AN AFRICAN FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE ON THE SEX TRADE IN WEST AFRICA: A CASE STUDY OF GHANAIAN WOMEN

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LEGON SEPTEMBER 2004
DECLARATION

I, Nancy Ansah hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of an original research by me under the supervision of Professor Lehlohonolo Tlou and no part of it has been submitted anywhere for any other purposes. Besides, all relevant references and works have been fully acknowledged.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to:

Kobby, for his love and concern;

Mr. Ansa –Asare, for his care; and

Uncle Tim, for being there for me.
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I am thankful to God for his grace that has seen me through another degree programme. I express my profound gratitude to the Chair of the Supervisory Committee, Professor Lehlohonolo Tlou, of the Legon Centre for International Affairs, for her patience, understanding and immense help during the writing of this research. Prof. your advice and guidance is exceptional and I am very grateful to you for shaping my direction in my academic pursuits. I owe a debt of gratitude to Professor Bluwey and Dr. Vladimir Antwi-Danso for reading through my script and offering me very important comments and suggestions.

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ABSTRACT

Women who make the choice of commercial sex work do so because patriarchal structures embedded in cultural practices that limit the employment opportunities available to women. These socio-economic and political dynamics stipulated by patriarchy, lead some women into practicing prostitution in various forms. The implications of the sex trade related to the education, employment and political participation as they affect women, is complex and multifaceted.

This study examines the international sex trade and, especially, the involvement of Ghanaian women. The study is based on the premise that unless the sex trade is understood from the African feminist’s perspective, we will possibly fail to address the serious socio-economic and socio-political problems of the sex trade in West Africa. The analysis of interviews of the sampling population of Ghanaian prostitutes attests to this. Prostitutes who are trafficked and those who make the choice themselves are victims of the neglect of African women since colonial times through the capitalist transition of their societies. They lack higher level of education and therefore find it difficult to find employment.

The study concludes that most prostitutes are not promiscuous or lovers of “plenty sex per se”. They rather are victims of a patriarchal society, which limits the advancement of women. The answer to the sex trade problem lies in an understanding of the issues from an African feminist’ perspective and the attempt to correct the anomaly.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Problem

This chapter offers a background of the sex trade; it also includes the problem statement, the hypothesis and the research methodology.

The sex trade is the institutional market place for sex. Sex workers or prostitutes are people who engage in non-marital sex in exchange for money. The term prostitution was at first used to describe the exchange of sex for money and "prostitute" was used to describe those involved in this commercialization of sex. But recently, the redefinition of prostitution, as work, has brought the phrase "sex work" to represent prostitution.¹ "Sex workers" is also a clearer definition of what the trade involves. Little and Kenneth define prostitutes as women whose livelihoods, over a period of time, depend wholly on the sale of sexual services and whose relationship with customers does not extend beyond the sexual act.²

The sex trade is an old phenomenon. According to Adams Jones, in his study on the European references to prostitution in the Western Gold Coast between 1660 and 1860, prostitution existed apparently in those times but met the needs of only unmarried men.³ Another medieval example is the booming sex industry in Paris, especially in the Clapier district. This district was well known for prostitution and its name was associated with gonorrhea. During this era, prostitution, whether in Africa or elsewhere, was mainly within the borders of countries.
However, the nature and practice of prostitution has changed over the centuries. A new dimension of the sex trade, over the last thirty years, entails the trafficking of women across borders to trade their bodies for money. This has gained international attention as it also represents a type of slavery. The International Organisation of Migration (IOM) reports that each year about one million women and men are trafficked and forced into sexual exploitation, of which women are in the majority. Mostly from poor countries, some of these people are trafficked to richer countries and are forced to work under appalling conditions as sex workers. They are cramped in brothels to prevent them from escaping. In many cases, they live and work at the same place. In this prison-like condition, they are often beaten and forced to work for their pimps. Some women service as many as thirteen men a night, but have access to little or no health care and a very small fraction of their income. This reality underscores the exploitative character of the sex trade, especially as transnational or migratory work.

Trafficking of women and girls into the sex trade expresses itself in the migratory rules and regulations of countries. Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 13) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (article 12) stipulate that the individual, under international law, has the right to migrate, sovereign nations reserve the right also to restrict migration. This makes it difficult for labour from developing countries to migrate to developed countries through the right immigration process.
In Ghana, the sex trade's migratory character became evident in the wake of Ghana's industrialization in the early 1960s. Men migrated to the industrial towns, leaving their wives behind. A notable example is the building of the Akosombo Dam, which required a mainly male labour force. Prostitutes, therefore, moved to Akosombo and other similar sites to sell themselves. In 1983, Ghana experienced acute drought that worsened the already dwindling economy. This led to the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as an economic policy. Like many other countries that pursued this programme, Ghana's economy failed and this quickened the pace of the increase of cross border prostitution in Ghana.

The migrant nature of the sex trade is not just women moving or being moved to other countries. The global economy fuels the sex trade in the flow of rich migrants from the North to the South, under the pretence of business but in search of sexual gratification. Men from these countries, based on their economic affluence, travel far and near to improve upon their diary in the quest for satisfaction. They travel far in search of sexual services and affection which their women will not render. The internet has been a channel through which information on where women and girls exist for sex can be located. For Ghana as an African country, it is worth noting that the notion of the exotic nature of the African women in the Western world is wide. African women are stereotyped as sexually good and submissive. In fact with African women, these men request
and in most cases, get types of sexual services like oral and anal sex, which their wives and other women in the West may not offer.\textsuperscript{10}

1.1 Problem of the Research

There have been many reports on prostitution in West Africa but with very little understanding of the dynamics that defines it; especially as practiced by Ghanaian women. This is because the nature and form of prostitution, as well as factors that groom it, may not be the same in all countries. African feminists would perceive the sex trade as a symptom of unequal culturally defined gender relations that have affected and continue to affect the political, educational and the economic independence of African women. This cultural structure is also conditioned by the unequal economic structure between the developed and the developing countries.

This research adopts an African feminist perspective to examine the peculiar political, cultural, social and economic factors that define the nature of prostitution as practiced by women in West Africa, particularly, Ghanaian women.

1.2 Objectives of the Research

The objectives of the study are to:

a) Identify the nature and forms of the sex trade in West Africa.

b) Examine the structural relations of the actual actors of the sex trade in West Africa.
c) Study the human rights and health issues involved in the sex trade in West Africa.

d) Analyse the implications of the sex trade in West Africa from an African feminist perspective.

1.3 Hypothesis

Unless the sex trade is understood from the African feminist perspective we will fail to address the serious socio-economic and socio-political problems of the sex trade in West Africa.

1.4 Rationale of the Research

The study is in partial fulfillment of Legon Centre for International Affairs’s Master of Philosophy Degree in International Affairs. It is also an attempt to promote a deeper understanding of the sex trade in West Africa especially as practiced by Ghanaian women.

1.5 Definitions of Key Concepts

Feminism - The awareness of women’s oppression and exploitation within the family, at work, in the society, and the conscious action to change the situation. The theory of feminism is often used in the western concept and mostly is associated with negative connotation such as lesbianism (female sexual autonomy). This research looks at the African variant which deals with the conscious action to change the social, economic and political subordination of women. The African variant examines basic needs of women in the society.
Patriarchy- Patriarchy refers to a system of male authority which oppresses women through its social, political and economic institutions. In patriarchy, a sex - gender system and a system of economic discrimination operate simultaneously. Patriarchy has power from men’s greater access to, and mediation of resources and rewards of authority structures inside and outside the home. Patriarchy is the term which feminists use to express the totality of oppressive and exploitative relations which affect women.

Sex Trade - The exchange of sex for money and wealth. In this study, Sex Trade and Prostitution will be used interchangeably.

West Africa- It is used here to refer to the geographical area and also the people of the region. This clarification is necessary because part of the research was done in Britain and references made to other Western countries where West African women practice prostitution.

1.6 Methodology

The population for the study is Ghanaian prostitutes and gender/feminists activists, scholars and advocates. This necessitated two distinct interviews: unstructured interviews with prostitutes and structured interviews with feminist scholars and practitioners in gender advocacy. The researcher interviewed prostitutes in Ghana and Ghanaian women who practice prostitution in Britain. The researcher chose Accra, Tema, Circle and Ashiaman for the research in Ghana. These towns and cities were chosen because of their proximity to the Researcher. Britain was chosen because of the historical links with Ghana. Ghanaians travel to Britain as well. The towns and cities where research was
conducted in Britain were London (Briston and Tottehnam), Milton Keynes and Doncaster. Research in Britain provides an international dimension of the sex trade as a migratory work, especially in relation to the trafficking of women and girls into the sex trade. Britain was also chosen among other European countries because of its affordability. Forty (40) women were identified and interviewed in Britain: five (5) students who practice on holidays, ten (10) women who traveled on their own and twenty five (25) women and girls who were trafficked.

The nature of the population (prostitutes) of this research demanded the use of non-probability sampling to be able to carry on the field research. The types of non-probability sampling used were snowball sampling and the haphazard sampling method. In the Snowball sampling method, the sampling unit is asked to suggest another person for the next interview. This proved to be one of the best ways to get people for interview, since the location of a sizeable number of prostitutes is not easy to find. Sixty (60) prostitutes in Ghana were interviewed. Twenty five prostitutes for four types of prostitution identified to be practiced by Ghanaian women in Ghana: “Seaters”, “Roamers,” “Streetwalkers” and “Call Girls”. Informal interviews were used for the prostitutes because they refuse to talk when they see questions written down and assume the researcher might be from the media. Secondly, the use of informal interview provides a relaxed atmosphere for the prostitutes to share information. For this kind of research, the whole story needs to be told and interaction in the speech of the sampling population is avoided until it is necessary to generate another answer that is needed and also to direct the interview. In other words, the informal interviews

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provide a means for a deeper understanding of the problem.

The questions asked were on the reasons why some move from town to town, their educational background, their financial background, the background of their parents, in terms of finances and education, their own training, their marital status, their attendance to hospitals for check ups, their knowledge of HIV/AIDS and the use of the condom. The researcher deemed these areas adequate to yield the expected results or otherwise. For those interviewed in Britain, questions on how they reached Britain were included. Their present lives, their relationships to those whom they live with were also asked.

Structured interview were used in accessing information on African feminism and the sex trade. Advocates, activists, and scholars on gender and feminism related issues were interviewed. Their views will be very important. The importance lies in the fact that, feminism, and especially African feminism, is an evolving theory and for that matter a lot of issues might not have been documented and recompiled. Most of these resource persons/interviewees have also worked as researchers, scholars and advocates with prostitutes and others in fighting for the rights of women. Their views and experiences therefore provide valuable information.

Apart from interviews, the study also utilizes secondary materials. In terms of secondary sources, the researcher consulted books, journals and articles from the Balme library, African Studies library, Sociology library, Legon Centre for
International Affairs library and The Institute of Statistics, Social, Economic and Research; all at the University of Ghana, Legon. Books and articles from George Padmore Library and the United Nations Information Centre in Accra were also consulted. The Internet also provided up to date information on the subject.

1.7 Limitations

The research work had methodological and financial limitation. It was not easy to locate sex workers for interview. The researcher had to make several visits to brothels before having approval for interviews by the managers of the brothels. The help of taxi drivers and some men had to be solicited in order to get streetwalkers and roamers for interview. In most cases, prostitutes demanded payments for the interview time.

Feminist Activist and gender Advocates were not easy to locate initially. The researcher therefore had to join a gender based Non Governmental Organisation in order to be close to as many gender and feminist advocates as possible. This offered interview opportunities and opportunity to participate in debates, which sharpened the researcher’s knowledge on feminist issues.

1.8 Arrangement of Chapters

The research is divided into five chapters. Chapter one is the research design. Chapter two reviews existing literature on feminism and the sex trade and presents the theoretical framework. Chapter three examines the nature and form of the sex trade, as well as the legal framework that governs it. Chapter four
analyses the implications of the sex trade from the African feminist perspective.

Chapter five includes the summary of findings, conclusion, and recommendations.
NOTES


3. Ibid.


CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

Writers from developed countries and developing countries alike have written on the sex trade, as practiced in their countries and elsewhere. The first section of this chapter is a literature review on the sex trade. Literature on African feminism, whose interdisciplinary nature cuts across the customary subject divisions of history, philosophy, politics, economics, and sociology is also reviewed. The second section focuses on the theory of African feminism, which is the theoretical framework within which the research is situated. The theory will present a general review of feminism in the West, and African feminism, taking into consideration, the historical, cultural, socio-economic and political peculiarities of Africa that shapes feminism in Africa.

2.1 Literature Review

Naomi B. Mc Cormick in Sexual Salvation: Affirming Women’s Sexual Rights, defines “prostitution as an institutionalized place for the sale of sex and a person who engages in the exchange of money for sex as a prostitute”.¹ She distinguishes between prostitution and sexual slavery on the premise that a prostitute is a free agent in the market place whilst a sexual slave is a person forced or coerced and deceived into providing sexual services.² While the distinction for highlighting the extent to which sex workers are “free agents” is important, this study does not concentrate on it. This is because only few African women and for that
matter. Ghanaian women are trafficked outside their countries as ‘free agents’ and with the full knowledge of what they are going to do. In other words, it is difficult to determine who is trafficked and who is not. Some of them are sold by their families to defray family debts. Some of them are promised factory jobs and other service jobs upon arrival. However, Naomi’s work is important to this research because it analyses prostitution in general and the various relations of power between its actors. Nevertheless, it fails to address the dynamics of the sex trade in other parts of the world, since the text has more or less, an American view of the sex trade. This research will expand on Naomi’s basic premise by applying it to sex trade as practiced by African women, especially Ghanaian women.

Schur M. Edwin in Labeling Women as Deviants regards the buying and selling of female sexuality as an epitome of women’s devaluation and objectification. He explains that prostitution is thought of as something women do and it is viewed as a female offence. Thus it is the prostitute whose behaviour, respectability and legal status are treated as being problematic. Her male customer, without whom she could not engage in prostitution, is not given a second thought. The prostitute is thought of as a deviant yet a great many ‘conformists’ appear to be dependent on her services.

Schur’s work is very useful to this research because it underscores one of the main tenets of the research work, that is, the structural relations and the sex trade. The culpability of men in the sex trade is usually not mentioned, whilst the
woman is always blamed. Perhaps, Schur could have categorically stated that the solution to what is considered, as a social problem cannot be achieved by tackling part of the problem. This research work will expatiate on the structural relations in the sex trade and establish the effects of gendered society on women in this regard.

Little and Kenneth studied prostitution among Ghanaian women. In *African Women in Towns- An Aspect of African Social Revolution*, they assert that when migrant women do not find employment in the cities, going back to their villages becomes difficult for them. They, therefore, go into sexual services in exchange for money. This creates the kind of economic opportunity which does not require a university degree, but a mere physical attraction and the capacity to flirt. According to them, prostitution in Ghana is mainly “Tutu” which is referred to as ‘seaters’ in this research. The prostitutes in Accra and Takoradi live in what is called separate “red light” areas and they stand in front of their brothel or door steps in the evening, allowing their clients to make a choice.

Little and Kenneth write that this same kind of prostitution is in Abidjan but there, the “Tutu” women are dispersed but can be recognized by red curtains that are lowered at the door step when the women are occupied. Young women between the ages of twenty and thirty constitute about 60 percent of prostitutes in Cote d’Ivoire. Some of them are married and have children.

Little and Kenneth’s work is important to this essay because it captures some of
the forms of prostitution as practiced in West Africa. Their assertion of Tutu in Ghana being the same in Cote D’Ivoire also, suggests that these prostitutes might be migrating between these countries in the practice of their profession. Little and Kenneth however, may lack understanding of the dynamics of the sex trade if they assert that one of the qualifications needed for the sex trade is the capacity to flirt.

Most women are in the sex trade without the capacity to flirt. Though trafficking of women into the sex trade was not rampant at the time Little and Kenneth wrote, quite a sizable number of prostitutes would have been trafficked, or forced into the sex trade by other factors like poverty and lack of employment. It is evident then, that there are many women who are compelled to sell sex for a living without the capacity to flirt. This is true of Ghanaian women who went to Cote d’Ivoire during the 1970s. They left Ghana in order to escape the economic hardships and the persecutions they face as traders, from politicians and military personnel.

Little and Kenneth’s work has two main strengths worth noting: a) the observation of similarities in professional (prostitution) practice in Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire which suggests movement across borders and, b) that university education is not needed for prostitution. Many women, who do not find jobs because of lack of education and employable skills, practice prostitution. This is one of the strong arguments of African feminism as discussed by Oyeronke Oyewumi in her The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western
Gender Discourses.

Oyeronke Oyewumi asserts that the initial disadvantage of females in the educational system is arguably, the main determinant of women’s inferiority and lack of access to resources in the colonial period and in recent times. The colonial masters prepared the males in the society to take up the new challenges of governance and the economy whilst women were prepared to be good wives and mothers to men. Oyeronke however leaves a gap to be filled. She does not write about the situation of the African women immediately after independence.

By the 1940s - 1950’s, most countries in sub-Saharan Africa had obtained their independence. It is not known whether women’s chance in formal education improved or was the same. Her work is nevertheless important to this research because it provides one of the main tenets of African feminist arguments. This essay will examine the effects of the process of independence on the social, economic and political development and capitalist oriented transition of Africa states on women.

Siripon Skrobanek et al. in The Human Realities of the International Sex Trade, assert that prostitution has become more internationalized since the 1970s. For instance Asian, Indian and African women constitute 60 percent of prostitutes in the Netherlands. Siripon et al. assert that migrants perform labour, which is considered by local people as demeaning or dirty. But migrants consider the economic gains rather than social status. This is because migrant sex workers have left the economic hardships of their countries, just to seek ‘greener
pastures' abroad. Moreover, most of them are forced by those who traffic them or the pimps who buy them to do any kind of job. In examining the factors that increase the demand for migrant women in the sex trade, Siripon et al. mention that local women do not patronize the trade anymore because of the social stigma and the increasing awareness of the health risk. Though Siripon et al. write on the sex trade in the Netherlands, their views are useful because they highlight the abuse and health hazards associated with sex trade as a migratory work.

Calhoun C., et al., focus on the vulnerability of prostitutes to STIs and HIV/AIDS in his book, Sociology. They state that the answer to the spread of AIDS lies in the social structure—where there is a high degree of interconnectedness among members of the population who engage in risky behaviour, allowing the virus to spread quickly in those segments.\textsuperscript{11} Calhoun et al. establish the relationship between prostitution and AIDS by looking at the mode of infection and transmission. In contrast to the United States, where the spread of HIV/AIDS is largely through homosexual activity, HIV/AIDS in Africa is spread mainly through heterosexual relations. One study revealed that in Africa, 80\% of HIV positive patients got the infection through heterosexual behaviour.\textsuperscript{12} The sex trade therefore becomes a very potent threat to the health of African nations, as one person who is infected can infect as many as fifteen people, if he or she does not use a condom.

Sociologists study the transmission of diseases in order to see how social factors contribute to it. Such research can be helpful in finding social action, which
might help reduce the risk and incidence of the disease. This literature is important to the research work because it helps in the analysis of the implications of the sex trade for the traders and for the West African sub-region as a whole. It examines the peculiarities of the sub region, which make it vulnerable to the AIDS pandemic. Calhoune et al do not examine the historical and cultural peculiarities dynamics that influence the sex trade in Africa, two important dimensions which this essay will add to the discourse on prostitution in Africa.

Gloria Chuku in her article “African Women Since 1960” clarifies the health issues raised by Calhoune. She situates the discussion of HIV/AIDS in women’s reproductive health. She emphasises that women’s economic independence increases their social status and both greatly determines their economic and social wellbeing. She asserts that the spread of HIV/AIDS was increased by the economic crisis which led to the feminization of poverty. The chances of survival became a major issue to many Africans, especially women and many built survival strategies on the exchange of sex for material things. Women’s survival strategies became death traps. Evidence is the report that about 90 percent of commercial sex workers in Ghana were infected with HIV. She concludes that AIDS in Africa is a result of the gendered structure of inequalities within a stagnant economy in which accumulation by international capital and a local ruling class leaves the majority, especially women, poor. Gloria’s work is beneficial to this dissertation because it takes into account the factors that push African women, and for that matter Ghanaian women, into the sex trade.
Williams Phil in *Illegal Migration and the Commercial Sex Trade* demonstrates that perhaps the lack of financial autonomy by women is the main reason for their involvement in prostitution. He discusses child trafficking and sexual exploitation of African females between the ages of 8-18 from Ghana, Togo, Nigeria and Cote d’Ivoire. Most of these women become vulnerable to traffickers because they are pushed to contribute towards the upkeep of the families without having the necessary tools for income generation. In their desperation to fulfill the demands of their families, they are deceived by promises that lie in some far away countries for them. These victims upon arrival are sold to brothels in the West. Williams documents that in some cases, families give their daughters to traffickers in order to make money out of their sexuality. Williams’s work gives us insight into the role of the family in the cross border trade. He offers a bases for the analysis of the situation of the African family in the face of capitalism and globalisation.

Bowman G. et. al in *Women and Law in Sub-Saharan Africa*, perhaps differ with Williams when he tries to establish poverty as the reason why families sell their children into the sex trade. They assert that prostitution is an attempt by women to liberate themselves from societal controls. A woman who engages in prostitution frees her body from the grip of society. She assumes the management of her sexuality, since in theory she decides with whom she will have intimate relationship, and when and where they will occur. At this level, it is evident that, she shakes off the traditional shackles imposed on her sexuality and
thus contributes to the sexual liberation of women from men.

This research would have considered this opinion myopic if Bowman and Akua Kueychia have stopped at this assertion. However, they continue to examine this claim by stating that since the prostitute depends solely on the money of her client, she cannot make choices of how she wants her services delivered. She becomes a commodity and submits to the man’s wishes. In trying to free herself from social norms, she falls into the hands of the man who regains his authority and dominion over her.

The explanation of Bowman et. al needs further examination. They assert that in prostitution, the prostitute chooses whom she wants to have intimate relations with. This premise is not laudable since the delivering of sexual services is not based on intimacy. The word intimacy cannot be used to describe sexual relations in which money or wealth changes hands with different people. Whenever money becomes the basic of any relations, the fact that one party is in need of it is established. This reinforces that many women in Africa are into prostitution for money to survive. The notion of prostitution as a rebel of traditional norms is western and therefore foreign to the African situation. This research will examine the dynamics that influences the sex trade with real interviews with the practitioners of prostitution and other feminists who have worked closely with their rehabilitation or otherwise.
This section has examined various literature on prostitution and African feminism. The various authors examine the sex trade closely, while considering the key issues such as health, poverty, human rights abuse, colonialism, and the international political and economic system. The following section of this chapter offers a general presentation on feminism thereby situates the theory of African feminism within the study.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guides this research is feminism and in particular, African feminism. Feminism can be described as those ideas and politics that argue for gender equality and the eradication of discrimination on the basis of gender. In simple terms feminism is the advocacy of the emancipation of women. Over the centuries, many women have advocated greater economic and political power for women. Until recently, women have been linked to jobs concerning reproduction like childbirth and child-rearing which are not quantified and cost awarded to it. Feminism challenges traditional thinking by connecting issues of reproduction with production and the personal with the political. Feminism proposes that women would be self sufficient, if only society would allow them equal political, legal and economic rights. Recent feminist theory has moved from viewing women as simply an oppressed group, and victims of male domination, and has tried to formulate ways of analyzing power as it manifests itself and as it is resisted in the relations of every day life. Feminist theory insists on the extricable link between theory and practice and between private and public. In feminism, theory and experience have a very
special relationship and it is normally expressed in the popular slogan “The personal is political”.

Feminist theory has at least four notable characteristics. First, Feminist theory is interdisciplinary, cutting across customary subject divisions including history, philosophy etc. Secondly, themes like reproduction and representation of sexual division of labour keep recurring. The third and the most striking are new concepts such as sexism created to address gaps in existing knowledge as well as the social discrimination these concepts describe. Lastly, women’s subject experiences are drawn onto enrich scholarship.¹⁸

All variants of feminism share three major assumptions:

1. Gender is a social construct that oppresses women more than men.

2. Patriarchy (male dominance of social institutions) shapes the construction of society.

3. Women’s experimental knowledge best helps us to envision a future non-sexist society.

There are variants of feminism; notable among them are western feminism and African feminism. These variants are conditioned by different geographical locations, political ideologies, socio-economic disparities, historical experiences, and cultural differences. The following section will discuss briefly Western feminism and then review African feminism.
2.2.1 Western Feminism

Western feminism grows out of upper class individualism and the patriarchal control of women within industrialized societies. In this situation women are simply seen as individuals in society. There are various ways in which feminist theory exhibits itself in Western feminism; notable are radical (radical left and radical right), social, Eco-feminists and liberal feminists. Radical feminists are in two basic groups: Radical left and Radical right. Radical left seems to blame all their problems on men and the institutionalization of heterosexuality, therefore oppose everything masculine. This branch of feminist theory is characterized by intense discourse from the commonalities in women’s lives (i.e., physical and sexual abuse, menstruation, childbirth, sexual harassment, etc.). It argues that patriarchy centers on a fundamental difference in interests between men and women, and that equality for women cannot be achieved unless men collectively give up the power, wealth, and privilege that patriarchy grants them. Politically, Radical left feminism was the first to create a discourse on violence against women, especially rape and domestic violence, pornography, and global commerce in prostitution. Sexual exploitation is viewed by Radical left feminism as the worst effect of patriarchy because its goal is the social control of women. Stressing the differences between females and males, radical left feminism values women and likens males to a separate species. They stress on male dominance in society. According to the radical left feminist ideology, the violence of the heterosexual male has led to the patriarchal and hierarchical cultures of today. This form of feminism is called radical because it focuses on the roots of male domination and claims that all forms of oppression are extensions of male
supremacy. The theory suggests that a woman is complete without a man and that lesbianism can be part of every woman’s culture. The radical lefts would see child bearing as a hindrance to building a successful career that will put any woman at par with any man.

The radical rights have a conformist attitude towards the ordering of society. They emphasize and reclaim feminine values and traits. Radical rights believe that societal peace can be achieved through understanding and that women’s emancipation will come by peaceful negotiations.

Certain issues put the radical feminists at odds with other feminists, especially a socialist view of centralization of class and a Black view of race. Mitchell criticized radical feminism for not speaking of women oppression in a historically specific way. Radical feminism is concerned with sexuality and socialization rather than labour.21

Socialist feminism is a branch of feminist theory which holds that the source of women’s oppression stems from men’s specific material interest in the domination of women and that men construct a variety of institutional arrangement to perpetuate this domination.22 It further states that Women’s reproductive activities for family and men’s production work give each different consciousness, which are diametrically opposed ways of thinking and feeling. It creates tension which strengthens gender biases and provides a terrain for conflict and power struggles. Feminists who agree with the tenets of socialist
feminism believe that women are seen as a sex class, gendered by society into a secondary position, through a systemic sex gender system that dictates social roles, purposes, and norms. These feminists believe that women are exploited as both a "sex" and a "class", and that women are consigned to reproduction and their natures tethered. Men take the roles of goods production and potentially reach freedom. To change this situation, socialist feminist advocate for "women" and "men" to disappear as socially constituted categories.

Growing from the idea of women's values as separate from men's and also closer to nature, Eco-feminism revalues and redefines feminine traits. Women are seen as in tune with nature and seeking to work in conjunction with it; men have a hierarchical relationship to nature and seek to control it. This view poses the idea that men's control of nature up to now has created a crisis in much of the world. Eco-feminists look for life-affirming and nonviolent solutions to world problems. They see feminine values such as patience and understanding, as virtues needed by the world's patriarchy to survive and evolve.

Liberal feminism is also sometimes called the theory of individual freedom for women. Liberal feminism is a branch of feminist theory that claims that gender differences are not based in biology and therefore women and men are not all that different; they share a common humanity that supersedes their procreative differences, and should therefore not be treated differently by the law regarding rights, and educational and work opportunities. Liberal feminists are individualists who stress the importance of freedom, especially the freedom to
choose. They see more similarities between women and men than differences and envision a community of equitable opportunity for both sexes. They also see most stereotypically masculine or feminine traits as culturally imposed.

Liberal feminists view choice as an absolute right, and they seek control over the body and social circumstances. They strive to avoid the imprint of gender codes and the gender socialization of children, looking instead for an authentic, un-engineered, and individual approach to life. One of the major developments associated with the liberals is the incremental growth of female representativeness at the levels of state power at the local and regional levels.

2.2.2 Convergence and Divergence of the Various Forms of Feminism

All the above branches of feminism share a central theme which is the emancipation of women from oppression, be it political, cultural or economic. They also seek to address the empowerment of women in society. African feminism embodies all these variants: more of some variants than others and includes the peculiarities presented by politics, both domestic and international, religion, history, culture and economic position.

2.2.3 African Feminism

African feminism can be defined as those ideas and politics that argue for gender equality and the eradication of discrimination based on gender and taking into consideration the peculiar history, culture and politics of the African woman’s experience. This definition might not be written in any literature but it will serve
as a working definition for this research project. As Gwendolyn Mikell, a leading African feminist notes, African feminism grows out of a history and a culture of female integration within largely corporate agrarian based societies with strong cultural ties, which have experienced a traumatic colonization by the west.\(^{26}\)

According to Gwendolyn, African women have experienced marginalisation in the capitalist oriented transition of their societies. Ironically for African women, political independence has been fraught with economic “dependence.” \(^{27}\) African feminism therefore, involves a strong resistance to western hegemony and its legacy within the context of African culture, and male dominance over women in these societies.\(^{28}\) African women deal with two forms of oppression; western hegemony and patriarchy. Western hegemony here implies the process of colonization and all the transitional processes which established and continue to establish economic, political and social forms of western ‘rule’ in Africa, notably, the introduction by the West, of the money economy and more recently for Ghana, the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1983.\(^{29}\)

The construction of gender is closely related to the patriarchal relations. The patriarchal structure in African societies is also exhibited in the imbalance in access to formal education. Women lack formal education, which is the yardstick for higher occupational status in post colonial and post independent Africa. This is evident in; a) lower formal educational level of women across the continent; b) the large population of women in peasant farming instead of professional and
higher income generating activities; and c) the high level of female malnutrition. Oyewumi asserts that the initial disadvantage of females in the formal educational system is arguably the main determinant of woman’s inferiority and lack of access to resources in the colonial period and especially in recent times.

Formal education offers access to payable jobs; it provides access to political power and social recognition. Once African women lack basic skills, which help in acquiring economic opportunities and power, they become vulnerable to all sorts of exploitation and social vices such as prostitution.

The presentation of women in politics is another area where gender inequality in African societies is perpetuated. African women are not presented in the public/political sphere. Politics is the ultimate public realm. In this realm, decisions concerning the organization of societies are made. Economic decisions concerning what to be produced and how it should be allocated are also determined in this realm. The absence of women in this crucial social stratum implies their neglect in important decision-making processes that could improve their lot.

Gwendolyn asserts that African women were actively involved in politics in pre-colonial days. Women were heads of families, lineages and cults. Yaa Asantewaah of the Akans is mentioned as a classic example. According to Gwendolyn, the challenge to women’s participation in politics occurred when the state was consolidating structurally and becoming more centralized; or responding to external or internal challenges. Women were then seen as a threat
African feminists assert that one tradition exported to Africa during colonialism was the exclusion of women from the newly created colonial public sphere. In the West, access to power was gender based: therefore politics was largely men’s job and colonialism, which was fundamentally men’s affair, was no exception. Colonial masters from the West therefore introduced their patriarchal system of social organization to the conquered territories. The conquered were excluded from higher levels of governance but men were at least involved or represented at the various lower levels of government. The system of indirect rule regarded male chieftaincy as against females. Women were ineligible for leadership. This inequality persists today.

In the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, African women in parliament, cabinet positions and various political offices are few. The 1995 United Nations report showed that in no country is women’s participation in political leadership at par with men. The report put the global participation of women in political leadership at 6.8 percent, while forty-eight countries recorded zero participation. The case of Africa is peculiar in that out of the fifty-one countries 26 were below the global average and 25 were above it. The percentage ranged from 0.0 percent in countries like Benin, Djibouti and 3.3 percent in Seychelles. Ghana fell within the 8.8 percent, while Nigeria fell within 6.8 percent. It is argued that even women who are in cabinet positions happen to be ministers of insignificant areas like education, social welfare etc. It is however important to point out the equality of
positions; that no cabinet position is inferior to the other. Being in charge of education is an effective area of a country’s development and since these are the basic areas which the neglect of women have led to the perpetuating of the feminization of poverty, it is important to get gender sensitive women who will use a gender approach to correct the bases of the problem of exclusion. When democracy is gendered, the specific needs of women are excluded. Though female ministers may not necessarily represent women’s interest, their presence has the potential to impart sounds to voices that often go unheard and this will also enhance political and social equality. Political access to the state has profound impart on people’s opportunities, and resources.

Women’s lack of access to economic resources is another area where male dominance is pronounced. Women lack access to land, which is the primary economic resource for further production. Before the advent of Europeans land was not sold. They belong to the communities or the lineage as a whole although agricultural and living areas were assigned for the use of individuals. Western concepts of land and property ownership were introduced in the colonial statutory law. 33 This led to the sale of land to individuals. Women could not participate in this purchase because the colonial culture did not consider them as individuals. Again, they did not have the capital and even the affluence that was necessary for acquisition of properties in Africa of that time.
The production of cash crops like cocoa also proved to be another factor that increased the value of land from which in gender terms women were excluded or marginalized. The emphasis on cash crops over the production of food sidelined women in the economies of their countries. The colonial masters realized the potential of cocoa and mobilized a market for it. The labour and the technical knowledge for its production were shrouded in 'maleness'. This implies that women were marginalized in the wealth created by cocoa and other cash crops. Cocoa production hence gave men advantage in trade and provided them with capital.

One of the ways of having access to resources is through inheritance and land is not an exception. Although the rules and incidents of inheritance differ from country to country, in each case, inheritance does not result in any greater independence for women. In most African societies, inheritance passes on only to male children. This means that after the death of parents, female children have nothing to live on. Even if female can inherit from their parents, they tend to have life interests which they cannot pass on to their children. Marriage does not make things better. In most cases women do not inherit their husbands. In some situations legislation has been used in an attempt to improve the situation of women in relations to inheritance and yet problems persist.

In some parts of West and East Africa, women cannot own or buy land except they are guaranteed by their husbands irrespective of how much money they have to build up their own economic strength. Even in countries like Ghana,
where there are no laws banning women’s autonomy and especially in her acquisition of land, popular perceptions that regard a woman who seek properties as a witch and envious, discourage a lot of women to acquire properties on their own and in their names.

Another area where women’s lack of access to economic resources is seen is in the perception of women’s work. Women’s work, for a long time, has been defined in the performance of their roles as mothers, housekeepers and child rearers. These jobs are never quantified and rewarded. Even when women take part in agriculture activities, national statistics do not record their contributions. The turn of the 20th century brought about women’s expressions of interests in paid jobs but they are discriminated in the search for formal employment.

Women lack access to employment. As a result of the lack of higher education and the biological limitation of childbearing, males are favoured in the search for employment than females. There are some jobs that categorically state that there is no vacancy for women in their childbearing age. When women get jobs, it is most of the time; in positions that do not pay as much as those occupied buy men. Women are mostly secretaries, receptionists, whose jobs are to receive calls and prepare tea. Even until very recently, when women and men occupy the same position with the same qualifications, the man is paid more than the woman.

In recent times when the private sector is growing and has become the backbone
of most economies, women find it difficult to participate. This is because they normally do not get access to credit facilities, may be because they do not have the needed collateral or just because they are women and cannot compete with their competent counterparts, men. Women’s attempt to gain their economic independence may be viewed as enmity against society.

2.2.4 Other Distinctive Characteristics of African Feminism

There are other distinct characteristics of African feminism. African models have always emphasized the communal group as against the individual. Women conceive of their roles as determined by this membership in corporate groups in family or lineage groups. As a result, one of the areas that brings friction between Western feminists and African feminists, is the emphasis on public participation in African feminist issues as against individual autonomy in Western feminism. Africans tend to fuse nature and culture in their traditional conception of women’s roles. Although this has posed problems for many Western observers, it is implicit within the social and political models of society and the state that African women and men accept in their everyday life. This fusion of nature and culture is evident in how Africans describe the supernatural and its structures the role that African men and women play in household, social life, political arena and economic sphere. In this respect, African feminists can be said to be eco feminists.

Western women are often troubled that African women take their reproduction tasks seriously. They often celebrate their ability to give birth and refuse to
subordinate their biological roles to the other roles within society. The pro natal aspect of African culture is reflected in the number of children African women strive to bear. What it means to be an African woman radically differs from the increasingly anti nature-culture nature of western feminism.

The remarkable quality about African women is that while striving to carve their niche in the modern political economy of Africa, they have never sacrificed the valuable cultural heritage of their people. African women’s biological roles are not viewed as preventing them from taking on economic, political or social responsibilities, at least, not to the extent as Western and American women are affected by their biological roles. Apart from the honour and happiness derived from raising children, African women believe that they are also making investments on their marriages and children are not only for the future economic and social security, but also for the overall development of their communities and their nations.

2.1.5 Females Treating other Females Unequal

One issue that feminist discourse is silent on, but which needs attention is the limitation and violence against women by women. There is a lot of evidence that women harm and limit their fellow women. Women participate in the trafficking of women and girls. They force vulnerable girls and women into the sex trade in anticipation of their own financial gains. The maid-servant –Madam relationship in Ghana cannot be left out in this analysis. It is a social issue that has gained a lot of scholarly attention. Women go for other women’s children
from the villages and use them to work and in the process abuse these children both verbally and physically. Feminist theory could take women’s subordination by women into account and discuss ways and means to end it. This will then be a holistic approach to the search for equality for all women.

It is evident from the literature review and theoretical framework that much literature abound on the sex trade and feminism. However there is little or no literature that critically examines the sex trade from an African feminist perspective as this research does. This research adds to the existing literature on women’s issues and combines theory and practice for a holistic approach.

The above chapter has attempted to review literature on this essay and discussed African feminism as the theoretical framework for this essay. In the next chapter therefore, the dissertation tries to build a case by looking at the types, causes, structural relations of the sex trade and examine various legal provisions on the sex trade.
NOTES


2. Ibid.


6. Ibid.


9. Ibid. p. 128.


12. Ibid.


15. Ibid.


17. Ibid.

18. http://www.shu.ac.uk/schools/es/ceri/staff/mills


23. Ibid. p. 200.


26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.


30. Ibid.


36. Ibid.


38. Ibid.

42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Adomako A., “To Be or Not To Be a Prostitute: the Example of Ghanaian Prostitute in the Netherlands”, p. 11.
CHAPTER 3

NATURE AND FORMS OF PROSTITUTION AS PRACTICED BY GHANAIAN WOMEN AND LEGAL PROVISIONS RELATED TO PROSTITUTION

3.0 Introduction

This chapter examines key elements of the sex trade as practiced by Ghanaian women in Ghana and Britain; namely: types of sex work, traffic in women, structural relations in the sex trade, causes of prostitution and the legal provision on prostitution. These are the main dynamics that define the nature of the sex trade as practiced by Ghanaian women. The examination of the above elements should promote a better understanding of the social, economic, cultural and political environment within which sex workers function.

3.1 Types of sex work

Sex work, as practiced by Ghanaian women, varies in nature and form. Some of the women who prostitute can be described as ‘Seaters’, “Roamers”, “Streetwalkers”, “Call Girls” and “Seasonal Prostitutes”.¹

3.1.1 “Seaters”

“Seaters” are those who prostitute in brothels and therefore do not roam for customers. They are also sometimes referred to as “Tutu”. They rent rooms and pay for them. Some hotels in Ghana rent out rooms to prostitutes almost on a permanent basis.² The prostitutes come out in the night to look for customers.
Most of them have children. They claim their husbands or the fathers of their children do not cater for them. During the interviews, the researcher learned that some of the prostitutes were married to husbands who had travelled for years without any form of communication. Half of the 15 prostitutes interviewed by the researcher in a brothel in Ashiaman were above the age of twenty-five. Three of the women were fifty years and above. Most of them were not educated above primary level. Their educational background highlights the neglect of women in the educational system. Such workers earn about three hundred thousand cedis ($35) a night which is above the daily wages of high government officials in Ghana. This implies that prostitution provides for these workers what they could not have made through legitimate means.

3.1.2 Roamers

Another type of Ghanaian prostitutes are ‘Roamers’ who roam from one nightclub to another in search of clients. The harbour vicinity of Tema has a high concentration of such sex workers. They can generally be described as sophisticated and rich. Roamers wear expensive clothes and service foreign clients, of whom most are seamen. They tend to eat their breakfast, lunch and supper from very expensive restaurants. Prostitutes in this group earn $200 - $250 per service. Quite a proportion of those interviewed, however, are on drugs. This information was obtained from answers to interview questions. When some of them were asked why their friends behave violently, they admitted that some of their colleagues were on drugs because the business is a very difficult one and only few could do without the help of narcotic drugs. The persistent efforts made
by women in this group to service Whites are based on their experience and perception that the Whites pay more than Blacks. This is an under tone of the unequal economic relations between developing countries and developed countries. The average income of most men in Ghana is such that they cannot afford what the prostitutes get from the seamen. These seamen from industrial countries are rich or have enough to solicit for expensive sexual service. Women and girls in this group of roamers are between the ages of fifteen and thirty. Most of them are semi-illiterate. However they speak enough English for their business transactions.

3.1.3 “Streetwalkers”

Another group of Ghanaian sex workers is ‘Streetwalkers’. ‘Streetwalkers’ solicit clients out of doors. They typically do a stroll, by walking down a particular street with other women, in a metropolitan neighbourhood well known by members of the society for its availability of prostitutes. Such sex workers charge very low fees for services. This is because men who patronize these prostitutes are of lower class in society. They do not have much money to solicit for expensive services. At times, these sex workers transact business just at the place they meet their clients (by walls and in secluded places near the streets), because they and their customers lack money to rent hotel accommodation. The researcher found out among the prostitutes who work around Circle in Accra that when they do not get customers in a particular night, they charge as low as 5000 (half a dollar) cedis and accept any condition for services, for example, sex without condom use. This exposes them to health risks as most of them can be
infected with HIV/AIDS and other sexual transmitted infection (STIs). One infected prostitute can spread the disease to many people in the society. Apart from health risks, they are also prone to rape, beatings and police interventions (normally in the forms of raids and arrest), which at times lead to injuries and loss of their monies. Girls as young as thirteen are found in this type of sex work. Some of them are from the northern part of Ghana who are displaced by the conflict and poverty in that region. They are trafficked by neighbours and relatives to come to the south, especially Accra. In an interview with three of them at Adabraka near Accra, they disclosed that they do potter work (Kaya yee) during the day and engage in prostitution at night.

It is important to note that girls in this category of sex work are generally young. There are as young as thirteen and fourteen year old girls in streetwalking. Most of them work for older women and some also work for men who they claim are their lovers. These pimps and madams give the prostitutes nice clothes, wigs and do “makeups” for them. They then send them to the streets and monitor them from a distance. Streetwalk is not very common among Ghanaian prostitutes in Britain, though the researcher found some in Nottingham in London. Some also can be found in Doncaster and Milton Keynes. They operate in fear because Streetwalking is illegal and the police normally make arrests.

3.1.4 “Call Girls”

“Call girls” is a description of another group of Ghanaian sex workers. Call girls can be described as the aristocrats of sex workers. They are normally women
from middle class homes. Some of them have good educational backgrounds. They normally leave their pictures and telephone numbers at hotels and they are contacted when needed. “Call girls” charge very high fees and operate from their homes and expensive hotels. This type of prostitution is quite lucrative and practitioners can make as much as $1000 a week and this can be attributed to their better educational status compared to the others. Call girls may travel outside the country for businesses upon invitation and at times serve as escorts for international conferences. Ghanaian university students involved in the sex trade are mostly found in this category. Many Ghanaian prostitutes who practice in Britain also fall in this category. This is so because it is not easy to “hawk” on the streets of Britain, especially in London. For instance the police always clear the London streets of prostitutes. This makes escort services one of the more attractive options.

3.1.5 Seasonal Prostitutes

Another kind of prostitution one can find in Europe, particularly in Britain is “Seasonal prostitution”. This is normally the kind of prostitution practiced by students who go for holidays abroad. During holidays, especially long vacations, a lot of tertiary students travel to Britain and other developed countries to work and save some money for school fees and general needs. Many Ghanaian girls who go to Britain find it difficult to get jobs. Unlike in developing countries where documents are not prerequisite for foreigners to work or live peacefully, British working visas are required for work in Britain, but they are difficult to obtain. Most students therefore acquire visiting visa, which is easy to get, but do
not give permission to work. This implies that these girls might not be able to find work unless they get people to help them circumvent emigrational requirements. They therefore indulge in sexual services to obtain the amount they need and return home when school reopens. Some of the girls in this category may also take on a few jobs as factory hands or shop assistants. The exodus of students to rich countries in search of work and money highlight the nature of the global economy.\textsuperscript{10} There are few jobs in Ghana, even for graduates who are out of school. Meanwhile students are paying school fees and purchasing other materials needed for school. On the other hand there is a popular perception that if they try and reach Britain or another developed country, jobs await them and they can make in three months what the average Ghanaian employer makes in two years. The migratory aspects which fuel the sex trade can also not be overemphasized. The global economy allows free movement of goods and services, but is more restrictive with the movement of labour.\textsuperscript{11} Labour from developing countries suffers a lot before they can gain visas to rich countries to work.

3.1.6 The Risks in the Sex Trade

Whatever name or description given to sex work, there are health, social, political, economic and international issues associated with their operations. For instance, sex workers are prone to sexually transmitted diseases. This is because a majority of them do not have the right to negotiate sex.\textsuperscript{12} This reveals the unequal power relations in decision-making between the prostitutes and their clients. Prostitutes are obliged to render any service demanded once payment has
been made. This is a carry over of the cultural practices and stereotypes that promote the woman as a passive participant in sexual intercourse and the perception of the body of the woman as existing for men’s pleasure. Interviews with prostitutes in Tema revealed that though they carry condoms, their usage depends on the demands of the customer. According to the sentinel surveillance report by the Ghana AIDS Commission in 1999, 75.8 and 82 percent of sex workers in Accra and Kumasi respectively were HIV positive. This shows the magnitude of the danger of the sex work among sex workers.

A rise in the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS implies redirection of funds from developmental activities to the treatment of HIV/AIDS positive people. It is therefore not surprising that the greater part of international finance in the form of Aid is directed to HIV/AIDS. The increase in HIV/AIDS prevalence is an undertone of the unequal economic and political relations between the North and the South. HIV/AIDS was first reported in the United States of America, but the US does not have the proportion of HIV patients sub Saharan is having, because of good nutrition and money to treat opportunistic infections. Meanwhile, most prostitutes in Ghana and other developing countries lack finance to have regular hospital checkups and thereby prolong their lives.

Apart from some of the ‘Roamers’ in Tema and some ‘Call girls’, the other types of sex workers do not make much money. Interviews with ‘Streetwalkers’ in Circle, Accra, indicate that, they, at times, charge as low as 5000 cedis. In addition, their pimps keep much of the money.
Given the aforementioned risks, it is important to examine the causes that fuel the sex trade in West Africa particularly Ghana from an African feminist perspective. This will help deepen our understanding of this growing international business.

3.2 Causes of Prostitution

Psychologists and criminologists argue that women who enter the sex business or are unable to leave it grew up in a dysfunctional family in which they might have been victims of mental and physical abuse. But feminists, and for that matter, African feminists would debunk this mental illness and criminal deviant explanation and would argue that women in the sex trade should be viewed as lacking political and economic power. There are many causes of prostitution, but this study examines four of them which are: poverty, cultural practices linked to the family, traditions and religious practices and political conflict.

3.2.1 Poverty

Poverty is felt or seen when one experiences hunger, malnutrition, ill health etc. The Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) puts the poor in Ghana into two groups: the very poor and the poor. The poverty line is the minimum amount that one needs to obtain the basic needs of life i.e. food, water, clothing and shelter. The Ghana Living Standards Survey in 1999 calculated that one needs at least seven hundred thousand cedis ($70) for the year to be able to buy enough
food to survive.\textsuperscript{17} People who make just €700,000 are termed very poor and those who make Nine hundred thousand cedis (€900,000) are termed poor. The majority of Ghanaians live below the poverty line. The GPRS asserts that majority of poor people in Ghana are women.\textsuperscript{18} Women form about 52 percent of the total population but form about 70 percent of the poor.

African feminists might attribute the increase in the sex trade to many factors of which poverty is one. Desperate circumstances breed desperate measures. Poor women enter into prostitution because it is the best paying job or the only job they could find. Interviews conducted among prostitutes in a hotel in Ghana reveal that most of them are in the sex trade for money. Two of the prostitutes said that they were once married, but their husbands did not help in the upkeep of the children. Lacking vocational training, formal education and capital, they virtually had no option except to work as prostitutes to see their children through school and to clothe them.

Although a depressing acknowledgement of the disintegration of familial authorities and a disturbing comment on the nature of society, the realities is that many victims are sold into prostitution by their families.\textsuperscript{19} Poverty of families compels parents to sell their girl children to brothels and traffickers. In many poor countries of the world, the sale of a woman provides food and clothing to individuals and families who might otherwise not have a meal or a shirt. This is a socio-economic inequality that encourages the involuntary supply
of this market. Most often the guilty party is a father or uncle who decides that his daughter or niece could provide much needed cash. The girl may be sold to a criminal group or pimp and never thought about again. Conversely, she may continue to live with family while she is pressed into sexual services. This seems to happen more often with younger girls who are frequently sold for sex only as long as they are still young to become pregnant.

Closely related to poverty is the popular perception of materialism in capitalist oriented economies. Individuals are judged and respected by what they possess in terms of cars, houses and money. Interviews conducted among prostitutes in a brothel in Ashiaman, a suburb of Tema in Ghana, indicated that most of these girls entered and cannot leave prostitution because of the amount of money involved, which is better than what they get from trading, sowing or hairdressing. Most of them are school dropouts and are looking for quicker ways of acquiring what some of their excelled schoolmates have acquired through formal processes. Families put their children into prostitution to be able to acquire properties as ways of putting themselves among the recognized people in their societies. The nature and the changes the African family has undergone need critical examination in order to understand their involvement in the sex trade.

3.2.2 Family System
Another cause of the increase in prostitution is the break down of the family system.  

Most families in Ghana are going through a hectic time of keeping
intact. The divorce rate is high which means a lot of children now live in broken homes. In some cases, both parents migrate to the urban areas in search of jobs and leave their children with relatives who might not instruct the children well.\textsuperscript{21} In many cases, children, out of frustration and need, migrate from the rural area to the city in search of jobs. Many of these children live on their own on the streets of these cities. This implies that most of these children are not properly socialized. Their subsequent behaviour validates Adler et al. assertion that the neglect of the family of its traditional function; regulation of the sexual activity and the provision of material, physical and emotional stability is a tragedy for the world.\textsuperscript{22}

The family is the first and most important social unit to affect children.\textsuperscript{23} Through the socialization process in families, the personalities, values, and beliefs of children are initially formed. One of the most critical aspects of the responsibility of family is the inculcation of moral values or virtues in children. Moral education or the training of the individual to be inclined towards the good, involves a number of things including rules -the ‘dos and don’ts’ and the development of good habits. They are given sexual instructions and moral instructions about rightful ownership and good citizenship. The family teaches societal norms about what is acceptable and what is unacceptable.

The breakdown of the family system means in many cases, that all the functions performed by the family in the socialization of the child are virtually absent. Adler et al. establish that a youth with a significant attachment to a parent
refrains from delinquency because he fears that delinquency might jeopardize that relationship. The bond of affection between a parent and a child, thus, become a primary deterrent to criminal activities. Unfortunately, most African children as a result of various factors ranging from famine to wars do not get the benefit of parental guidance during their formative years. This is a major contributing factor to the increase in the sex trade in Ghana.

Historically, African societies went through transitions without proper preparation to meet the challenges. The family as a large, loving and extended group that provides a network of support for its members is becoming extinct. In addition, social decline is compounded by an economy that does not have the capacity to promote individualism, as practiced in other societies. Many young women and girls therefore are left without support and enter the sex trade as the last resort through which they can earn money for themselves and their families.

3.2.3 Cultural and Traditional Practices

There are peculiar cultural practices, which contribute to the increase in the sex trade in West Africa and for that matter Ghana. The Akan notion of marriage is one of such cultural practices. It is a marriage system imbedded in matrilineal inheritance and therefore accords greater importance to matri-kin than to male spouses and this has resulted in a situation where marriages are fairly unstable. Husbands do not cater for their children because the latter belong to his wife’s family. This makes women responsible for the upkeep of the children. Lacking employment skills, many women resort to prostitution to maintain the family.
One might then assume that women’s lot will be better in patrilineal societies, but that is not the case. In patrilineal African societies, the system of inheritance does not favour women. After the death of fathers, properties are given to male children and the females are often left with little or nothing. This practice perpetuates the economic dependence of women in West Africa and for that matter, Ghana.

Another cultural practice in Ghana, which perpetuates female sexual slavery, is the Trokosi system among the Ewes in Ghana. In this practice, young girls, usually under the age of ten, are given to local fetish shrines to atone for offences allegedly committed by their families. In this traditional practice, girls become the property of fetish priests and provide sexual services as well as other labour for them. Though a lot of efforts have been made by the government and international human rights bodies, it is estimated that about four thousand five hundred girls are still bound to various shrines after successive government campaigns and criminalization of the act in 1998). Most of these cultural practices are enshrined in traditions and religion and are used to suppress women.

The Krobos in Ghana have an interesting sexual culture, which has become a subject of study by sociologists since the report of HIV in Ghana. Among the Krobos, a girl is ripe for sex and marriage after her Dipo rites (rites of passage). After this rite, the woman is ready for child birth. In the olden days, the rites were performed for girls who have seen their menstrual period. But in recent
times, it is performed for girls as young as nine years. This new development is as a result of fear on the part of parents that their daughters may start sex early and therefore may not go through the ceremony successfully if left to grow up.\textsuperscript{29} Since parents fear the consequences of not going through dipo before pregnancy and sex, they take their wards through the ceremony at tender age. This implies that children around the age of nine, culturally, have access to sexual relations. This practice has negatively affected the Krobo land. Marriage to a lady who does not have children in Kroboland is very expensive. Because of this, young men will prefer marriage to women who have children with other men.\textsuperscript{30} This coupled with the existence of try marriage in the Krobo land influences young women to have indiscriminate sex. Again, the child born out of wedlock becomes a pride of the mother since the man is not allowed to own him. She takes the child; names her after whom she wants and presents the child to her would be husband as his child. This cultural practice over a long period of time has encouraged promiscuity in the Kroboland.\textsuperscript{31}

It is also estimated that more than half of women in Kroboland visit Cote d’Ivoire to practice prostitution for financial and other cultural gains as discussed earlier. Among the Krobos, a young woman who has not traveled to Cote d’Ivoire to practice prostitution is not respected, and this has led to high prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS infection. It is recorded that twenty people are buried each week as a result of death from AIDS. If cultural practices encourage women to prostitute themselves before men accepts them, then society has a lot of problem.
3.2.4 Political Conflict

In addition to the above cultural factors, political conflict contributes to the increase in prostitution in Sub-Saharan Africa. By 1999, about 34 out of the 54 countries in Africa had experienced conflict.\(^\text{32}\) During conflict, a lot of people are displaced, often leaving their jobs, homes, properties and migrating to other countries. Many of these victims acquire refugee status and become vulnerable to sexual exploitation, as they struggle to feed themselves and their economic inactive dependants in these new countries. For example, in the 1989 Liberian conflict, about 1,700,000 people were displaced and 2,000,000 were also displaced in the Rwandan Conflict of 1990. The most vulnerable and helpless are women and children who constitute about 60 percent of the displaced population during conflicts. Political conflict also displaces women internally. For example, a lot of women and girls migrated from the north of Ghana to the south during the Nanumba-Dagomba conflict. Most of these girls had no relatives in the cities they migrated to, and had to fend for themselves. As a result, they sell themselves in order to make a living. Rehn and Johnson assert that trafficking is inextricably linked to conflict.\(^\text{33}\) Women are trafficked to be abused in forced labour which often includes prostitution. They are pushed into marriages with members of the opposing groups. The breakdown of law and order, police functions and border controls during war makes it easy for traffickers to cross borders without inspection.
3.3 The Sex Trade and its Structural Relations

The traffic in women is rooted in unequal power relations between the rich and the poor and between men and women; a situation, which the current global economy is not designed to reverse.\(^ {34}\) The abuse of human rights is embedded in the global system which has as a consequence, a growing inequality between the rich and the poor. The denial of economic rights, particularly in developmental model that is intensively dependent on money is a potential and actual abuse of human rights. Human rights that do not include the right to livelihood and hence, the rights to survival are inadequate formulations.

Most women leave their countries in search of better living standards in developed nations. They fall prey to traffickers who promise them jobs because they want to escape the economic hardships that exist in their countries. Not only do women travel in search of jobs that do not exist in their home countries, men from these rich countries travel to poor countries on business or vacation with the idea of existence of women and children for sexual pleasure. As the rights of the poor are curtailed, the rights of the rich are extended.\(^ {35}\) Discriminately attitudes and patriarchal perspectives extend to the beliefs that one of the main purposes of the female is to please the male, especially sexually. Sexism and gender roles are taught from childhood and in some cases are intensified by religious beliefs.

This section will discuss the structural relations in the sex trade by examining the relationship between the prostitutes and their pimps, the demand of the sex trade
and homosexuality.

3.3.1 Pimps as Managers of the Sex Trade

There is nowhere that the male economic dominance is more evident than in the sex trade. Workers are predominantly female, but managers and entrepreneurs are predominantly male. Naomi argues that men own and manage brothels. Female prostitutes are unable to function unless they work for men because men dominate the management of prostitution. There are a few women called madams, who also manage brothels. But it is interesting to find out that, most of them are controlled by pimps, who they keep for emotional support and security. This implies that the male dominance in the management of prostitution is total. Streetwalkers are expected to turn over all their monies to pimps who in exchange buy them food, clothing and bail them when arrested. A study of Ghanaian prostitutes in the Netherlands shows that most of them give a substantial amount (about 80 percent) of their earnings to pimps in exchange for emotional support and protection.

Sometimes the pimps are husbands or lovers of the prostitutes and at times they may strictly have business relations. Ghanaian men (pimps) would not want to marry their prostitutes. They would prefer a more ‘virtuous’ woman to marry. Most pimps come from lower economic status communities. To stay in business, pimps normally exploit the romantic feelings and the economic needs of the prostitutes. They use ‘divide and rule’ tactics to sow seeds of jealousy among them, so they will not ‘compare notes’ to their dissatisfaction and gain
independence or even work together for improved conditions. The worth of the pimps is measured by how many prostitutes they control and how much money they generate. The prostitutes get just a little fraction of their money and the pimps take the rest.

The pimps live luxuriously and establish businesses in their home countries and towns. Some of the pimps are violent and beat their prostitutes. Akosua Adomako cites the case of a Ghanaian prostitute and her pimp at the red-light district of Amsterdam. Akosua heard a heated argument between a man and a woman in Twi (a Ghanaian language). The man threatened the woman that if she did not go in the window house and work he would give her the beatings of her life time, while the young woman pleaded and begged that she did not want to go in there. The girl at long last had to go and prostitute for this man. The pimps sometimes organize gang beatings and rape of the women when they disobey them.

3.3.2 Demand in the sex trade

Another area where the structural relation in the sex trade is pronounced but writers and the state are silent is the demand aspect. The sex trade is demand driven. As long as there are men who prefer to buy sex rather than engage in reciprocal intimacy, people who seek to satisfy their perverted tendencies, and individuals ready to operate as intermediaries there will be numerous unwilling victims. Schur asserts that the primary cause of women becoming prostitutes is that there has existed a demand by men for sexual services which men pay.
Unfortunately, much of the supply must be involuntary because the demand for women and children for the use of sexual purpose is so great. However, almost all documentation of the sex trade, both as a social or legal problem is silent on the role of men (demand for women). Prostitution is regarded as women activity. Efam Awo Dovi in her article “Men Prostitutes” states that without active male patronage, there will be no jobs for prostitutes and they will leave the streets and brothels.\(^42\) In view of the major demand role played by men they should also be made to face the arrests that prostitutes go through. It is only when the two participants of the trade are checked that solutions will be arrived at.

Seabrook examines the psychological and social background of men who travel to look for sexual pleasure as sex tourists in developing countries. His work has relevance for the study of the sex trade because it gives an insight into an aspect that has been neglected for long. He found out that most of the customers of prostitutes are from the West and are in search for a kind of pleasure that could not be found home. Men who have money travel to find exotic and tamed women who, as a result of financial need, give any sexual service required, unlike the assertive women of the western culture. He unveils the peculiar poignancy of the sex trade. The sex trade is a relationship between the rich tourists from rich countries and the poor sex workers in poor countries. It is one of the rare occasions when privilege confronts poverty face to face. The rich perpetually depends on the poor for their comfort and joy. But the picture portrayed is the continual production of AID and assistance to the poor, which has obscured the real international trade.\(^43\) The international sex trade is significant and symbolic.
It is one of the few arenas where people from the North and the South come face to face. Any business will collapse without customers. The sex trade in particular is driven by demands of its customers.

It is also important to register complaint of most prostitutes of the violent behaviour exhibited by many customers. The customers insist on "some out of normal" sexual services like anal and oral sex. Some customers even insist on using harmful items and sometimes their pets with the prostitutes. In this situation, most of the prostitutes are helpless since they can not call for help because of the criminalization of their activities. The prostitutes know that even if the police come to their rescue, they will face arrest and subsequent trial while their customers are left without any questioning. If people around the area come to her aid, they will hoot at her because of the stigma associated with the trade. Again, in the face of HIV and AIDS, most customers reject the use of condom when prostitutes propose it. They insist on getting their money’s worth by having "raw" services. This is a big problem when it is considered against the health of the prostitutes and the health toll on the nation as a whole. There is the need for the sex trade to be examined in the light of demand and supply in order to arrive at helpful conclusion.

3.3.3 The Sale of Sex by Men (Homosexual Prostitutes)

Men contribute to the international sex trade by participating as sellers of sex. Though homosexuality is an old phenomenon, it has gained a new dimension. Men now go to the sex market in search of men or boys to have sexual services.\(^{44}\)
Seabrook gives accounts of sex tourists who solicit the services of their fellow men. In Ghana, the phenomenon is gaining strength as the involvement of homosexuals in sex work increases. In the year 2003, the Madina court in Accra sentenced two boys for possessing homosexual pornographic materials and indulging in the act itself. Some male students of the University of Ghana were also said to be indulging in homosexual practice with Lebanese clients in the area around the Great Hall (the registry) popularly known as Accra by Night. Recently the business is said to have reduced because the place is out of bounds to students at night now. However the increase in homosexuality in the Christian Village, a suburb near the University of Ghana is mind intriguing. Men and boys are said to be around that place selling sex. In fact, there is a homosexual fellowship in this village.

Many social workers give their reasons; some attribute it to poverty in the area, but to many, the presence of the golf course is the main contributing factor. Boys and some men go there in order to pick balls and carry bags for these golf players. They end up having sex for money as some are lured to hotel rooms by these foreigners who play golf. This practice has various social and legal implications. First, this is not normally included in the research, documentations and writings of many scholars or journalists and this implies that there might not be intervention programmes to correct or deal with. Secondly, the boy child of Ghana is at risk because the definition of prostitution in the Ghanaian criminal code excludes males.\textsuperscript{45} This implies that there is no legal provision that can protect these children from those who sexually abuse them. There have been
many writings of the potential of homosexual practices in the spread of Aids. In some countries, it is the major mode of the spread of the disease. Neglecting its knowledge and focusing on only the prostitute as the medium of the spread leaves a lot of work undone.

The solution to the sex trade and sexual abuse lies in dealing with both parties in the trade, as buyers and sellers of commodities. Until then, any attempt to reduce its occurrence or impact is as good as not attempting at all. One will wonder whether there are no laws that govern the sale of sex, trafficking of women and the abuse of the human rights of young women. The next section looks at laws relating to prostitution and the trafficking of women, taking into consideration the total human rights of women. The section tries to probe into the gaps that exist so far as the implementation of the legal instruments are concerned.

3.4 Legal Provisions on the Sex Trade and Trafficking

The sex trade is a criminal offence under the law of many nations, whilst other nations permit it with some restrictions on the movement and the activities of prostitutes. For instance in Canada, the sex trade is subject to legal control and punitive action. These actions are based on the assumption that prostitution is a threat to public order or is offensive to public decency. In the Netherlands, when an adult decides of her own free will to engage in prostitution the government considers it as part of the universal right to self determination. On the other hand, however, the law forbids organized prostitution involving middlemen by law since 1911. The Dutch government is concerned with its management more
than its abolition.

3.4.1 Ghana Criminal Code (1960)

In Ghana, measures to control crime have been documented in the criminal code, 1960 (Act 29). The list of crimes under this act includes prostitution. Section 279 of the Ghanaian criminal code (Act 29) defines prostitution as the “offering by a female of her body commonly for acts of lewdness although there is no act or offer of an act of ordinary sexual connection.” This definition sets the bias of the law against women. It suggests that only women offer their bodies for money and they do it out of lewdness. Lewdness here means profanity or filthiness. African feminism would suggest that instead of branding women as promiscuous, sex lovers and a nuisance to society, the government should rather examine the factors that push them into prostitution. One might find patriarchy, culture, and economic history to be the basic problems and not women per se.

Section 272 and part of 279 seem to be prescriptions against settled prostitutes like the “Tutu” while section 276 states that any prostitute wandering in public streets like streetwalkers and behaving in a riotous and indecent manner shall be liable to a fine. Under the Ghanaian criminal code, any one who allows prostitution under his/her roof is also guilty of the offence. Any one who forces a child into prostitution is also guilty. But most often, all these people are not punished. In practice, the law enforcing agencies like the police have been arresting the prostitutes but not the customers, the brothel the owners and family members who sell their children into the trade. An African feminist
interpretation would focus on this as a bias of the law against women, which must be examined. A secondary interpretation of the provision in section 274 (1) makes soliciting the services of a prostitute illegal. This provision is similar to the legal provision under the United Nation’s Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others.

3.4.2 International Conventions

Article 2 of the convention states that the parties to the present convention further agree to punish any person who:

1. ‘Keeps or manages, or knowingly finances or takes part in the financing of a brothel; and
2. Knowingly lets or rents a building or other place or any part there of for the purpose of the prostitution of others.’

The legal provisions cover both the prostitutes and anyone who connives and abets in any form in this crime, but most often prostitutes have been arrested without the search for those who exploit them. In law traffic of women is a criminal offence.

The UN convention stipulates that “each effort or deed taken the woman away from her living or residential environment to use her elsewhere for prostitution even with her consent is an offence.” However, in many countries the offence is not seriously prosecuted. The fact that the women already worked as a prostitute or consented in some way is often cited as a reason not to prosecute the traffickers. Victims of trafficking in women usually have no legal protection. In
the countries of their origin, there are only few possibilities of protection against criminal agencies and procurers. Because of the illegal way they usually reach their host countries, victims may also be deported as illegal immigrants.

The Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others stipulates that prostitution and the accompanying evil of the traffic in persons for the purpose of prostitution are incompatible with the dignity and the worth of the Human Person and endanger the welfare of the individual, the family and the community.

The declaration which was approved by the General Assembly, resolution on the 31\textsuperscript{st} of July, 1947 and came into force on the 25\textsuperscript{th} of December, 1951, lays down measures to restrict this activity in society. Article 1(1) states that the parties to the convention agree to punish, whom, to gratify the passion of another: procures, entices or lead away, for the purpose of prostitution, another person even with the consent of that person:

3. Exploit the prostitution of another person, even with the consent of that person.

Political leaders or signatories to the convention do not really see to the implementation of the declarations and convention on women and their human rights. Many women who are victims of forced prostitution and trafficking are hunted down by the law enforcing agencies, whilst those who exploit them are left to go unpunished. Both Articles 1 and 2 state that even if the exploitation is with the consent of the prostitute, the exploiter should be punished.
The laws of most nations are rigid on women; their behavior and activities, but very liberal on men. In fact, the trafficking of women fetches billions of dollars for trafficking mafia which is mostly controlled by men.\textsuperscript{49} Article 17 states that the parties to the present convention undertake, in connection with immigration and emigration to adopt or maintain such measures as are required, in terms of their obligation under the present convention to check the trafficking in persons of either sex for the purpose of prostitution.

In particular they undertake:

1. To make such regulations as are necessary for the protection of immigrants or emigrants, and in particular, women and children, both at the place of arrival and departure and while en route;

2. To arrange for appropriate publicity warning the public of the dangers of the aforesaid traffic;

3. To take appropriate measures in order that the appropriate authorities be informed of the arrival of persons who appear, prima facie to be the principals and accomplices in or victims of such trafficking.

Article 18 states that the parties to the present convention undertake, in accordance with the conditions laid down by domestic law, to have declarations taken from aliens who are prostitutes in order to establish their identities and civil status and to discover who has caused them to leave their State. The information obtained shall be communicated to the authorities of the state of origin of the said person with the view to their eventual repatriation.
The trafficking and exploitation of the prostitution of women is against their human rights. In a statement to the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing on September, 1995, the UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros Ghali, said that violence against women is a universal problem that must be universally condemned. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women addresses the issue of violence against women. It affirms that violence violate, impairs or nullifies women’s human rights and their exercise of fundamental freedoms. The Declaration provides a definition of gender abuse calling it “any act of gender based violence that results in or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or sufferings for women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life”.

Article 2 of the Declaration identifies three broad areas in which violence commonly takes place:

1. Family;

2. Physical, sexual and psychological that occurs within the general community including rape; sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at war, in educational institutions and elsewhere: trafficking in women and forced prostitution; and

3. Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetuated or condoned by the State.

From the second part of article two of the declaration, the trafficking in women
and forced prostitution is abuse. Again the third part brings to mind the role of
the state in the trafficking of women. The neglect of help to women and the lack
of enforcement of the declarations in the convention on trafficking make
trafficking and forced prostitution a neglect of the role of the state in protecting
its citizens. The entire illegal immigration thrives on corruption. It is part of
smuggling of women across borders. When smuggling aliens pass through
countries one cannot deny bribery on the part of government agencies.
Government agencies receive huge sums of money and allow women to be taken
across borders for sale

3.4.3 Regional Institutions’ Instruments to Check Trafficking

Regional institutions also have various instruments on the trafficking of women
for the sex trade. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
has action campaigns and legal instruments for the protection of females.
Though these are normally adoptions of international declarations, they address
the peculiar border, cultural and religious practices which fuel the sale of the girl
child into prostitution.

On October 24, delegates from ECOWAS and United Nations (UN) officials met
in Ghana and concluded an international meeting on combating human
trafficking in West Africa with a draft resolution to fight the scourge through
tight laws and policies. The draft resolution which was made public at the end of
the meeting, called on member states to fight against human trafficking during
the period of 2002-2003 as a matter of urgency. The document also urged the UN
to strengthen its laws against human trafficking, especially women and children. The resolution which was submitted to ECOWAS Heads of States in December for adoption pledged to commit countries to adopt laws criminalizing trafficking in human beings and to build the necessary administrative structures for its execution.

ECOWAS countries would also develop public awareness campaigns aimed at potential victims of trafficking, using both traditional channels of information as well as the mass media. Member States need to set up special police units to combat human trafficking along with better training for police, customs and immigration officials, prosecutors and judges.

One striking issue about these draft resolutions is that, they scarcely get approval to be binding legal instruments and even if they become, they are not implemented. Leaders of the States either lack the necessary structures to implement them or they just do not bother to work on them. Very often women and children are trafficked into the sex trade. They do not get help at the borders since the traffickers are able to cross borders with little amount as bribes for government officials.

African feminist activists would point to the gender inequalities in the legal provisions. For example, prostitutes are arrested but their clients are not. The administrator of International Federation of Women Lawyers, in Ghana, Gloria Ofori-Attah, who is an African and a feminist activist, said that the law is biased
against women. Mrs. Ofori Attah made it clear in an interview that there is the need to review this law so that those who patronize the services offered by prostitutes could also be prosecuted.

Chapter three has established the dynamics of the sex trade among African women especially the Ghanaian women. It has examined the causes, types, structural relations and the legal implications of the sex trade. These issues are unavoidable if one would have to understand the sex trade as practiced by Ghanaian women. The next chapter will analyse the data collected during interviews with prostitutes and African feminist scholars and advocates; bearing in mind the above discussed dynamics and how they play out in the sex trade.
NOTES

2. Ibid.
5. Olson Elizabeth, op. cit.
8. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
23, p. 34.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. See generally, G. K., Nukunya, op. cit.
28. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. McCormick B N., op. cit. p. 94.
37. Adomako A., op. cit. 10.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Seabrook D., op. cit.
43. Seabrook D., op. cit. p 14.
44. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
49. Williams, P., op. cit. p. 140.
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE SEX TRADE FROM AN AFRICAN FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

4.0 Introduction

The analysis of the sex trade revolves around the social, cultural, economic and political consequences of the sex trade on the part of sex workers and the nation as a whole. This analysis will also consider the cost and benefits of the sex trade in these three areas. The implications of the sex trade from the African feminist perspective has been analysed on the bases of three processes that determines the situation of the African woman namely, colonialism, independent and the capitalist transitions of these societies with its associate economic reforms. Women have been marginalized and sidelined throughout history especially from the colonial era. The analysis will explain how each issue evolved in the phases of the processes and how it is linked to the involvement of Ghanaian women in the sex trade. It is however important that the effects of one process on any of the issues raised may be overlapping.

4.1 Social Implications

Health

The social issues that this essay discusses are health, the family system and education. Despite improvement in health care in post independent and contemporary African states, a large number of Africa’s population and for that
matter Ghana’s population, have inadequate access to health care. Since the colonial era, women’s issues have been neglected and health is not an exception. Women lack money and access good medical care. Women’s lower social status in Ghana is reflected in various indicators of health and this is evident in the health problems associated with the sex trade; HIV/AIDS and other STIs. It is common knowledge that prostitutes contribute greatly to the spread of AIDS. The spread of the disease lies in the degree of interconnectedness among members of the population who engage in risky behaviour, thus allowing the virus to spread quickly in those segments. The virus is spread through contact with blood, semen, virginal discharge and breast milk. Thus, a person may be infected by having unprotected sex.

In 1994, a study of HIV/AIDS seroprevalence in Accra reveals that about 75.8 and 82 percent of prostitutes in Accra and Kumasi respectively are HIV positive. Since HIV/AIDS was first reported in Ghana in 1984, a cumulative total of 67,000 cases have been recorded by the year 2000, with nearly 63 percent being females. HIV/AIDS was brought to Ghana by women who went to Cote d’Ivoire to do prostitution.

Western feminists think that it is wrong to link sex workers to the spread of AIDS. The basis of this argument is that, most sex workers use condom most of the time and that the question of who infected the prostitutes should also be asked. Information collected from the United States’ Disease control suggests that only a small proportion of AIDS patients were infected with the virus.
through sexual contacts with prostitutes. Just because women exchange sex for money does not in itself transform them into a health risk. It is further argued that, most sex workers insist on the use of condoms to signify distance from clients. It is when sex signifies intimacy and love that women who sleep with their boyfriends without condoms, are at risk. But African feminists would think differently on this assertion, taking into consideration the main mode of transmission of AIDS in Africa.

In Africa, AIDS is mainly transmitted through heterosexual means. Secondly, research conducted by the National AIDS Control Board, among the sampling population of prostitutes revealed that though they claim they use condoms, they in actual fact do service some customers without them. Economically, a prostitute is dependent on her client for material survival. Consequently, she submits to his sexual demands without always considering her risk of infection. Furthermore, for those who practice in Europe, the demand for black prostitutes has decreased since the spread of AIDS was linked to Africa. This implies that Black prostitutes in Europe do not get many customers, so they give in to demands of clients even at the peril of their lives. Most of the prostitutes keep lovers, so even if they usually use condoms with their clients, they will not insist on its use with their lovers. Some of these prostitutes are married women living in their matrimonial homes. About 70 women interviewed both in Ghana and in Britain claimed they keep serious relationships. In an interview with prostitutes in a brothel in Ashiaman, it was revealed that, though they know about the condom and its protection, its use depends on the wish of the customer. At times,
they meet violent customers who insist on service without condoms. The illegal nature of the business in Ghana discourages them from fighting back or even reporting to the police. The use of condom among Ghanaian prostitutes in Britain is however advanced.

Thirty prostitutes interviewed in Britain (75 percent of interviewees) claimed they insist on condom use. But the remaining 25 percent indicated that the choice of protection depends on the customer and also the nature of business in a particular day. They claim that some customers, especially those of Indian and Arabian origin insist on service without condom use and do pay more for it. But if business is bad, they do give in. However, if business is good, they refuse such conditions of service.

The prostitutes are also prone to series of abortions. Most men request sex without condom for higher pay. Some refuse to pay if the prostitute insists on condom use. This means that most of them get pregnant and abort them. This is a detrimental to their reproductive health. Some even loose their lives during abortion because they go to quark doctors because of lack of funds to access medical facilities at authorized medical centres.

Prostitutes are exposed to violence from maniac customers. A prostitute interviewed by the researcher in Melton Keynes in Britain told the researcher that one day, she met a customer who wanted to use a stick in her private part instead of having normal sex with her. When she refused, the man beat her until
she was rescued by her pimp. She was rather reprimanded for being disobedient. She is not the only prostitute who reported violence, most of the prostitutes said that it takes a lot of strength to engage in prostitution since most of the men who patronize them do not ask for normal sex. They are assaulted in various degrees by customers and even by the police who occasionally arrest them. A recent study done in Ghana when women were asked what the consequence of their refusal to have sex with partners who have high risk behavior they indicated that they were beaten by their partners and their husbands refuse to give them money for their upkeep.

African feminists may perceive the health situation of prostitutes and women as a whole as a result of patriarchal practices, which makes women passive in sexual issues and thus disallow them to make decisions about safer sex. This is evident in the sex trade where customers decide which service they want. Sex workers oblige because traditionally, they have been groomed as such. Those who refuse are beaten and mal-handled. In an interview with Mrs. Esther Amoako the director of AIDS Alert Ghana and a lecturer at the Law faculty of the University of Ghana, she asserts that prostitutes are abused by customers when they make attempts to negotiate safer sex. They are also subjected to sexual assaults by law enforcement agencies that arrest them. She asserts that this is a violation of their rights as “criminals”. In these asymmetrical sexual relations, the transmission of AIDS from men to women may be greater than women to men. Report of the Women AIDS Research Programme of the International Centre for Research on Women (ICWR) notes that: “initiating condom use is
simply not practical for most women around the globe.\textsuperscript{15} Women and girls do not have power to successfully negotiate their protections in the face of male domination. Though HIV/AIDS affects both men and women, it does so disproportionately. From various seroprevalence, it is clear that every point in time, the number of women infected is more than men. The preponderance of women affected with HIV/AIDS is another indication of unequal social gender relations in Ghana. Perhaps, no other disease exposes the subordination of women as does the HIV/AIDS.

Another social implication linked to HIV/AIDS is the increase in the number of children made orphaned and vulnerable. The Ghana Aids Commission in conjunction with UNAIDS did a research on orphans with regards to HIV/AIDS and came out with the findings that Ghana has about two hundred and fifty thousand orphans whose parents died from AIDS.\textsuperscript{16} If these children are not well cared for, they will grow up to threaten the security of the nation. The boys growing on the streets will become armed robbers and the girls might sell sex for a living. The consequences defy enumeration.

4.1.2 The Effects of the Sex Trade on the Family

Another social implication of the sex trade from the African feminists’ perspective is the one that affects the fabric of the African family. Pre colonial African families were portrayed as large, loving and extended groups that provided a network of support for those of its members that lapsed or needed help.\textsuperscript{17} The family connotes protection and gives a sense of belongings. It is the
Basic unit upon which society is built. In the family, one meets her social quest of relating to other human beings. In the family, parents are a symbol of security for their children. Children always look up to their parents for protection and guidance. Giving care and support is a universal function of parents and the society expects them to be the first point of socialization for children. With the proliferation of cities after independence coupled with the demands of capitalism, most parents do not have time to socialize their children. They do not even spend time with them.\(^{19}\) Most of them leave their children in their villages and migrate to urban areas in search of greener pastures. Children are therefore left in the family house and in most cases not in the care of any particular relative. The relatives in the family houses also have their own lives and therefore do not care for these children.

The African family system which used to pride itself in the values of the extended family as loving has lost its qualities. These children at times do not get anyone to straighten them up when they are going wrong. Araba Mensah one of the sex workers interviewed said that her mother left in the village with her maternal aunts and came to Accra to work.\(^{19}\) She was not properly cared for so she decided to come to Accra to look for her mother. At a tender age of 13 and without the exact knowledge of where her mother was in Accra, she left the village in the Western region for Accra. She was told upon arrival that her mother had traveled to Nigeria and will be away for sometime, she met her senior at school in the same house where she thought she could find her mother. This young woman was the one who took care of her since she had no money and
she eventually introduced her into the sex work.

The neglect of parents and the family as a whole of their responsibility of socialization is not the only issue when it comes to the sex trade and the family. The family is directly involved in giving their children to traffickers into the sex trade. The involvement of the family in the sex trade paints another picture of the family and, to a large extent, depicts how deeply the African family is affected by the capitalist economic structure evident in the global demand for women and girls in the sex trade. Several girls are sold to traffickers by their own parents or extended family members who act as their guardians. They are sold for money and material wealth which is the yardstick of good living as projected by capitalist oriented economies, to which African countries were introduced during colonialism and after independence. Many men in Africa wish and want to possess cars, mansions and vast plots of land and in places where polygamy is still endemic, men desire to have money to marry more beautiful women; a symbol of manhood and good financial standing. Wealth is no more measured by the number of children a man has to work on his farm or tend his cattle, neither is the pride of a man in his grey hair or advanced age, because society is not respecting grey hair anymore but rather a show of affluence in the above mentioned areas. Parents, especially fathers therefore, sell their girl children so they can possess all they need to become great. Part of this money definitely should also go into making the sons lawyers and doctors for the pride of the family. There is evidence of fathers who refuse to allow their daughters to leave the sex trade, even if the children complain they cannot cope.
If any of them return home, they make sure they get them back to the trade until the contract with the traffickers is over.

Though it has been documented that fathers normally sell their female children to traffickers, one cannot rule out the possibility of involvement of mothers in this trade. Women normally encourage their daughters to use their beauty and sexuality to call the attention of men. There are many cases when girls have been persuaded or forced by their mothers to use their body for financial gains. In the wake of the 21st century, women desire to put on the most recent fashion of lace clothes and other products. The pressure if put on the female child to be “productive” and help keep the mother’s name among the prominent in society. Mothers therefore have in various ways shucked their societal and legal responsibilities in order to acquire the symbols of power and affluence. Many young girls are therefore left at the mercy of strange men who use them for their pleasure. The story of Yaa Benewah attests to this.

Yaa Benewah, during interview in Britain told the researcher that she lost her mother at an early age and when she was about ten years old, she lost her father too. An Auntie took her to her home and cared for her. Among the numerous abuses she suffered in that house was the frequent sexual assault by her Auntie’s husband. When she gathered courage to tell her Auntie, the Auntie accused her of attracting her husband intentionally. She said, after three months of this confrontation, her Auntie informed her that a friend of hers would take her abroad and employ her as house help. She gladly left with this woman on a faked
passport. On arrival in Britain, this woman put her in a room and men come there for her to service them. She serviced about ten to thirteen men a day, including some women and her Madam. Any time she managed to get access to a phone, her Auntie refuses to speak to her and tell her to service the men since she was doing that with other men in Ghana, including her husband. From the age of sixteen, she remained in this bondage until the Madam died in an accident.

The willingness of the family to sell their daughters to traffickers or send them to brothel is conditioned by the belief that, young girls are less likely to be infected with HIV. Girls as young as eight years are sold to brothels to service men for money which they do not control. The sex trade has contributed to the disintegration of the African family and a loss of the love and protection that have been its prominent character. The family is the basic unit of society, and therefore, its loss of the sense of responsibility is a tragedy for the world.

The involvement of the family in the trafficking of women and girls spells out doom for the moral fabric of society. As Adler et. al assert, the family is the first unit of the society through which social norms are imparted into children. One wonders how parents can inculcate moral values of the society, when they sell their children to sell sex. This is because values on sexual behaviour are integral parts of the moral codes of society. The loss of the sense of responsibility of the family is critical for the political, economic, and social ordering of society.

Afua Oye, a prostitute interviewed in a brothel in Accra lost her mother at an
early age. She claimed she left home because her father’s wife maltreated her. She came to a friend in Accra who introduced her to the trade. In any case, she has no formal education or vocational training as an alternative for survival.

4.1.3 The Implications of Education

The discussion of the social effects of the sex trade would not be complete without the discussion of formal education. Education as a social institution is to transmit knowledge, technical skills, values and norms. African feminists argue that African societies before independence, transmitted knowledge on equal basis depending on age, gender and position in society. Colonialism instituted western formal education which is a yardstick of social standing in contemporary Africa. The importance of formal western education lies in the fact that the leadership which produces administrators, intellectuals, technical cadres and policy-makers is formally educated. Formal education therefore determines the level of social and political position one can attain.

Colonial African state and society oriented women as not in need of education. The interests and cultural values of the Europeans constituted the determining factors in the provision of education. A central guiding principle was the need for education that would provide technical skills and shape the attitudinal dispositions of Africans and that which would prepare them to work towards colonial goals. In limited education designed for colonized people, female education was particularly excluded. Females became the recipient of socially less valued domestic oriented education often provided by missionaries. Women
were thought of as people who should stay home and cook as their husbands go out to work. Education for women were argued along functional lines, it was intended to reinforce their role as wives and mothers and thereby constitute social benefit; either as future mothers of male citizens or beneficial for marriage institution. This presupposes that the issue of education goes beyond inequalities in access to formal education for women; it necessitates addressing the orientation, contents and impact of education on women.

Since the political independence of African states, in the 50s and the 60s, education has been considered as both a basic human rights and an investment in human resources for socio-economic development. Undertaking educational reform after independence therefore became a symbol of freedom and self-determination. All African countries have had some experiences with educational reform. The post independence Africa opened up access to education for women in the effort to make accessible social goods for the good of society. Some women therefore had the opportunity to go to secondary schools but this access to education varied across the continent. Women who found themselves in Islamic states could still not have much access because of religious restrictions on them. Despite the efforts made at independence, statistics show that gender inequality in access to education has not been significantly and systematically addressed, and that the gap persists especially at the higher learning levels.

In recent times, it is clear that without formal education it is difficult for people to make anything meaningful out of life. The attainment of positions in the public
sphere, the skills to interact and negotiate and the ability to maintain wealth even if bequeathed, depends on the attainment of formal education. Formal education is one of the most powerful keys to the attainment of economic independence and higher occupational status. It provides skills for employment and gives knowledge for the sharpening of talents. The formal education of women is, therefore, very important for every society. Joe Aggry, a renowned educationist in Ghana once said that if you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a nation. Formal education from this point was conceived as a necessary tool for women to be able to socialize their children very well. Though a limited view of the need for education for women, it recognises that formal education is inevitable in every sphere of life. African feminist would agree that gender differentials in access to formal education are the main determinants of women's subordination and lack of access to resources in the contemporary world.

Research by African feminists indicates that in this contemporary world, where Africa finds itself inadequate in the face of globalization, the plight of women is magnified. Only few men are able to completely provide the material needs of their wives and children. Women are, therefore compelled to work to supplement family income; ironically, they do not have the formal education and the skills required for higher employment opportunities. This makes the sex trade the only option for some women to be able to get money to take care of their children and to fulfill other societal responsibilities. This research work is not asserting that all sex workers are not educated or not highly educated. As mentioned in chapter
three when examining the types of sex work, it was mentioned that most women in the category of “Call Girls” have attained appreciable level of formal education with a few having attained university degrees. However the percentage of such women in the sex work is not more that 20 percent. This implies that about 80 percent of them are illiterates or semi literates. They either never went to school or dropped out in primary. African feminists could predict that this imbalance in access to education will keep deepening, if the number of women and girls joining the sex trade increases as the present rate. The problem posed by the sex trade is that girls, who are supposed to be in school, are increasingly joining the sex trade. Even those in the classrooms are running away to the streets and brothels to trade their bodies. Education is a prerequisite for improving the socio-economic status of women in order to achieve greater social autonomy.33

Inequality in the female access to education has continued, despite commitments by various governments to the goal of universal basic education. In both absolute and relative terms, female enrollment lags behind male enrollment at all levels of the educational ladder in Ghana. With the enrollment of 46.2 percent for girls in 1995, these gender disparities increased at junior secondary level, senior secondary level and reached its peak at the tertiary level, where female enrollment was 25 percent.34 Most of the these drop out may end up in the prostitution. The late 1990’s witnessed the argument that females are under represented in higher institutions because facilities are not available for them. For example until the above mentioned period, University of Ghana had one
exclusive female hall and one exclusive male hall. All the other halls, though labeled mixed sex, had only one or two blocks out of about eight blocks in a hall for females. The subsequent argument is that if young girls will have access to education, there should be the facilities for their use.

The under-representation in education is not the only issue. Girls are found to congregate in some areas like home science, dressmaking etc. This is increasing at an alarming rate with the offset of the proliferation of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO’s) in human development interventions. The media always show some young women who have been taken through vocational training, mostly sowing and hair dressing. This is not harmful to society but it might not help much. Most of those sponsored have the brains to attain higher education in disciplines that are dominated by men. African feminists might contend that the increase of girls and women in the sex trade will further increase this inequality in the educational institutions. There is the need therefore to have measures to keep girls in the class rooms and keep those on the streets out of the streets.

4.2 Economic Implications

The discussion of the economic implications of the sex trade in West Africa and for that matter, in Ghana, includes the accessibility of land and employment for women. The effects of the SAP on these issues are also analysed.

The economic implication of the sex trade can be traced to women’s weak economic position from colonialism, through independence, and the capitalist
oriented transitions of these societies with its various economic reforms in African countries, especially, Ghana. During colonial times, women’s access to economic resources, especially land was limited. Land is one of the most important factors of productions. Many economic activities occur on land and with land. It is evident that both export crops and crops for domestic consumption grow on land. In land, gold and other precious minerals which are at times the mainstay of some economies are deposited in land. Resources from land are used to produce ceramics and other essential commodities. It is evident also that little can be done without land and this is true especially for a continent like Africa where more than half of its economies depend on agriculture. The exports through which the nation gets foreign exchange are predominantly agricultural goods like cocoa, coffee, cotton, tea etc. This implies that the denial of land to women is a denial of the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the economic development of their nations. Many women produce food on subsistence level for domestic consumption and at times do sell some to buy few items for their homes. But the conversion of land to produce export commodities robs women access to land for their farming activities.

Oyewumi argues that land in pre-colonial Africa belonged to both men and women, according to their lineage; but individual ownership of land, which gave men priority of ownership of land was introduced by the colonial masters. Since most African economies depended, and still depend, on land, the lack of land implies the lack of economic resources for many women. The issue of ownership is also of prior importance. Many women and girls cannot inherit the
property of their parents. Thus after the death of their parents, they are left with no means for survival. Nana Oye Arthur, a legal practitioner at Federation of International Women Lawyers, in an interview with the researcher said that this is a major cultural and traditional practice or institution which affects females. 38

Mostly family properties are left in the hands of the customary heir who only recognizes the male child as fit to rule. Reviewing the matrilineal system of inheritance among the people of Ashanti in Ghana, it was recognized that though they inherit from their mothers’ family line, inheritance of the uncle still goes to the male child of his sister, and not the female. This, according to Ms. Dorecas Appiah Coker of the Gender Centre, is a clear indication of the dominance of men of social institutions. Access to productive resources is a prerequisite for women’s participation in development. 39 Women can not take control over their lives without access to economic resources. Economic resources provide the means to participate in the public realm.

Related to land ownership is the fact that colonial and post independent economies concentrated on the production of export commodities where labour required was male intensive. The boom for export crops like cocoa, coffee, cotton and tea sidelined women’s production of food crops. 40 The production of the above crops was male linked and labour was male intensive. Women’s production of food was not appreciated as they were not even quantified and rewarded. Land that could be used to produce food was put to the production of export commodities. The
implication was that women could not find adequate employment in such economies. Although few clerical jobs existed women could not access it because, as discussed earlier, they lacked the formal training required for employment. ⁴¹

This economic bias was carried over through independence to this day. In the implementation of economic reforms, the paramount being the SAP, there was no gender analysis of the impact of the reforms on vulnerable groups like women. ⁴² Though the SAP affected both men and women, it did so disproportionately. The effects of the economic reforms and policy climate they created have been hostile to the promotion of social and economic programmes to ensure women’s empowerment. ⁴³ The restructuring of state enterprises involving specific measures such as increase in tax rates and the resultant job loose have affected female-dominated sectors such as the service sector. The retrenchment of thousands from the public sectors through the influx of numerous redeployments has adversely affected women. The decision to promote cocoa production without a similar policy for food production also affected women’s labour, their access to land and their income generating activities in the agricultural sector since cash crops are mostly owned by men. Donor agencies have attempted to respond to concerns about gender inequalities in the economic reforms in the popular women and Development slogans. In the 1960s, the UN saw women as mothers and adopted the welfare approach, which instituted maternal health and population control. But in recent times, poverty has been identified to be the main problem facing women and income generating projects for women have, therefore, been instituted. Writers such as Palmer have argued
that gender affects the success of economic reforms and, therefore, ignoring women has dire consequences of which the sex trade is one.\textsuperscript{44} Palmers assertion is true in the case of Ghana.

Ghanaian market women especially, experienced neglect, discrimination and hostilities during the successive military take over in their country. Notable is the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) era. Ghanaian market women were accused of hoarding which destroys the economy. Their goods were therefore seized; their properties sophisticated and some of them whipped and branded witches. This was viewed as a necessary aspect of the so called “house cleaning exercise.” A lot of women lost all their capital and most of them migrated to nearby Cote D’Ivoire to engage in prostitution. As the custodians of the art of trading, their absence on the economic scene led to acute shortage of consumer goods and coupled with the introduction of SAP, the economy of Ghana collapsed.\textsuperscript{45}

Women’s lack of access to employment is one of the main determinants of the increase of women and girls in the sex trade. Majority of women are involved in reproductive work as against productive work that fetches income for the home. Women spend much of their time doing house chores and farm work which are also contributory to the economy of nations, but such work is neither documented nor measured for reward. Efforts to document the nature and scope of women’s work have not yet brought about the formal recognition. When women have access to employment they will be able to raise enough funds to
cater for their families even if their husbands and fathers are not around. Dzifa and Kokor, prostitutes interviewed in a hotel in Achimota claimed they are into prostitution because they have no alternative job. Kokor recounted the difficulties she went through when she decided to look for an alternative job. According to her, anywhere she went her Junior Secondary Certificate was not accepted for the post. In some places, the owners and managers of the organizations requested for sex in order for her to be employed. But after a number of free services in anticipation for a job, she realized that the men were taken advantage of her. According to Kokor, she concluded that even in the formal employment environment she might continue to sell sex. She subsequently gave up her search and concentrated on the sex business. Some of the prostitutes expressed their interest in trading but lack the needed capital to do so.

About 60 percent of women interviewed in Ghana have children and claim the fathers of their children do not help in their upkeep. They are therefore in prostitution so they can feed their children. About 80 percent of women interviewed indicated that they would prefer alternative jobs if available. Gwendolyn confirms this by stating that when women’s income generation efforts fail, they may supplement their incomes with sexual services and that the proliferation of multi partner strategies is a direct consequence of deepening economic crisis. African feminist would link the implication of the sex trade to the feminization of poverty. The low formal education of women limits their access to well paid jobs
and, therefore, forces them to look for alternative sources of complementary income. The sex trade becomes a ready option, since it does not require training or capital. The dependence of most African women on men for their financial needs compromises the position of such women in matters relating to their sexuality. Lariba (real name withheld) told the researcher that, she was convinced by her boyfriend to leave the Northern part of the country and join him down in Accra. She obliged because she had no means of survival apart from the moneys that the boyfriend gives her. When asked of her parentage, she replied that her parents are farmers who scarcely make ends meet. She also has young siblings who need to be cared for. This makes it mandatory for her at the age of 18 to cater for herself. She joined the young man in Accra and the young man put her in a hotel in Accra where she was interviewed. The young man brings customers to her in the room to service. Since she came to Accra, she has been living and working in the hotel.

Lariba’s case is an example of the outcome of poverty on young women. Out of the 60 percent of people who are poor in Ghana, 70 percent are said to be women. The Ghana poverty Reduction Strategy Paper records that as a result of certain cultural practices, women suffer more from poverty than men. The African society has conditioned women to rely on men for their upkeep in exchange for labour, either in service or production. This might underscore the reason why foreign writers find it difficult to give the study or definition of sex trade a boundary in most African societies. Because an in-depth study sometimes shows that any finances or favours from men to their women is a reward of
sexual favours. Though African feminist would debunk this line of thought, there is much evidence that women lack the necessary economic facilities to adequately care for themselves. They thus need men, who society has depicted as the have to support them. The nature of marriage ceremonies in most Ghanaian societies assert to this fact.

In most Ghanaian societies, young women and girls are given into marriage to old men. The idea is that they will be taken care of by men who already have substance. The Woman is advised and taught how to satisfy her man in bed and in other deeds so that they will keep their marriages. Among the Akans in Ghana, a woman going into marriage is advised that when she incurs debt during marriage, she should let the man pay, but when she acquires wealth, she should bring some home. Muna Ndolo, writing on customary marriage in Zambia, which applies to most African societies states that, the obligations of the husband is to maintain the wife by providing her with necessities. And in return, he is entitled to her services in domestic matters including cooking. These institutions put women in a dependent relationship throughout their life. They are never encouraged to work and own the fruits of their labour. The owning aspect of the proceeds of labour is significant in the discussion of women’s work. A lot of women work on the farms of their husbands. They may even keep vegetable gardens separately from their husband’s. But whatever they acquire is managed and accredited to their husbands. This applies to traders also. In West Africa, women contribute greatly to the economy of nations. They trade in all goods and dominate the running of significant markets. But rarely does any
profit or property from that trade bear their names. The Akan adage "se obaa tuo edwere bema dan mu" (when a woman buys a gun it is kept in a man's hut) attests to this assertion. All that a woman owns or any significant property a woman acquires is managed and owned by her husband. This practice has left many women penniless throughout their lives. Most of them loose everything they acquire with their husbands immediately their husbands die. This is because tribes have customary laws on inheritance and it is surprising that there is no African society and for that matter Ghanaian society that the woman inherits her husband.

Among the Akans in Ghana, the man's family packs everything of their son or uncle or brother the moment he dies. They share properties and decide what should go to the man's children. But the wife is never considered as deserving any share. A prostitute interviewed in Ashiaman said that she worked hard with the husband to acquire some property. But when the husband died, all her belongings were taken away by the man's family, even the wooden mortar she uses to pound fufu. But no one asked how the children should survive. Left with nothing after the funeral, and with three children in school, she had to engage in prostitution to see the children through school until "I get another husband or some money to trade" she said.

It is not only in the private life that women's labour is not recognized. Until recently there was no effort to document the contribution of women in the economy of nations and for that matter Ghana. Research shows that women
are very instrumental in the production and processing of food in Ghana. But the reports on food production exclude women. African feminist will propose that the gender issues be considered during appraisals of the performance of the economies. These economic inequalities fuel the sex trade in West Africa.

The increase in the number of young women in prostitution implies that human resources, which could have been useful in the production of the formal sector, are being wasted. Linked to this is the fact that the HIV/AIDS prevalence among prostitutes is higher than in any other group of workers; thus, apart from losing the contribution of these women in the formal sector, their very lives are also at risk. Most of the prostitutes are breadwinners of their entire families. Most women, who travel to Abidjan to trade in sex, remit home regularly. They send money to their parents, children and siblings. The death of these women implies economic hardships of families, especially children who become orphans.

Those who advocate for the legitimacy of the sex trade argue that the sex trade yields a lot of revenue for many nations. For example, tourism which is motivated by the sex trade yields more than $4 billion a year for national economy of Thailand. In Edo state in Nigeria, where prostitution is said to have flourished, is the busiest office is the Western Union money transfer office. It is believed that most of the migrants are prostitutes. They send money to their families for the establishment of businesses and building of family houses. In Ghana, there are no statistics to support how much money is made from prostitution, but it is well known that most illegal immigrants remit home often.
This assertion of gains from prostitution may not hold for African countries and, for that matter, Ghana, if the supposed profit is linked to the cost of treating HIV/AIDS patients and the stress it exerts on the expenditure of the country.

The spread of the AIDS and its implications goes beyond the effects on the prostitutes alone; it affects families and the nation as a whole. A lot of money is spent on drugs, doctors and other workers’ salaries and the administration of hospitals. The resources available to governments to meet all these demands are, however, limited.

4.3 Political Implication

Politics is about power and influence, which dictate the pace of any economic and social development. In this public realm, decisions are taken concerning international relations, enforcement of laws and economic resource and their allocation. The political implications of the sex trade and vice versa are in this vein.

The relations between states have been perpetuating the sex trade in recent times. Women who have been marginalized throughout their history are trafficked from poor countries (mostly) to rich countries. In the case of cross border prostitution in Ghana, south-to-south migration is as true as north to south migration. This is because Ghanaian women dominate the sex trade in Cote d’Ivoire. But the underlying cause is that, at the time when Ghanaian women started migrating to Cote d’Ivoire, the countries had better economy.
Mostly women from poor countries and for that matter Ghana, seek greener pastures in rich countries. Economic reforms proposed by donors to put the economy of these countries on their feet, rather perpetuates poverty and women are the most affected.

Trafficked women are often abused and exploited by traffickers. The law-enforcing agencies in the recipient countries punish the women who are trafficked but not those who traffic them. This is because of the criminalization of prostitution in most countries and the limitation of activities of prostitution in others. The Convention on the Traffic of Persons and the Exploitation and the Prostitution of Others seeks to address the bias of the law concerning prostitution. It addresses prostitutes as victims of international and societal structures which allow men and some women to take undue advantage of vulnerable women. African feminists would assert that the neglect of states of their responsibilities under conventions they sign is a major source of potential tension in relations between states. Most governments’ reports on human rights for women reproduce the existing constitutional and legal provisions relating to non-discrimination but do not venture into analyzing neither their application nor indeed the obstacles to the enjoying of equal rights by all women. Not only is there a wide gap between formal legal status and reality, but eradication of de facto discrimination. Without data on actual position of women regarding all their human rights and fundamental freedoms discrimination remains invisible and policies for its eradication difficult to elaborate. Donor and recipient countries are entangled in a relationship which tacitly consents to this form of
exploitation of poor countries and denial of women’s human rights.

The advocacy for the enforcement of legal regimes to combat trafficking and the prostitution of others immediately brings to the fore the under-representation of women in the judicial service and in parliament. After independence, most African states leaders did not want to go back to the chieftaincy system that existed before colonialism, they decided to maintain the political system that was introduced to them and that excluded women. They however courted women’s organizations for political purposes and yet assaulted them when they disapprove of government policies. Society was represented by one party in an effort to avoid the societies of class divisions. The production of amenities were seen as benefiting women as well, and therefore there was not the need for women’s dual sex organizations, they were often seen as impediments.

African feminists conclude that the laws that govern society are made by men and for men. Women have been excluded for long in this area. Legal provisions are biased against women; an example of such provision is that of prostitution. As quoted earlier, the criminal code of Ghana defines prostitution as the offering of a female of her body commonly for acts of lewdness although there is no act or offer of an act of ordinary sexual connection. This definition represents two problems of interpretation. It connotes that it is only women who engage in prostitution and that they do it only for the sake of promiscuity. This implies that there are no provisions to cover the activities of men who engage in prostitution. Enforcement agencies that would have checked cross-border
prostitution are infective. Most of them are men and succumb to trafficking under little pressure of traffickers through bribing.

Grace, a prostitute interviewed in Britain, entered the country with the passport of another person. According to her; she paid two thousand USS dollars to be able to pass through immigration. When she and her connection man reached the immigration of the airport, they found out that, the immigration officer they paid did not report for work. They therefore had to pay another USS 500 to enable them go through immigration without being arrested. The government mechanism set for protection therefore fails in its work when it comes to the trafficking of women. Legal provisions which are put in place to address trafficking and the exploitation of women are hardly enforced. Grace gets stranded in Britain because the “connection man” could not provide her with accommodation and job as promised. She started sleeping with men just for the shelter, but later, when the search for a job proved futile Grace had to prostitute to survive. Trafficking is not a crime only when the trafficked person does not consent or is a minor. The Convention on the Traffic of Persons and the Exploitation of Others” states categorically that the trafficking of consent minors and adults is a crime. In Ghana, the Trafficking in Persons Prevention Bill has been a draft bill for long, it is awaiting the necessary processes for it to be a useful instrument.

African feminists view the popular perception of women as second class citizens and semi adults as an obstacle to the search for solutions to their problems.
practice of prostitution under the purview of tourism affirms this assertion. It suggests the approval of society of the exploitation of the bodies of girls and women to fulfill the demands of older men. This is a visible sign of the perception of women and girls as ‘things’ to be used for pleasure. If women are only arranged for dignitaries and invitees who attend conferences, then there is the suggestion of lack of political will to put an end to this exploitation. In Ghana, women form 53 percent of the population. It would therefore be of much benefit to this nation, if these women are found in the production units of the economy, for economies are not built on sexual gratification, but on sound policies that ensure economic growth and human development.

The above chapter has analysed the implications of the sex trade from an African feminist perspective. The analysis has brought to bear the interplay of certain social, cultural, economic and political dynamics that influence the sex trade in West Africa. Chapter five will therefore present the summary of the major findings of the research, conclusions and make recommendations.
NOTES

3. Ibid.
4. "HIV/AIDS and Women in Sub-Saharan Africa", freeservers.com
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
20. Williams, P., op. cit.
27. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Oyewumi, O., op. cit. p.127.
36. Ibid., p.120.
37. Ibid.
40. Oyewumi, O., op. cit. p.120.
41. Ibid.
42. Tsikata, D., op. cit. p.49.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., p. 50.
50. Ibid. 426.
52. Ibid.
53. Tkikata, D., op. cit. p.50.
57. Ibid.
58. Williams, P., op. cit. p. 144.
62. Ibid.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

Chapter five presents the summary of chapters, the summary of findings, recommendations and conclusions.

5.1 Summary

This study attempts to examine the phenomenon of the international sex trade as practiced by West African women. Chapter one is the research design. It introduces all the salient aspect of the title of the research; the meaning of sex trade, the nature of practice, the migratory character which underscores the aspects of international relations and more importantly, the structural relations of the sex trade. The chapter also explains the methodology used.

Chapter two discusses the theory of African feminism. It establishes that though African feminism shares a lot of features with feminism practiced in the West and elsewhere, it also has distinct characteristics.

Chapter three discusses some elements, which give the sex trade, as practiced by West African women, especially Ghanaian women, its peculiar characteristics. The examination of these various elements established that the nature and the causes that influence the sex trade are different in every given country.
Chapter four asserts that the sex trade has a lot of implications on the sex workers, families and the nation as a whole. It analyses the sex trade from the perspective of African feminism and establishes that women lack access to education, economic resources and jobs that pay with the ease that men do. And this in turn, encourages the exchange of sex for money.

Chapter five is the summary of the findings, recommendations and conclusion. Most of the recommendations would express the opinion of African feminism.

5.2 Findings

The analysis of the international sex trade from the African feminist perspective brought to the fore very important findings. Women and girls who are into the sex trade have always been branded as bad, loose and unsocialised, but this study has established the fact that women are not bad neither are women lovers of plenty sex per se, but are victims of a lot of factors which define their world.¹ The research uncovered the factors that influence these women’s decisions concerning work and thereby has revealed that most of them are victims, forced into sex work by others who live on their earnings; and even if it is a personal choice, the international system, the society on various levels, and the political leadership, though invisible entities, contribute greatly to this decision.²

The unjust global system, coupled with capitalism has empowered many criminal and unscrupulous people to take advantage of the vulnerability of women to trade in them. They deceive them and promise them domestic and factory jobs in
foreign countries which are non existent, upon arrival in these countries, where they do not know the people, nor speak their language, their traveling documents are seized and they are forced into brothels. African women and for that matter Ghanaian women are vulnerable to “connection men” because as citizens of a Third World country with more than half of the population in abject poverty, they are always ready to seek greener pasture at the scent of any.

The research has established that this unfortunate situation has its root in the neglect of women in colonial administration and also in the post colonial administration. Women had no access to land and other factors of production. Changes which have been shrouded in culture have limited women in their economic pursuits. Lacking access to economic resources, women have depended on men and sex for their upkeep. Though West African women have tried to contribute immensely towards the economy of their countries, their efforts are not appreciated and rewarded as some regimes have deliberately robbed them of their economic independence.

The lack of money signifies, among things, the lack of access to social amenities necessary for life. Women’s health needs are not taken care of, and this situation is worsened by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which affects more women than men at any given time. Socio cultural practices especially where sexual relations is concerned, supported by the patriarchal structures in African societies, makes women vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and other STI’s.
One of the most important findings which need further research is the involvement of the family in the sex trade. Parents sell their children to traffickers and brothels to do sex work so they could meet the demands and expectation of capitalist economies; owning big and beautiful things. This spells out doom for society since it makes intervention programmes absurd. Intensive education is needed for change to be effected.

Women lack good formal education. Women have been under represented in the educational institutions. Even when they are in schools, they congregate in areas that will make them good domestic workers.

Women are as a result under represented in the decision making on various levels especially cabinet and parliament. They do not participate in decision-making in areas that concern their lives. All decisions therefore are made by men and for men. This assertion can be based on the definition of prostitution and the bias of government security agencies that are to protect all citizens. Men are virtually absent in the legal provisions on prostitution and therefore security agencies condone their immense contribution to sex work. The legal instruments enacted by international bodies made up of governments are rarely implemented. There is lack of political will to protect women and girls.

The case of the African woman and for that matter the Ghanaian woman in the sex trade is different from that of the Thai woman or the European. The Ghanaian woman’s presence in the sex trade can be summarized as the outcome
of her history of western hegemony and also of patriarchy that limits her participation in all spheres of life. 8

5.2 Conclusion

It is evident from the study that women and girls who are in the sex trade are not promiscuous by nature or lovers of sex per se. They are victims of a society that exploits the sexuality of women and of which its legitimacy is derived from gender inequality. The solution to the problem of women and girls in the sex trade depends first and foremost on understanding the factors that put them there, which are properly explained by African feminism. African feminism asserts that unless the education, economic and political independence of women are achieved, and unless the negative elements of culture are changed, women will continue be pushed into the sex trade for money.

5.3 Recommendations

Global inequalities and the exploitation of poor countries are of paramount importance to the spread of transnational prostitution. The principal aim of a more humane policy should be to contribute to a less exploitative world order to reduce the migration of women from poor countries. 9 This can be achieved through the accessibility of third world countries to the international market. Trade barriers and tariffs should be removed. It is in this light that the African Growth and Opportunity Act of the United States are of much importance. Industrial countries should also put in place trade policies, which will help improve the economics of poor countries, instead of their protectionist policies.
The United Nations and other international agencies should provide funds for organizations, which document cases and pursue complaints of human rights violations at the international level. They should support research institutions and non-governmental organizations to engage in specific research into trafficking and prostitution in order to disseminate credible information for public consumption.

Legal provisions at the national, regional and international levels have existed at documentary levels. Heads of states enact these laws, put them in instruments but do not see to their enforcement. Heads of states and government should be committed to the implementation and enforcement of the bills and laws they pass and ratify. It is only in their use that they become important.

The government should promote women’s economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and the control over economic resources. All levels of training in business and financial management should be organized to equip women manage their own businesses and participate in policy making. Credit facilities should be available for women who are in business. In this light the assistance given to indigenous women industries like those in beads making and pottery is in the right direction, but there is the need to expand this scheme that is executed under the poverty reduction strategy programme.
Women and girls should be given equal access to educational institutions in the country. Scholarships should be given to girls who excel in various subjects, especially, those that are dominated by men, like the sciences and mathematics, so that they could study hard. It would be helpful for the government and all stakeholders in education to enhance female structures to encourage girls to go to school. Dormitory facilities that need to make studies comfortable should be enhanced as efforts are made to increase female intakes at all levels of the educational ladder. Though there are a lot of efforts being made in this direction, there is still more room for improvement.

Last, but not the least, cultural practices, traditions and literature that perpetuates female subordination should be discouraged. Laws should be enacted to punish people, who, in the name of tradition, subdue women to inhuman treatment and discourage them from gaining their economic and political independence.
NOTES

2. Ibid.
7. Chuku G., op. cit. p. 36.
3. Ibid.
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http://usinfo-state.gov/topical/traffic/99091402.html
QUESTIONS FOR STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

HOW THE SEX TRADE WORKS

1. What do you understand by the term “Sex Trade”?

2. Would you know whether there are other terms used to refer to the sex trade?
   a. Are Sex trade and prostitution the same?

3. In your opinion, what are some of the dangers of the sex trade for the sex workers?
   a. Are the sex workers aware of the dangers involved in the sex trade?

4. From your perspective, what do you think are the reasons for their involvement in the sex trade?

5. Do you think there are costs and benefits of the sex trade for Ghana and the world at large?

6. Would you say there is a direct link between the sex trade and the following: poverty, educational status of women, financial status and parental attachment?

TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

7. What do you understand by the term human trafficking?

8. Is it a crime?

9. What in your opinion fuels the trafficking of women and children?

10. Is the condition of women who are trafficked different from those who migrate on their own?

11. What is the link between human trafficking and prostitution?

12. To the best of your knowledge, what measures have been put in place by Ghana and the world as a whole to educate people on the dangers of trafficking of human
STRUCTURAL RELATIONS AND THE SEX TRADE

13. In your opinion, do you think that the sex trade manifests itself in unequal relations?
   a. How does this relation manifests itself between countries?
   b. How does it manifest itself between the sex workers and their pimps or madams?

14. Is there a direct link between the sex trade and the following: poverty, culture, patriarchy, educational status of women, financial status and parental attachment?

FEMNISM

15. In your opinion what is feminism?

16. Is feminism in Africa and for that matter Ghana the same as in the West?

17. Does African feminism have something in common with feminism in other Third World countries?
   a. How does African culture inform African feminism?
   b. To what extent does African culture permit the sale of sex for a living?

18. What is the place of female sexual behaviour in feminist theory?

POLICIES, LAWS AND THE SEX TRADE

19. Is sex trade a criminal offence in Ghana?

20. Are there any laws in Ghana concerning the sex trade?

21. Are there any international laws Ghana has adopted governing the sale of sex and are they enforced?
22. Does the nation have adequate information on all migrants outside the country and what they do?

23. What is the government doing about this informal trade?

**Target Groups**


- Academicians in feminist theory from the University of Ghana and Queen’s University in Canada

- Lawyer at Federation of International Lawyers (FIDA)

- Doctors and Nurses at West Africa Project to combat AIDS and STIs

- Workers at the Ministry of Women’s Affairs