to have among Jamaican females ages 18+ years.

Table 8: A cross-tabulation between Social Media Usage and the Number of Sexual Partner, n=1,123

Details	Social Media Usage		Total
	Yes	No	
	% (n)	%(n)	%(n)
Number of Sexual Partners			
0	23.1 (30)	16.6 (165)	17.4 (195)
1	47.7 (62)	58.3 (579)	57.1 (641)
2	14.6 (19)	12.1 (120)	12.4 (139)
3+	14.6 (19)	13.0 (129)	13.2 (148)
Total	130	993	1123

Table 9 presents a cross-tabulation between sexually active and engagement in transactional sex among Jamaican females ages 18+ years. Using Chi-square analysis, a statistically significant relationship emerged between the two previously mentioned variables ($\chi^2(df = 1) = 69.922, P\text{-value} < 0.001$).

Table 9: A Cross-tabulation between Sexually Active and Engagement in Transactional Sex Among Jamaican Females ages 18+ years

Details	Sexually Active		Total
	Yes	No	
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)
Engagement in Transactional sex			
Yes	38.4 (365)	8.5 (18)	32.8 (368)
No	61.6 (561)	91.5 (194)	67.2 (755)
Total	911	212	1123

Discussion

Transactional sex is nothing new in Caribbean and Latin American literature (Ahmed, 2003; Allen, *et al.*, 2000; Brennan, 2004; Cabezas, 2019; Fitzgerald, *et al.*, 2000; Fosado, 2004; Hawkins, *et al.*, 2007; Kempadoo, 2009a, 2009b; Logie, *et al.*, 2020; Perkins, 2008) because of its relationship with sexual and reproductive health matters. Despite studies establishing a relationship between social media usage and sexual behaviour (Landry, *et al.*, 2017; Lau, *et al.*, 2021) and transactional sex and socioeconomic variables (Menza, *et al.*, 2020), no studies on transactional sex and social media usage emerged in Jamaica, particularly post-COVID-19. Landry *et al.*, (2017) opined, “Social media provides a context in which adolescents, who need social acceptance and gratification and are still developing self-regulation skills, may find themselves vulnerable to pressures or unanticipated risk opportunities” (p. e28). Although the perspective of Landry *et al.* (2017) has some merit that “Social media may also provide increased access to partners that are more experienced, leading to increased communication about sex because of the perceived privacy of social media” (Parks & Floyd, 1996, p. e28), it not influencing the sexual behaviour (i.e., number of sexual partners and transactional sex) of Jamaican females ages 18+ years.

Some Jamaican females ages 18+ years have included transactional sex as a part of their normal sexual activity including their stable sexual partner. Of the sampled Jamaican females ages 18+ years, 38.0% of them indicated that they have asked their partners for money/gifts after sex, 32.8% were practising transactional sex, and 38.4% of the sexually active were engaged in transactional sex, and 32.1% of them stated that they have done this at least once. The current research concurs with the literature that found between 4 and 41% of American women were engaged in transactions with sex (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013; Chen, *et al.*, 2011; Cohan, *et al.*, 2005; Decker, *et al.*, 2012; Jenness, *et al.*, 2011; Menza, *et al.*, 2020; Sherman, *et al.*, 2018; Walters, *et al.*, 2018). However, substantially more Jamaican females ages 18+ years who were sexually active are engaged in transactional sex compared to 10% of South African adolescents and young women (ages 15 to 24 years old; Duby, *et al.*, 2021). To understand why Jamaican females ages 18+ years have introduced transactional sex in their sexual practices the response to the question “Do you receive money/gifts or favours from your partner for sex?” provide some explanation. Most of the sampled Jamaican females who are ages 18+ indicated that they practice transactional sex because of multiple reasons (59.9%), with pleasure accounting for 13.4%, 9.8% for material gains, and 5.0% for status. A deduction, therefore, that can be made from the perspective of Jamaican females ages 18+ years is that the economic climate warrants more financial resources compared to before the pandemic. So when Chronic (2016) wrote an article entitled “Social Media fuels transactional Sex” and Awan *et al.* (2021) argued that internet pornography use has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, this is not the case, but it is the economic climate that fuels this phenomenon and social media is only accommodating the reality. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, nd.) opined, “Women face larger burdens than men to retain their jobs or reenter the labor market. They not only continue to lose jobs at much higher rates than men, but they are seeing larger increases in non-paid domestic work, particularly in the supervision of children’s educational activities.” Therefore, this is a case of wrongful diagnosis and it will lead to incorrect social interventions because of the initial interpretation.

Wamoyi *et al.* (2019) asked the question “Is transactional sex exploitative?” and this is a valuable question. They provided some historical context for the behaviour and therein explain how embedded in the culture is a transactional relationship between the gender concerning intimacy. Wamoyi *et al.* (2019) opined, “The social norms influencing the practice of transactional sex included: reciprocity as a core cultural value that permeates the way exchange in sexual relationships is judged; gendered expectations that men should provide for women's material needs in sexual relationships and that women should reciprocate employing sex; and peer pressure to be perceived as "fashionable" (p. e0214366). Within the social context that males are expected to provide for their intimate partners, transactional sex is therefore supported therein. Jamaican females are not exploiting males when they asked for money/gifts and/or favours for sex because if it is a mutually beneficial exchange, never no exploitation may occur in such an event. The previously stated perspective is supported by the writing of Kyegombe, *et al.* (2020). They opined, “Interventions must also be designed to recognise that girls in transactional sex relationships may not consider themselves as exploited, thus requiring engagement with them based on their concerns, aspirations, and expectations”.

Limitation

This study cannot be generalized to Jamaican females as it is a national probability study of Jamaican females ages 18+ years old.

Conclusion

There are many faces of transactional sex is a current reality (Formson & Hilhorst, 2016) and this emerging one goes to the core of the social fabric of western society. The age and economic asymmetry matrix in society (Luke, 2003) as well as the economic-gender disparity is fueling transactional sex. The economic reality in a society is a factor that influences transactional sex behaviour (Chatterji, *et al.*, 2005; Fitzgerald, *et al.*, 2000; Hawkins, *et al.*, 2007) and social media should not be used to mask the real phenomenon. This is a new reality—the economics is creating changes in the sexual behaviour of Jamaican females ages 18+ years—that must be used in planning social intervention programmes and not focusing on social media which is highlighting the gleaming socioeconomic disparities in the society.

Recommendations

The Health and Education sector has a major part to play in addressing the multiple risk factors and vulnerabilities of Jamaican aged 18+ by providing social and counselling. The current complexities of social media and transactional sex need to be acknowledged, and the intricacies of a range of sexual arrangements and practices are appreciated.

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