



The Trends of Human Trafficking Among Women in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State

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Publication Process	Date
Received	September 11th, 2020
Accepted	October 15th, 2020
Published	November 30th, 2020

ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to investigate the trends of human trafficking among women in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. To achieve this objective, four research questions and two research hypotheses were formulated to guide this study. The data was collected from primary sources. The primary data was collected with the help of a well-structured questionnaire administered to Two Hundred and Eight thousand inhabitants of Oredo Local Government of Edo State, Nigeria. The data collected were analyzed with tables and simple percentages to analyze the research questions and to test the research hypothesis. The research findings showed that the major causes of trafficking among women in Oredo are competition and rivalry as well as polygamy and too many children, while the use of force, abduction and deception was identified as ways through which the perpetrators of human trafficking carry out their business. Thus, the study recommended that Parents should endeavor to monitor their children's activities especially when they are being fostered by relatives, also, the Government of Nigeria should ensure a friendly and humane political economy as existing social security programmes are totally inadequate, thereby compelling citizens to take to engage in illegal acts for survival.

Keywords: Human trafficking; Child Trafficking; Women Trafficking; Edo State; Oredo

Introduction

Human trafficking is a global problem described as a modern form of slavery. Women and children form the main victims of the illicit trade. International Labour Organisation (2008) findings indicate that women and girls make up 98 percent of the persons trafficked across international borders. Women who are victims of trafficking are sold for sexual exploitation. This underscores the gender dimension of sex trafficking. Akor (2011) describes human trafficking as the unlawful movement of persons from one destination to another often for forced labour, sexual exploitation or both. Whatever purpose victims are trafficked for, it is an act that withdraws their free will in exchange for coercion. Trafficking and slavery are two phenomena that are very much interwoven as they coerce victims to render involuntary services. Several factors have been adduced to serve as the root causes of human trafficking. Vogelstein (2018) opines that family disintegration which is a common trend across the globe in the 21st century contributes to human trafficking. Other causes of human trafficking according to Bamgbose (2005) and Barry (2015) include gender inequality, stereotyping females as sex hawkers, and globalization which is occasioned by the development of high-power media technologies. Human trafficking is an age-long practice globally. It is deeply rooted in the slavery era which had cost Africa a lifetime of fortunes. During the slavery era, human trafficking involves some situations where human persons are ferried across the Atlantic coast to faraway places under inhuman conditions. These practices which have been condemned globally since the 19th century and made illegal according to international conventions continue to exist in the 21st century. According to the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Related Matters (NAPTIP), it is disguised in other forms such as the trafficking of women including female children in most developing countries especially in Africa and particularly in Nigeria. The practice of human trafficking is widespread in places like Edo State, Nigeria, where more females are documented to have been victims of human trafficking. Despite efforts by state actors and non-state actors across international boundaries to halt human trafficking, it has continued unabated domestically and across international geographical boundaries, where the female victims have continued to be traded as housemaids, sex objects, and commercial sex hawkers among other forms of abuse dignifying modern slave.

Akor (2011) observes that over the decades, Nigerian women have been victims of sex trafficking to Italy. The migration of Nigerian women to Italy and across Europe could be linked to the political and economic status of Nigeria. It is also attributed to the ignorance and family size of women (Achebe, 2004). Some women could be ignorant that they will be compelled to prostitute themselves. Due to high responsibility associated with large family size, especially when the family has a poor income a member of the family. Globally, the sub-Saharan Africa region including Nigeria accounts for over Sixty percent of those involved in illegal migration for transactional sex (UNESCO, 2005). Similarly, in Nigeria, the phenomena of trafficking women for the purpose of transactional sex have continued to impact negatively on her image abroad. For example, available data indicate that about 10,000 Nigerian girls are on the streets of Italy transacting sex (Germano, 2001). Another estimate reveals that over 50,000 Nigerian girls, who are illegal migrants, are engaged in transactional sex on the streets of Europe and Asia (Loconto, 2002). The trend of increase in those involved is clearly shown by Ojomo (2001) who observed that in 1997, only 10 people were repatriated. This increased to 225 in 1999, 1,092 in 2000, in connection with illegal migration to Europe for the purpose of transactional sex. The number of these deportees had increased to 1,957 at the end of 2002 (UNICRI/UNDOC, 2003). The number of women deported from Europe over illegal migration, for the purpose of a sexual transaction, has continued to soar even afterward. Consequently, the United Nations Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) particularly labeled Nigeria as a leading country in human trafficking especially as regards trafficking of the under-aged or minors (Skogeth, 2006). Incidentally, the majority of those deported back to Nigeria are women who were trafficked for sexual purposes, are from a particular ethnic group in Nigeria, popularly known as 'Binis'. Benin City is the ancestral home of indigenous Binis and the capital of Edo State in the Southern part of Nigeria. It is currently regarded as a major market for cross border commercial sex work in Nigeria (Aghatise, 2002; UNICRI/UNDOC, 2003). To buttress the stance of the Nigerian government towards women trafficking, Nigeria is a signatory to some international conventions, which are directly targeted at eliminating all forms of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, yet there the phenomenon has continued unabated. Edo state has gained notoriety for human trafficking, particularly for sexual exploitation. As the world has experienced globalization, the trafficking of human beings for sex has taken yet another turn. Human traffickers, aware of the risks involved in the trafficking of human beings, have set up sophisticated channels and networks for the easy and undetected flow of trafficking business. Regardless of the interventions by international bodies, NGOs and national agencies to combat trafficking in Edo State, the region is still a hub for trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation. The focus of this study is the trends of human trafficking among women in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State.

Statement of the Problem

Despite efforts of state and non-state actors across international boundaries to halt human trafficking, the trends have continued unabated with more and more victims lured by traffickers. It is likely that the trends in human trafficking have continued particularly among women as they are often considered to be most affected by socio-economic and political instability in developing countries. In addition, the trends have likely assumed more worrisome dimensions because of the absence of educational or vocational training and employment opportunities for women, thereby exposing them as easy victims of human trafficking and preys to traffickers. It is also assumed that among rescued victims of human trafficking, women from Oredo Local Government Area in Edo State, constitute a sizeable portion. It is safe to assume that more women from this area of Edo State are likely to be easily lured into embarking on illegal migration which fuels human trafficking because other women who have been trafficked to Europe send a message back home which suggest that their social conditioned have been improved with their families signing their praises. This practice has affected unaccounted numbers of women including girls who are between the ages of 15-18 as no official record exists to document the numbers of women trafficked from Edo State. Findings by NAPTIP revealed that in 2014 Nigeria is ranked top among countries of the world where trafficking of human persons is common especially among women. According to the agency's statistics, six out of ten trafficked persons across the globe are Nigerians especially young females. However, this study aimed at examining the trends of human trafficking among women in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To identify the common causes of human trafficking among women in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State
- ii. To examine the common patterns of human trafficking among women in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State.

Research Questions

- i. What are the common causes of human trafficking among women in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State?
- ii. What are the common patterns of human trafficking among women in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State?

Research Hypothesis

- i. Poverty and economic imbalance are not a major cause of human trafficking among women.
- ii. Sex and trading in illicit drugs are not common forms of human trafficking among women.

Theoretical Framework

a. Conflict Theory

Conflict theory is based on the sociological fundamental idea that crime is caused by the economic and social drives within society. Conflict theory can help explain the thoughts and reasoning behind human trafficking. It argues that what could better explain the struggle between classes, human trafficking, and the victims versus the traffickers, then conflict theory. The conflict perspective of society stressed the existence of different value systems and norms that influence the efforts of people to establish rules and to regulate behaviours (Shoemaker, 2009). Karl Marx's concept surrounding social conflict theory states that there is a constant conflict between two groups. We cannot think of more conflict than that of a victim at the hands of the perpetrator. In all societies, one of the most important status groups for determining people's chances in life has been their gender. In almost every case, women are markedly inferior to men in their access to wealth, power, autonomy, and other valued resources, in no almost no case are they superior (Wallace & Wolf, 1999). Conflict theory explains that the powerful and the haves are able to take things from the haves-not with economic ways or with force. On the contrary, human trafficking is able to do both. In almost all trafficking scenarios the traffickers are the men and the victims (women), and most likely children. Focus is on separating the powerful from the haves-not, taking away their family, their tradition, and all their connection to their community, as power would be looked at in human trafficking. The general thoughts behind social conflict theory are the general premise that is surrounding human trafficking. The traffickers, who are the

more powerful group, use their power to exploit groups with less power than themselves. In regard to the victims of the trafficking, with the constant separation between the classes, society has only driven a further division between the classes (Wallace & Wolf, 1999). The theory can be applied to the fact that society cannot stop until poverty and other class divisions are rectified. The traffickers have the money, the victim's passports, and other documentation, and there is no way for the women to get out, without money, so they try and work their way out with prostitution and the cycle continues seamlessly, due to the traffickers making the rules and the control they have overall the families. Conflict theory is a good example that explains trafficking in women and children.

b. Economic theory

Economic theory can be used to explain crimes, actions, and behaviours which calculate the gains and benefits accrued from participating in a certain task. The economic theory of crime suggests that people make decisions to offend in ways that resemble their decisions made about other non-criminal activities, (Witt & Witte 2000). The criminal might commit a crime if the expected gains from legal work are less than the ones that are to arise from illegal work. The underlying principle of the economic theory is that criminals commit crime because they have perceived the benefits from the crime to outweigh the possibility of being prosecuted and incurring costs, (Eagle & Betters, 2007; Persson & Siven, 2007). It is pointed out by Pratt (2008) as well as Witte & Witt (2002) that individuals apply legal or illegal actions because of the expected utility from those acts and are influenced by the fact that the possibility of the expected gains from crime relative to earnings from legal work accentuates trafficking endeavours. Another component of this theory is that the lesser the punishment the more human trafficking progresses. The probability of being apprehended prosecuted and sentenced and the value of the expected punishment will determine the extent of the crime. That brings another economic dimension in human trafficking that is presented by McCray (2006), in which he argues that certainty is more important than severity. Furthermore, McCray observes that the criminal in this regard would act like an economist and apply the image of a self-maximizing decision maker, carefully calculating his or her advantage, which might be different from an opportunist whose ill-considered and reckless nature might get him into trouble. Certainty and severity of punishment are the two variables that are considered important for the formulation of an integrated theory. In summary, once rational decisions have been made, vulnerability of potential victims ascertained and requirements of the demand considered the human trafficking process resumes. The human traffickers could by then have studied the legal response to human trafficking to ascertain the sanctions confronting them should they get caught by the criminal justice authorities. Hence, it is vital that a combination of public health, criminal justice, crime prevention and criminology conceptualized as Epidemiological Criminology should be considered to prevent, protect victims, and prosecute human traffickers of young women and girls for involuntary prostitution.

Empirical Review

Ndiora (2012) in her study aimed at finding the public perception of Onitsha inhabitants on female trafficking and organized crime in Nigeria. The major objective of the study according to the researcher was to look at female trafficking and organized crime in Onitsha, and suggest ways of reducing or eliminating the crime. In order to achieve results, the study utilizes two different instruments (i.e. Questionnaire and in-depth interview) to collect the needed data. The questionnaires were administered directly to the respondents by the researcher while the in-depth interviews were conducted by the researcher on sixteen NAPTIP officials by the researcher. The findings of the research showed that; main inhabitants of Onitsha do not know what trafficking in females is. All the victims of trafficking under the NAPTIP shelter in Enugu Zonal officer were not aware of the crime of trafficking in females, prior to their victimization. Some of the victims of trafficking in females knew the type of job they would be going into abroad, before accepting the offer. The researcher further posits that the quest to make money is the major motivating factor for which traffickers engage in trafficking. The researcher also discovered that there is a positive relationship between poverty and female trafficking in Onitsha, there is also a significant relationship between awareness and trafficking victimization, and that females with a lower level of education are not more likely to fall victims to female trafficking than those with a higher level of education.

Afonja (2001), carried out research titled an assessment of trafficking in women and girls in Nigeria in Edo and Delta States of Nigeria. The study used structured questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and Focused Group Discussion to elicit information from households' heads, women, and girls at risk, victims of human trafficking, NGOs, and other stakeholders making up a sample size of 500. The researcher noted that participation in trafficking involves a third party, which takes the form of an invitation from family members, friends, even strangers, who approach either the household heads or the girls concerned. The so-called Italios, adolescents aged 10-19-year olds, their sponsors, and

host in the country of destination are involved in the human trafficking process. Before departure from the state, rituals are performed by the parents, Italios, and sponsors to cement a covenant between them, to protect them from being apprehended, and to incur favour with their employers. Parents involved in initiating the contractual arrangements provide all or part of the funds for the journey and may also be indebted to the sponsors. According to the researcher, trafficking of girls and women from Nigeria is said to be especially well organized and centres on a female figure called "Mama" or "Madam". She plays a key role in luring young women to leave their homes for Italy. The trafficking web is organized at three levels; the first centres around "Mama" living in the country of origin; the second centres around the Nigerian "Mama" in Italy; and the third, the "Messengers": the persons transferring the money from Italy to Nigeria. As part of the 'recruitment' drive, Nigerian girls are contracted in the suburbs of cities such as Lagos or Benin City and in the countryside in the South and East. The researcher ends by saying that many of those who are trafficked to Europe for prostitution have tended to be of the Ibo tribe and from Edo and Delta States.

Nwokeoma (2010) carried out a study on the opinion and perception on factors affecting human trafficking in Imo and Edo States of Nigeria. He adopted a cross-sectional survey design and used multistage random sampling processes to achieve a required sample size of 1200. He utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. The findings established a high level of human trafficking in both states. In Edo state, however, there was a higher level of trafficking in women but recorded a higher level of child trafficking in Imo state. He recorded that the traffickers were mostly close relatives and surprisingly parents. The age group of persons with the most vulnerabilities of being trafficked is 15-24 for women and 6-15 for children. The victims were also found to go through traditional forms of bondage to ensure loyalty and obedience to the exploiters. The victims of trafficking are controlled through many different ways: physically, through beatings, burnings, rapes, and starvation; emotionally, through isolation, psychological abuse, drug dependency, and threats against family members in home countries and financially through debt bondage and the threat of deportation.

Laczko and Gramegna (2003) carried out a research in South Africa for the International Organisation for Migration's (IOM). The study covered Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, and South Africa's 4 major cities. The study focused on the various definitions of trafficking, the legal dimension, and the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation. Of the 232 interviews conducted, 25 trafficked women and children from 11 countries were identified. This confirmed the existence of trafficking in persons to the level it could be called a social problem.

Castle and Diarra (2003) carried out a research in Mali, focusing on the causes, context, and consequences of youth trafficking in 4 communities at risk. In all, 950 youths were purposively sampled. The research identified a variety of contextual migration, of which trafficking is an important subject. The youth (10-18-year olds) migrant basically to fulfill the demand for cheap labour.

Previous Studies on Trafficking in Edo State

Much of the information on trafficking in women in Nigeria is found on the pages of newspapers where reports of arrests of traffickers or repatriation of victims are recorded. For example, the Guardian Newspaper of 17 January 2001, reported that according to Mrs. Titi Abubakar, the wife of the Vice President of Nigeria, and founder of WOTCLEF, at least 1,116 trafficked girls were repatriated from various countries in 2001. The Punch of 19 October 2001, reported that Calabar, the Cross-River State capital, had become a transit point for traffickers. According to the paper, because of the war declared on trafficking in women in Edo State, and the consequent security alert at the nation's western borders, traffickers and their agents were now using Calabar ports and the various creeks in the areas as departure points to transport victims. The Newswatch Magazine of 26 July 1999 also reported details on girls being trafficked for prostitution abroad. According to Chief Isekhure of Benin, as reported in the article, traffickers had formed themselves into a cartel, with many of them owning properties in Benin and Lagos. Several other reports have also been made in other dailies in Nigeria. The first major survey of human trafficking was conducted by WHARC (Women's Health and Action Research Centre, WHARC, 2002). It conducted a community-based study to estimate the extent of sexual trafficking in Benin City, Edo State with funding provided by the Ford Foundation. In the study, 1,456 randomly selected women aged 15-30 years were interviewed in their homes to determine their knowledge of and experiences in relation to sex trafficking. Nearly 5% of the respondents reported that they had previously travelled abroad, while 32% reported that somebody had recently approached them to assist them to obtain papers to travel abroad. Friends and relatives (aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, parents and husbands) were reported by over 60% of the respondents as those most likely to offer such assistance. The respondents said that lack of economic means of survival is the major reason that drove women into prostitution

outside Nigeria. The countries to which women were trafficked were in order of frequency Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Germany and Belgium. The results of the study confirmed the high prevalence of sexual trafficking in Edo State of Nigeria. There was considerable pressure on women who have not yet been trafficked from relatives and friends, to involve them in trafficking. The study concluded that a broad-based community approach was required to reduce sexual trafficking in the State. WHARC also devoted a special edition of its journal, Women's Health Forum, to sexual trafficking (WHARC, 2002). Several prominent persons in the State were interviewed to ascertain their views on sex trafficking. In another study, GPI (Girls' Power Initiative, 2002) examined sex trafficking in 4 States; these were: Edo, Delta, Akwa Ibom and Cross River States of Nigeria. The study focused on why girls were being trafficked from Nigeria, what should be done to help girls resist being trafficked, and which services should be put in place for girls who do not want to be trafficked. FGD sessions were held with adolescent boys and girls, male and female parents, while 299 in-depth interviews were held with victims, boys, girls, traffickers, opinion leaders, NGOs, CBOs (community-based organizations), traditional and religious leaders, policymakers and other representatives of Government. The study was conducted between September 2001 and January 2002. The study found that girls were more susceptible to trafficking abroad for several reasons. Firstly, there is a demand for their sexual services (they were more marketable abroad), it was therefore profitable for traffickers to deal in women. Parents preferred to send daughters abroad because they could be relied upon to assist the family and help lift them out of poverty, girls were more willing to sacrifice themselves for their families. The success stories of other girls who had been trafficked and had made it, also encouraged others to try their luck. High rates of unemployment among girls due to relatively low levels of female education because of the unwillingness of their parents to send them to school, provided a pool of girls to be trafficked abroad. The study made several recommendations to enable girls to resist being trafficked abroad. Thus the 2 studies described above emphasize the prevalence of sex trafficking in Edo State, and the predisposing factors. Unemployment and poverty were the main push factors while the demand for sex workers in foreign countries was a major pull factor (Babafemi, 2010).

Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey study design. This study method was appropriate because it explored and described the relationship between variables in their natural setting without manipulating them. The design aimed at obtaining information that could be analyzed, patterns extracted and a comparison made for the purpose of clarification and provision of a basis for making decisions. Both qualitative and quantitative data were obtained for comparison purposes. The population for this study consists of about Two Hundred and Eight thousand inhabitants of Oredo Local Government of Edo State, Nigeria.

The sampling method used for this research is the probability sampling method using a cluster method. A simple random method was used to pick out the cluster. Target Respondents for this research are 208 inhabitants of the Local Government under study, aged between 18-65 years old. Both primary and secondary data was used in this study. The research instrument used in this study was self-administered questionnaires involving both structured and unstructured question items. The structured items enabled the researcher to tabulate and analyse data with ease, while the unstructured items facilitated in-depth responses and opinions beyond the researcher's scope of understanding. Data was collected using the mono data collection method through the use of a single technique of structured Questionnaires. The Questionnaires contained closed-ended questions that will give respondents a fixed set of options to pick from. These closed-ended questions will include multiple-choice questions and 4-point Likert scale. Their responses will be inputted into SPSS for Analyses.

Table 1 What is the major cause of trafficking among women in Oredo?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Competition and Rivalry	166	79.8	79.8	79.8
	Polygamy and too many children	42	20.2	20.2	100.0
	Total	208	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 above shows that 166 (79.8%) of the respondents accept that competition and rivalry is a major cause of trafficking among women in Oredo while 42 (20.2%) of the respondents accept that polygamy and too many children is a major cause of trafficking among women in Oredo

Table 2 How is human trafficking carried out?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Use of Force	123	59.1	59.1	59.1
	Abduction	60	28.8	28.8	88.0
	Deception	25	12.0	12.0	100.0
	Total	208	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 above shows that 123 (59.1%) of the respondents accept that Human Trafficking is carried out by the use of force on victims, 60 (28.8%) of the respondents accept that Human Trafficking is carried out by abduction of victims while 25 (12.0%) of the respondents accept that Human Trafficking is carried out by deception of victims.

Statistical analysis is a vital aspect of research. The choice of an appropriate statistical method depends on factors such as sample size and characteristics, the hypothesis being tested, and research design

Tables and percentages were used as techniques for analyzing research questions.

Findings based on Statistical Analysis

1. What are the common causes of human trafficking among women in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State?

According to the data presented in Table 1 it was established that the major causes of trafficking among women in Oredo are competition and rivalry as well as polygamy and too many children with a higher percentage (79.8%) of respondents accepting that competition and rivalry was the major cause of tracking.

2. How is human trafficking among women carried out in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State?

According to presented data in table 2 the use of force, abduction and deception was identified as ways through which the perpetrators of human trafficking carry out their business.

Research Findings

After subjecting the hypothesis of the research work to critical analysis, the following findings were made:

1. The major causes of trafficking among women in Oredo are competition and rivalry as well as polygamy and too many children.
2. The use of force, abduction, and deception was identified as ways through which the perpetrators of human trafficking carry out their business

Conclusion

The study reiterates that all human societies, irrespective of their levels of development have crime and criminality to contend with. Heads of different states have proposed indispensable foundations for a more peaceful, prosperous, and just world but these are yet to be achieved. The government of Nigeria and that of Edo State are firmly committed to combating trafficking in persons in all its forms, ensuring that criminals who engage in trafficking

are aggressively investigated, swiftly prosecuted, and severely punished and that the victims are provided with the assistance they need. This firm commitment of the Nigerian government has not reduced the incidence of trafficking in females in the country, as the recent press release of the Nigerian Immigration Service (2017) clearly reports that the crime is on the increase. Efforts should be geared towards employing proactive measures in combating this crime the study revealed that many inhabitants of Oredo Local Government (a town that has social characteristics that are susceptible to vulnerability) have never heard of trafficking in females but most households do not see their daughters travelling out to prostitute as trafficking so long as there is a regular flow of money. Another disturbing observation is the close association of polygyny with the problem of sex-trafficking as a result of family disorganizations. The family is a crucial socializing agency whose social functions cannot be undermined. The Oredo family has to be targeted for restorative work, so as to re-position it again.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher made the following recommendations:

- i. Parents should endeavour to monitor their children's activities especially when they are being fostered by relatives. A good understanding of the activities of potential relative fosterer will enable parents to make good judgment to know if their children would be adequately taken care of by potential fosterers.
- ii. A collaboration with the palace in an effort geared towards re-socializing the youths, and parents with the support of the active involvement of the Oredo Chiefs would go a long way in ameliorating the problem of sex trafficking in the area.
- iii. The legal instruments in Edo State and Nigeria need to be strengthened to properly enforce the inclusion of third parties in the prosecution of traffic-related offences. Beyond directs sponsors and traditional priests, third-party prosecutions should also include parents or relatives who are found to have been party to such crimes.
- iv. The Federal Government of Nigeria should ensure a friendly and humane political economy as existing social security programmes are totally inadequate, thereby compelling citizens to take to engage in illegal acts for survival.

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