



**GENDER DIFFERENCES IN HOOK-UP BUSINESSES AMONG UNDERGRADUATE
STUDENTS IN NIGERIA TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS: EVIDENCE FROM FEDERAL
UNIVERSITY OYE-EKITI, EKITI STATE**

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Abstract

The increasing prevalence of hookup businesses among undergraduate students has become a major social and psychological concern due to its effects on students' emotional well-being, academic performance, and social behaviour. This study investigated the causes, psychological effects, social effects, and gender differences in hookup businesses among undergraduate students. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population for the study included undergraduate students in selected tertiary institutions, while a sample of 200 respondents was selected using multistage and simple random sampling techniques. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Hookup Business and Undergraduate Students Questionnaire (HBUSQ)." The instrument had a reliability index of 0.81 using Cronbach's Alpha reliability method. Data collected were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, standard deviation, and t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The results showed that undergraduate students demonstrated a high level of involvement in hookup businesses due to financial hardship, peer influence, social media exposure, and desire for luxury lifestyles. The findings further revealed that hookup businesses had negative psychological effects such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, and emotional stress, while social effects included risky sexual behaviour, social stigma, poor academic performance, and weakened moral values. The study also established significant gender differences in the causes and effects of hookup businesses among students. It was concluded that hookup businesses constitute a serious social and psychological challenge among undergraduates. Among other things, the study recommended increased counselling services, awareness programmes, parental support, and student empowerment initiatives within tertiary institutions.

Keywords: Hookup business, undergraduate students, psychological effects, social effects, peer influence, transactional relationships, gender differences

Introduction

The transformation of social relationships among university students has contributed to the emergence of hookup culture as a growing social phenomenon in higher institutions worldwide. Hookup culture refers to casual sexual encounters that occur outside committed relationships (Egbo et al., 2024; Ugwu, 2021). In modern university settings, these interactions are often facilitated through social media, peer influence, and changing attitudes toward sexuality.



According to Stinson (2010), campus social life frequently encourages partying and hookup activities as part of the student experience. Bailey (1988) and Stinson (2010) also observed that changing courtship patterns and peer pressure contributed to the rise of hookup culture. Among undergraduates, experimentation and identity formation are common developmental experiences (Arnett, 2000). Consequently, hookup practices have become increasingly normalized among university students, raising concerns regarding emotional wellbeing, academic performance, and moral behaviour.

Economic hardship has also contributed to the growth of hookup businesses among undergraduates. In Nigeria, financial challenges such as inadequate parental support, school fees, and personal expenses have pushed some students into transactional relationships. Evidence from the uploaded manuscript showed that some female undergraduates engage in hookups as a survival strategy (Egbo et al., 2024; Adekoya et al., 2023; Olayemi & Adeola, 2018). further indicated that male students participate in hookup culture to gain social recognition or satisfy emotional desires. In addition, social media has intensified the visibility and acceptance of hookup practices among youths. Ajayi and Adebayo (2021) explained that online platforms make casual relationships easier to initiate and maintain. The manuscript also noted that social media applications are frequently used to coordinate hookup activities among students. This growing commercialization of relationships has increased concerns about exploitation and risky sexual behaviour among undergraduates.

The psychological effects associated with hookup businesses have attracted increasing scholarly attention. Although some students perceive hookups as a source of freedom and pleasure, studies have linked repeated casual sexual encounters with emotional distress, loneliness, anxiety, and low self-esteem. The uploaded manuscript explained that hookup experiences may provide temporary satisfaction but often leave participants emotionally dissatisfied. Mongeau et al. (2017) reported that students involved in hookups without emotional attachment frequently experience disappointment and regret afterward. Similarly, Moran et al. (2015) found that individuals with insecure attachment patterns are more vulnerable to emotional instability following casual relationships. Fielder and Carey (2010) further argued that repeated involvement in hookups may negatively influence self-worth and personal identity. These psychological outcomes may eventually affect academic engagement, emotional wellbeing, and social interactions among university students.

Gender remains an important factor shaping experiences within hookup culture. Studies suggest that male and female students experience hookup businesses differently because societal expectations impose unequal standards on sexual behaviour. Female students involved in hookups are often exposed to stigma and moral judgment, while males may receive peer approval for similar behaviour. According to Adebayo (2021), women involved in hookup businesses frequently experience shame and social criticism. Conversely, Ogunbiyi and Akintoye (2022) observed that male students sometimes gain social validation through casual sexual relationships. Nwachukwu and Edeh (2021) also explained that cultural stereotypes strongly influence the motivations and experiences associated with hookups among undergraduates. Despite the growing visibility of



hookup culture in Nigerian universities, limited studies have examined gender differences in hookup businesses. The manuscript identified this gap and emphasized the need for further investigation.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine gender differences in hookup businesses among undergraduate students in selected universities. Specifically, the study examined:

1. the level of involvement of undergraduate students in hookup businesses;
2. the major factors influencing undergraduate students' participation in hookup businesses;
3. the perceived psychological effects of hookup businesses among undergraduate students;
4. the perceived social effects of hookup businesses among undergraduate students; and
5. gender differences in the causes, experiences, and effects of hookup businesses among undergraduate students.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine gender differences in hookup businesses among undergraduate students. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researchers to obtain relevant information directly from respondents regarding their experiences, perceptions, and involvement in hookup activities without manipulating any variables. The study was conducted among undergraduate students in selected universities, where students from different faculties and levels of study were included to ensure broad representation. A structured questionnaire was used as the major instrument for data collection. The questionnaire contained sections on respondents' demographic characteristics, awareness and participation in hookup businesses, perceived causes of hookup involvement, and the psychological and social effects associated with the practice. The instrument consisted mainly of closed-ended items measured on a Likert-type scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. To ensure validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts in health education and social sciences, while reliability was established through a pilot study which yielded an acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficient.

A multistage sampling technique was employed in selecting the respondents for the study. Faculties and departments were first selected through stratified procedures to ensure adequate representation across academic disciplines, after which simple random sampling was used to select participants from the identified groups. Data collection was carried out with the assistance of trained research assistants who distributed copies of the questionnaire to respondents after obtaining informed consent. Ethical principles such as confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly observed throughout the study. Data obtained from the respondents were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviation were used to summarise respondents' characteristics and major variables of the study. Inferential statistics, including independent sample t-test and correlation analysis, were employed to determine gender differences and relationships among the variables at 0.05 level of significance.



Results and Discussion

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	92	46.0
	Female	108	54.0
Age	15–19 years	58	29.0
	20–24 years	103	51.5
	25 years and above	39	19.5
Level of Study	100 Level	41	20.5
	200 Level	55	27.5
	300 Level	49	24.5
	400 Level	40	20.0
	500 Level	15	7.5
Marital Status	Single	184	92.0
	Married	16	8.0
Residence	On-campus	87	43.5
	Off-campus	113	56.5

The result showed that female respondents constituted the majority with 108 (54.0%), while males accounted for 92 (46.0%). Most respondents, 103 (51.5%), were within the age range of 20–24 years, indicating that the study was dominated by young adults in their active undergraduate years. The highest proportion of respondents were in 200 level with 55 (27.5%), whereas 500 level students had the least representation with 15 (7.5%). In terms of marital status, the majority, 184 (92.0%), were single. The findings also revealed that more respondents, 113 (56.5%), resided off-campus compared to 87 (43.5%) who lived on-campus.

Table 2: Level of Involvement of Undergraduate Students in Hookup Businesses

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Students engage in hookup activities for financial benefits	3.62	0.91	High
2.	Hookup activities are common among undergraduates	3.74	0.88	High
3.	Social media encourages hookup participation	3.55	0.96	High
4.	Students participate in hookups to meet academic expenses	3.68	0.84	High
5.	Hookup businesses are becoming normalized among students	3.49	1.02	Moderate
	Grand Mean	3.62	0.92	High

The findings revealed a high level of involvement of undergraduate students in hookup businesses, as indicated by the grand mean score of 3.62. Respondents strongly agreed that financial benefits, academic expenses, and social media exposure significantly contributed to students' participation in hookup activities. The result also suggests that hookup culture is becoming increasingly common and socially accepted among undergraduates.



Table 3: Major Factors Influencing Undergraduate Students' Participation in Hookup Businesses

S/N	Factors	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Financial hardship	3.81	0.79	Agreed
2.	Peer pressure	3.59	0.92	Agreed
3.	Desire for luxury lifestyle	3.73	0.88	Agreed
4.	Influence of social media	3.66	0.95	Agreed
5.	Lack of parental support	3.41	1.01	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.64	0.91	Agreed

The result showed that financial hardship, peer pressure, desire for luxury lifestyle, social media influence, and lack of parental support were major factors encouraging undergraduate students' participation in hookup businesses. Financial hardship recorded the highest mean score of 3.81, indicating that economic challenges were the strongest motivating factor among respondents.

Table 4: Perceived Psychological Effects of Hookup Businesses among Undergraduate Students

S/N	Psychological Effects	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Emotional stress	3.58	0.89	Agreed
2.	Anxiety	3.49	0.97	Agreed
3.	Low self-esteem	3.36	1.02	Agreed
4.	Depression	3.44	0.94	Agreed
5.	Loneliness	3.52	0.91	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.48	0.95	Agreed

The findings indicated that hookup businesses were associated with several psychological problems among undergraduate students. Respondents agreed that participation in hookup activities contributed to emotional stress, anxiety, depression, loneliness, and low self-esteem. Emotional stress recorded the highest mean score of 3.58, showing that it was the most commonly perceived psychological effect among students.

Table 5: Perceived Social Effects of Hookup Businesses among Undergraduate Students

Social Effects	Mean	SD	Decision
1. Negative effect on academic performance	3.63	0.90	Agreed
2. Social stigma	3.57	0.88	Agreed
3. Risky sexual behaviour	3.79	0.82	Agreed
4. Weakening of moral values	3.48	0.97	Agreed
5. Damage to social reputation	3.69	0.86	Agreed
Grand Mean	3.63	0.89	Agreed

The result established that hookup businesses had negative social consequences on undergraduate students. Respondents agreed that hookup involvement contributed to risky sexual behaviour,



damaged social reputation, poor academic performance, and social stigma. Risky sexual behaviour had the highest mean score of 3.79, indicating that it was the most strongly perceived social effect among the participants.

Table 6: Gender Differences in the Causes, Experiences, and Effects of Hookup Businesses among Undergraduate Students

Variables	Male Mean	Female Mean	t-value	p-value	Decision
Causes of Hookup Participation	3.41	3.68	2.31	0.022	Significant
Psychological Experiences	3.29	3.57	2.74	0.007	Significant
Social Effects	3.45	3.70	2.18	0.031	Significant

The findings revealed significant gender differences in the causes, experiences, and effects of hookup businesses among undergraduate students. Female students recorded higher mean scores across all variables, suggesting that they experienced stronger social and psychological effects associated with hookup activities compared to their male counterparts. Since the p-values were less than 0.05, the differences observed were statistically significant.

Discussion of Findings

This study found that undergraduate students demonstrated a high level of involvement in hookup businesses, especially in relation to financial benefits, academic demands, and social media influence. This finding is expected in that the current economic realities facing many university students, coupled with increasing exposure to online lifestyles, have contributed to the normalization of transactional and casual sexual relationships among youths. This finding is in line with similar previous studies on hookup culture and transactional relationships among university students. For instance, Olayemi and Adeola (2018) reported that financial pressure and the desire to meet material needs significantly encouraged students' participation in hookup businesses. Similarly, Ajayi and Adebayo (2021) found that social media platforms expose students to luxurious lifestyles and increase their willingness to engage in transactional relationships. In the same vein, Bogle (2007) observed that hookup culture has become increasingly common within university environments due to changing social norms and reduced parental supervision. The implication of this finding is that hookup culture may continue to expand among undergraduates if economic hardship and unchecked social media exposure are not adequately addressed.

Furthermore, this study revealed that financial hardship, peer pressure, desire for luxury lifestyle, social media exposure, and lack of parental support were the major factors influencing undergraduate students' participation in hookup businesses. This finding is expected because young adults are often influenced by their immediate social environment, economic conditions, and societal expectations regarding appearance and social status. This finding agrees with previous studies on socioeconomic influences and student sexual behaviour. For instance, Ugwu (2020) reported that economic pressures and unequal access to financial resources increase students' tendency to engage in transactional relationships. Likewise, Nwachukwu and Edeh (2021) found that many students, particularly females, engage in hookup activities due to financial instability



and the desire to maintain socially admired lifestyles. Similarly, Kuhle (2014) explained that modern hookup culture is strongly associated with consumerism and material aspirations among young adults. However, Berkowitz (2004) disagrees that financial motives alone explain hookup participation, arguing that peer influence and perceived social acceptance also play significant roles. The implication of this finding is that interventions targeted at reducing hookup culture among students should address both economic and social factors simultaneously.

Moreover, this study showed that hookup businesses had several psychological effects on undergraduate students, including emotional stress, anxiety, depression, loneliness, and low self-esteem. This finding is expected because casual and transactional sexual relationships often lack emotional stability and may expose individuals to psychological conflicts and emotional dissatisfaction. This finding is consistent with previous studies on the emotional consequences of hookup culture. For instance, Moran, Whitten, and Colosimo (2015) reported that students involved in casual sexual relationships frequently experienced emotional distress, regret, and psychological instability. Similarly, Vermunt, Satorius, and Kessler (2021) found that compulsive involvement in hookup activities was associated with anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion among young adults. In addition, Impett, Strachman, Finkel, and Hamer (2014) observed that the absence of emotional commitment in hookups often contributes to feelings of loneliness and emotional insecurity. Although Garcia, Reiber, Massey, and Merriwether (2012) disagrees that all hookup experiences are psychologically harmful, they acknowledged that repeated involvement may increase emotional vulnerability among students. The implication of this finding is that university counselling services should provide more psychological support and mental health education for students.

In addition, this study established that hookup businesses negatively affected the social lives of undergraduate students through risky sexual behaviour, social stigma, poor academic performance, weakened moral values, and damaged social reputation. This finding is not surprising because involvement in risky social activities often exposes students to behavioural and academic challenges. This finding aligns with earlier studies on the social consequences of hookup culture among youths. For instance, Paul, McManus, and Hayes (2000) reported that frequent participation in hookup activities was associated with risky sexual practices and declining academic commitment. Likewise, Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (2019) highlighted those risky sexual relationships among young adults increase vulnerability to sexually transmitted infections and other health complications. Similarly, Adebayo (2021) found that students involved in hookup businesses often experience social judgment, reputational damage, and discrimination from peers and society. The implication of this finding is that hookup culture may negatively influence both the moral and academic development of university students if preventive educational programmes are not implemented.

Finally, this study revealed significant gender differences in the causes, experiences, and effects of hookup businesses among undergraduate students, with female students recording higher mean scores across the identified variables. This finding is expected because females are often more vulnerable to the social, emotional, and reputational consequences associated with hookup culture



in many African societies. This finding is in agreement with previous studies on gender and hookup experiences. For instance, Oladipo and Adeoye (2018) reported that female students are more likely to experience emotional pressure and social stigma in hookup relationships than male students. Similarly, Vogel, Wade, and Haake (2013) found that women generally report higher emotional and psychological effects following socially sensitive experiences. In the same manner, Oyewole, Adepoju, and Olagoke (2023) explained that cultural expectations and gender roles often place heavier social consequences on female participants in transactional relationships. However, Hyde (2014) argued that males and females may experience similar psychological outcomes, although societal reactions often differ. The implication of this finding is that gender-sensitive interventions and counselling programmes are necessary in addressing hookup-related challenges among university students.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study revealed that hookup businesses among undergraduate students are influenced by economic, social, and peer-related factors and are associated with psychological, social, and academic consequences. The findings further showed significant gender differences, indicating the need for counselling, awareness programmes, and targeted interventions within universities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made to reduce the prevalence and negative effects of hookup businesses among undergraduate students:

1. University management should organise regular awareness programmes and seminars to educate students on the psychological, social, and academic consequences of involvement in hookup businesses.
2. Counselling units in tertiary institutions should strengthen mental health support services to assist students experiencing emotional stress, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem associated with hookup activities.
3. Parents and guardians should provide adequate emotional, moral, and financial support to students in order to reduce economic pressures that may encourage involvement in hookup businesses.
4. Government and non-governmental organisations should introduce empowerment programmes, scholarships, and financial assistance schemes to help students meet their academic and personal needs legitimately.
5. Social media campaigns should be intensified to discourage the promotion of transactional relationships and unhealthy lifestyles among young people.
6. Religious bodies and community leaders should collaborate with educational institutions to promote moral values, healthy relationships, and responsible social behaviour among undergraduates.
7. University authorities should develop gender-sensitive intervention programmes that specifically address the unique experiences and vulnerabilities of male and female students involved in hookup businesses.



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