

The Economic Implications of Child Trafficking and Young Persons in Edo State, Nigeria: Matters Arising

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on Trafficking of Children and Young Persons and its economic implications for Edo state and Nigeria in general. Specifically the study seeks to examine reasons for trafficking of children and the young Nigerians with particular reference to Edo State. The study also seeks to find out the causes of trafficking of children and young Nigerians. It explains the economic implication of trafficking of children and young Nigerians as well as identifies possible solutions to the menace of trafficking of children in Nigeria. Descriptive survey was used in the study and the questionnaire method was used to elicit responses from respondents on certain outlined questions. Results from the study show that Millions of young Nigerian women, girls, boys, youth and children are at risk of human trafficking due to the following contributing factors: illiteracy, ignorance, greed, lack of opportunity, etc. Children and the young people are getting trapped by the perpetrators, and becoming victims of human trafficking. Human traffickers or perpetrators often see young people, especially women, girls and children as commodities. The study recommends that Government should hold complicit officials as well as individuals associated with the crime accountable for trafficking offenses. Also, government should strengthen efforts to identify trafficking victims among vulnerable groups and facilitate training for local, state, and federal judges on human trafficking.

Keywords: Children; Trafficking; Economy; Implications; Nigeria

Introduction

Trafficking of children and young people all over the world seems to be a lucrative business, especially in the aspect of organ harvesting and forced labour for domestic uses. The illicit trafficking of children constitutes a form of exploitation that poses a grave threat to the lives of these children. Exploitation is the act of utilizing another individual or their possessions (resources) in order to acquire personal benefit or advantage. Salihu and Ajio (2019) define "economic exploitation" as the perception of a human being as a mere resource by an organization, without considering the individual's well-being. As stated by Anuforum (2014), human trafficking can be defined as the illicit movement of individuals from their original locations or residences to different places or environments,

with the purpose of subjecting them to exploitative conditions, such as engaging in prostitution, domestic or child labour, or other forms of exploitative work. Human trafficking, as defined in Section 103(8) of the United States Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, refers to two main forms: A) sex trafficking, which involves inducing a person to engage in a commercial sex act through force, fraud, or coercion, or when the person is under 18 years old; or (B) the recruitment, harbouring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labour services through the use of force.

The term "trafficking" is legally defined by Section 64 of the Act (Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act, 2003/2005, the Child Rights Act, 2003/2005). According to this definition, trafficking encompasses all actions related to the recruitment, transportation within or across Nigerian borders, purchase, sale, transfer, receipt, or harbouring of a person. These actions involve the use of deception, coercion, or debt bondage. The Edo State administration has reiterated its commitment to eradicating the problem of human trafficking and illegal migration within the state. It has achieved notable success by securing the conviction of seven individuals involved in human trafficking, and is currently prosecuting 47 others for their participation in this criminal activity (Egbejule, 2023). Itohan Okungbowa, the Executive Secretary of the Edo State Taskforce against Human Trafficking, said this during a press conference preceding the International Community Unites programme, which aims to aid the fight against sex trafficking in Nigeria through the screening of the film "Oloture." The press conference was held at the Victor Uwaifo Creative Hub in Benin City. According to Okungbowa, the government has made significant strides in combating human trafficking and illegal migration since the establishment of the Taskforce in 2017. Furthermore, he stated that the government is persistently trying to eradicate the issue in Edo. He further expressed admiration for the former Governor of Edo State, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, for establishing the organization in 2017, as it has made significant efforts to combat the problem of human trafficking in the state. In its endeavours to combat the epidemic, the administration acknowledged the existence of an issue, which has facilitated the adoption of a proactive approach towards addressing the topic. Currently, we have successfully prosecuted seven individuals involved in human trafficking within the state, and there are 47 further cases awaiting resolution in court (Egbejule, 2023). The Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) has lately discovered new trafficking routes in the northwestern region of the country. As reported by Xinhua General News Service in 2003, human traffickers and smugglers have changed their route from the previous Lagos-Ogun axis to the northern fringes of the country. This new road allows them to reach Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Niger, as they make their way to Italy, Spain, and other European countries. This modification was implemented to bypass the security procedures that had been established along the conventional Lagos-Ogun route. During a seminar organized by the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) in Lagos in March 2002, WOTCLEF disclosed that around twenty thousand (20,000) Nigerian women are employed in the sex industry in Italy. Approximately 80% of the non-native women engaged in prostitution in Italy were of Nigerian origin, as reported in a survey published in the Daily Champion on July 12, 2002 (Osita, 2012). Child trafficking occurs throughout Nigeria, with children being transported from regions such as Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Ebonyi, Imo, and Kwara to prominent cities like Abuja, Lagos, Kano, and Kaduna, where they are subjected to exploitative labour. Subsequently, these youngsters are either sold into the sex trade or coerced into engaging in prostitution. Children are transported illicitly from the communities of Ekor and Nko, situated in Cross River state, inside the southern part of Nigeria, to the western regions of Ondo and Ogun. As per a police report, around 50,000 Nigerian ladies engaged in the sex trade were abandoned on the streets of Europe and Asia in the year 2001. Most of these girls originate from the southern Nigerian states of Edo, Delta, and Lagos. This analysis fails to consider the numerous girls who are scattered across the globe, as well as those who have died or have been severely affected by diseases like HIV/AIDS (Aghatise, 2014). The United States of America's

office stated that the Government of Nigeria does not completely meet the minimum requirements for eliminating trafficking, but is making substantial efforts to do so. This statement was made in response to the activities of traffickers, when the Nigerian-UK Joint Border Task Force (JBTF) conducted numerous international anti-trafficking operations with the aim of disrupting, identifying, apprehending, and prosecuting members of organized crime groups.

The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) may have collaborated with the authorities in Germany, Spain, and Burundi on various trafficking cases, including by addressing requests for mutual legal aid. Furthermore, NAPTIP collaborated with the governments of Cambodia, Ghana, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Mali, and Senegal to expedite the repatriation of human trafficking victims to their respective nations. The administration engaged in bilateral negotiations with the governments of The Gambia, Burkina Faso, and Cote d'Ivoire, as well as with the governments of Germany, India, and Spain, to address issues related to human trafficking. Consequently, there has been a decrease in the global trafficking of children and young individuals. As acknowledged by the United Nations in the accord to avert, suppress, and penalize the act of trafficking in individuals, particularly women and children, human trafficking can transpire at a national or even a regional scale. This, particularly, applies to circumstances involving women and children. The protocol is alternatively referred to as the Trafficking Protocol and the Palermo Protocol. Each of these names denotes the identical entity. The Trafficking Protocol is a pioneering global treaty that stands as the sole agreement to encompass a universally recognized definition of the term "trafficking." One of its objectives is to promote international cooperation in the investigation and prosecution of individuals accountable for such trafficking. Engaging in human trafficking is a breach of international law. The illicit activity commonly referred to as "human trafficking" manifests in various configurations. Notable forms of human trafficking include human trafficking in marriage through deception, labour trafficking such as child trafficking, sex trafficking, forced marriage of underage individuals, and other forms of forced marriage. Godwin Obaseki, the immediate past Governor of Edo State, was observed participating in a workshop organized by the State Government. The Honourable Laura Boldrini, an attendant of Italian government officials from the Italian Chamber of Deputies, accompanied him. According to Governor Godwin Obaseki, human trafficking is a type of contemporary slavery that is more abhorrent than kidnapping. Ebegbulem's (2017) findings showed that Governor Godwin Obaseki expressed discontentment with the activities of human traffickers in Edo state. A recent study also revealed that Europe has caught more than 37,000 illegal immigrants, with around 15,000 originating from the states of Edo and Delta. According to Ebegbulem (2017), this issue concerns the conservation of our community and requires urgent consideration. The president of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, Honourable Laura Boldrini, expressed her admiration for Governor Obaseki's endeavours to restore the deteriorating Benin Technical College (BTC), empower women mechanics in Edo state, and generate employment opportunities for the state's youth. However, she acknowledged the prevalence of human trafficking in Edo state based on the available records and pledged that the Italian government would provide financial and moral assistance to the state government in this regard.

Trafficking of Children and the young has grown into multi-billion naira organization in the country; Nigeria has become a destination and a transit route for the trafficking of children and young people. The high rate of trafficking of children, girls and women has become a serious issue in the country that the Nigerian government cannot afford to look side. The Office of the United State of America on the prohibition and trafficking in persons reports, one thousand six hundred and thirty-four (1, 634) trafficking victims, five hundred and forty-three (543) labor trafficking victims, and two hundred and fifty (250) victims of unspecified forms of trafficking; compared with identifying 935 victims the previous reporting period. Of the eight hundred and forty one (841) sex trafficking victims,

seven hundred and three (763) were women, four were men; sixty-seven (67) were girls and seven were boys. Of the five hundred and forty-three (543) labor trafficking victims, one hundred and eighty-three (183) were men, two hundred and ninety (290) were women, seventeen (17) were boys, and fifty three (53) were girls. Of the two hundred and fifty (250) victims of unspecified forms of trafficking, all were children, sixty-five (65) boys and one hundred and eighty-five (185) girls. Over time, the destinations have always been internal or external trafficking. Internal trafficking is factored by poverty and desire for employee ability. This has been the earliest form of trafficking of children and young in the country. The United Nations report that Nigeria is among the top ten (10) countries for the trafficking of children and the young. (Uzoma, 2012). External trafficking, involves the trafficking of girl-child to Europe, Middle East, North African and West and Central African countries for varied reasons. The most common reasons are needs for financial purpose, cheap labour, organ harvesting and theft. Without doubt, the trafficking of children and the young has economic implications, which could be immediate or long-term effects on the society. The immediate effect is the brain-drain it creates in the system, where Nigeria lost her future generation to trafficking, creating a psychological impact on their thoughts and mood of association while the long-term effects, it damages the image of Nigeria, locally and internationally.

Nigeria is significantly impacted by the formidable issue of human trafficking. The dilemma is of such extent and dimensions that it continues to impose a significant moral and socio-economic burden on Nigerian residents. Saraki, as stated by Umoru (2017, p.16), asserts that human trafficking has increasingly emerged as a significant menace to the progress of the nation, due to the negative reputation it has generated for Nigeria and the consequential security risks posed by trafficking victims. Furthermore, this has also enticed global media to disseminate many cynical and dehumanizing remarks on Nigeria and her citizens. Furthermore, it has been noted that the demise of individuals who have fallen victim to human trafficking has a detrimental impact on the efficiency and output of their family, the community, and the entire nation. As human beings play a crucial role in driving growth, the loss of an individual's life has a significant impact on national progress, as it depletes the country's workforce and manpower. The significance of human resources in the administration of material resources is essential, as machines are incapable of operating autonomously. The current economic surplus and potential economic surplus serve as indicators of development. This suggests that human trafficking has a direct impact on both the current and future economic surplus of a country, as individuals are continuously moving from their home countries to another, so undermining their ability to contribute to sustainable national growth. The fundamental source of a nation's prosperity is primarily determined by the richness of its skilled and productive human resources. Consequently, a nation where human trafficking is prevalent faces a significant risk of health issues, including HIV/AIDS and pelvic inflammatory disorders. This, in turn, hampers productivity, entrepreneurial endeavours, and the ability to make meaningful contributions to the economy. Krug, *et al* (2002, p.63) stated that early childhood trafficking not only exposes children to child work and violence, but also has a detrimental impact on brain development, increasing their vulnerability to various mental and physical health issues.

The general objective of this study is to examine trafficking of children and young person's using the economic implication of Nigeria as a case study. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine reasons and causes for the trafficking of children and the young in Nigeria.
2. Find out if an economic implication enhances trafficking of children and young in Nigeria.
3. Find out possible solutions to the menace of trafficking of children and young in Nigeria.

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study

1. What are the reasons and causes of trafficking of children and young in Nigeria?
2. Do economic implications enhance trafficking of children and young in Nigeria?
3. What are the possible solution to the menace of trafficking of children and young in Nigeria?

H_{01} = There is no significant relationship between children and young trafficking in Nigeria and economic implication

H_{a1} = there is a significant relationship between children and young trafficking in Nigeria and economic implication

Conceptual Review of Relevant Literature

Trafficking

Article 3 of the Palermo Protocol, an agreement between the United Nations and various entities, provides the following definition of human trafficking: "any form of coercion, including but not limited to the use of force, threat, deception, abduction, payment, or benefit exchange in order to secure the consent of a person in a position of authority; or the harboring, transfer, recruitment, or placement of individuals under such circumstances." Child trafficking continues to be a significant concern for the Nigerian population, despite the implementation of numerous attempts to tackle the issue. Although the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement Act and the Child Rights Act of 2003 have been enacted, instances of human trafficking have not decreased. Although these laws were enacted in 2003, this remains accurate. Child and adolescent trafficking has unexpectedly proliferated to the extent that it is now considered a global concern, despite constitutional provisions that forbid forced labour and enslavement on this demographic.

As in the rest of Nigeria, several arguments have been advanced for why trafficking has become such a lucrative business in Edo State. Due to causes like as poverty, a lack of educational and economic opportunities, and so on, one's hometown may be the source of one's voluntary movement within or outside of Edo State in search of a better life. As a result of globalization, national borders have been more open to increased commerce in goods and capital, resulting in increased labour migration as well as increased cross-border movement of people. People are driven to move due to the economic consequences of globalization, putting them at danger of being exploited by traffickers. Parents in Edo State finally became engaged by selling their property to ensure that their daughters or sons were transported abroad. Meanwhile, the sponsors took these victims to native doctors to have them swear a loyalty oath before transporting them to Italy or any other European country (Ebegbulem, 2017). In light of the preceding statement, the goal of the research project is to explore the practise of human trafficking in Nigeria, with a focus on the economic consequences of doing so.

Human Trafficking

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Nigeria is a leader in human trafficking, including both transnational and domestic versions of the crime. Human trafficking includes the exploitation of women and children for low-wage labour and prostitution as a means for traffickers to elevate themselves and their families out of poverty. Human trafficking occurs within Nigeria's borders, as well as in surrounding countries and numerous European countries. This is because these countries can transfer women and children inside a human trafficking network in order to increase the market for this sector of the economy. Nigerian gangs, according to Wikipedia (2019), are responsible for trafficking hundreds of women to sex markets in Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands. According to studies, Italy has the largest population of Nigerians brought to the nation as a result of human trafficking. There is an estimated 10,000 Nigerian prostitutes working in Italy, all of whom have been victims of human trafficking. Human trafficking of Nigerian women into Italy began in the 1980s, when Italy was importing foreign labourers to sustain its booming informal

economy. Italy was importing Nigerian women at the time. A group of Nigerian ladies travelled to the Campania region in central Italy to collect tomatoes. From here, they were drawn to the main cities of Rome, Naples, and Florence, where their charms were in high demand. Since then, the trade has grown, and traffickers have stepped in to take advantage of widespread poverty and the shredding of social services that occurred while the country was under military administration. (2017) published in The Vanguard.

Nigeria has a long history of financial problems, which have historically resulted in high unemployment and widespread poverty. Over 15 million Nigerians are thought to be living outside of their native country in quest of a better standard of life, education, and employment possibilities than those available in Nigeria. Getting a job outside the country and sending money back to their families in Nigeria is a typical reason for Nigerians to leave their home country in pursuit of better economic prospects. Despite having a population of more than 180 million people, Nigeria is one of the six poorest countries in Africa, with a gross national product (GNP) per capita of around \$280 US dollars, according to Wikipedia's 2019 data. Human trafficking has been combated in Nigeria through programmes established by local organizations such as NAPTIP's Public Enlightenment Unit, which collaborates with the Devatop Centre for Africa Development, and the Italian government, which collaborates with the Nigerian government to reduce the high rates of human trafficking in Italy. These projects have been effective in reducing the amount of human trafficking in Italy. Not only does Italy have law enforcement personnel stationed in large cities to close down brothels, but the Italian government also has initiatives in place with social workers to help women reintegrate into society once they have reached independent independence. Because many Nigerians who relocate to Italy are illiterate and have no prior experience with city life, it may be difficult for Nigerians without support to find a place in Italian cities where they belong.

Trafficking of Children and Adolescents

In Nigeria, the definition of a child varies depending on which law is being used and the aim that is being pursued. A person is considered a child if they are younger than 14 years old, while a young person is a child who is younger than 17 years old but has attained the age of 14. The ceiling age in Nigerian legislation is lower than the age standard stated in relevant international instruments. Any human being under the age of 18 is considered a kid, according to the International Instrument on the Status of Children (ACRWC, 2016). A recent study on children found that traffickers lie about the age of trafficked victims in order to beat security agents (Laden, 1997). This is the difficulty with age-based definitions; they are always arbitrary and risk becoming obsolete due to modern perspectives.

Stakeholders have engaged in a concerted and cooperative endeavour to arrive at a well-informed consensus regarding the characteristics of child trafficking. Despite the fact that a precise definition of child trafficking is elusive, the concept of child trafficking warrants further examination. On the contrary, human trafficking can be precisely characterized as a substantial violation of intrinsic human dignity and fundamental human rights. It encompasses the utilization of merciless strategies, including the exploitation and deceit of vulnerable individuals, as well as the application of coercion, force, assault, and intimidation. Moreover, trafficking could potentially be perceived as an extension of organized criminal operations. A previous council decision was superseded in 2011 by the European Union Directive on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Persons and protecting its Victims. The definition of this directive was expanded in accordance with the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Particularly Women and Children. In 2000, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime was supplemented by this protocol. This operation was conducted in adherence to the stipulations of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

Economic challenges ensued as a consequence of the structural adjustment programmes (SAP) that the Nigerian government, with the assistance of the International Monetary Fund, implemented.

Consequently, in the late 1980s, trafficking of Nigerian women and young girls to Italy with the intention of involving them in prostitution commenced. This action was taken in response to the growing demand for Nigerian sex labourers in Italy. The primary impetus behind the initial migration of Nigerian women and girls to Europe was the allure of lucrative employment prospects in offices, factories, and farms. After making their way to Italy, they discovered the disheartening reality that they had been duped into participating in prostitution and then forced into sexual servitude in order to repay the debts they had been fraudulently informed they had accumulated while receiving aid to travel to Europe. A considerable proportion of those who travelled to Italy in the 1980s obtained employment as prostitutes; furthermore, some of these women assumed the role of pimps, thereby participating in the exploitation of their fellow countrymen. Since 1995, a significant proportion of girls and women who were trafficked to Italy were aware of the improbable likelihood of obtaining legal employment and the potential for involvement in the sex trade. On the contrary, a significant proportion of these Nigerian women had not engaged in prostitution within their native nation. The consequence was that an overwhelming majority of them were not acquainted with the term "prostitution." The majority of individuals were lacking knowledge regarding the working conditions they would be exposed to and were not cognizant of the harmful aspects associated with prostitution. Section 12(1) (b) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Electoral Act 2010 absolves the traffickers of any liability for compelling or coercing the women into prostitution on the grounds that they were fully contacted. This is due to the fact that a considerable proportion of women recognized the potential necessity of engaging in prostitution.

In the third world, human trafficking is increasingly emerging as the most prevalent form of organized crime, surpassing the trade in illegal narcotics and weapons. Human trafficking is an illicit commerce that involves the forced labour, sexual exploitation for financial gain, and enslavement of individuals. Since the latter half of the 19th century, human and child trafficking has been a subject that has consistently garnered the attention of civil society organizations and the international community. Illicit trade frequently diminishes the worth of human beings, regarding them as trivial commodities. As a result, individuals involved in these endeavours endure challenging circumstances while being transported and encounter obstacles when attempting to assimilate into the host societies. Women and children, in particular, are subject to heightened susceptibility to physical violence, marginalization, exclusion, and discrimination. Human traffickers pursue various illicit activities, including but not limited to prostitution, forced labour, pornography, sex tourism, and fraudulent adoptions (Saadatu, 2013, p.13). The traffickers maintain their activities through the implementation of strategic duplicity, manipulation of public opinion, false assurances, and coercion. The issue of human trafficking has evolved into a global enterprise that generates significant financial profits for both the perpetrators and organized criminal organizations. Saadatu (2013, p.14) asserts that individuals who have been subjected to domestic trafficking within their own nation are purportedly employed in a multitude of occupations, including but not limited to hawking, domestic service, and prostitution. The term "exploitation" encompasses a range of forms of exploitation, including but not limited to forced labour or services, prostitution, servitude, and organ removal, as well as multiple types of sexual exploitation. An act must simultaneously satisfy all three of the following criteria, as stated by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2015), in order to be classified as trafficking. Each of these activities is considered illegal, including harboring, transferring, or receiving individuals.

1. The Means (How it is done) Threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability, or giving payments or benefits to a person in control of the victim.

2. The Purpose (Why it is done) For the purpose of exploitation, which includes exploiting the prostitution of others, sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery or similar practices and the removal of organs.

The majority of victims are enticed to travel overseas by the prospect of substantial and uncomplicated profits inside a little timeframe. The majority of Nigerian trafficking victims is lacking in literacy skills and has no prior exposure to urban living until they end up in the vast city hubs of Turin, Milan, and Rome. Upon reaching their destinations, they are informed of their assigned tasks and the amount of money they are required to pay in order to recover their liberty. It is only at that moment that they come to the realization that they are ensnared in a type of enslavement to their traffickers, a realization that often occurs when it is already too late and exceedingly difficult to decline or escape. They are faced with the challenge of adapting to a new circumstance, nation, language, and social environment without any assistance or support from friends or relatives. They experience brutality, exploitation, and a way of life that they never anticipated. Nigerian women and girls are deceived into believing that they have received financial support to migrate to Italy for employment purposes. The individuals are informed that the person who funded their journey, referred to as the "madam," is currently located in Nigeria. However, the person they will be residing within Italy is an associate of the madam who will be providing them with hospitality. In both Nigeria and Italy, the "madam" and the hostess are active participants in the illegal activities of human trafficking and prostitution. The majority of "madams" are women who were previously enslaved as victims of trafficking. After successfully paying off their debt, they continue engaging in prostitution and save sufficient funds to purchase a girl who then becomes their slave. The girl or young woman is compelled to engage in prostitution and remunerate the "madam" a predetermined sum of money, just as the "madams" themselves were compelled to do. Nevertheless, the Nigerian victims have the belief that their exploiters are offering assistance to alleviate the suffering they have endured. It is only when they experience violence and degrading acts, being stripped of their clothing, money, and dignity, and enduring physical hardship and beatings that they come to understand that the deprivation they had previously experienced in Nigeria was preferable to the daily violence, humiliation, and misery they face in Italy.

Transported illegally or forcibly, Nigerian women and children are coerced from rural regions inside the nation's boundaries. Women and girls are compelled into involuntary domestic slavery and sexual exploitation, while boys are forced into labour in street vending, domestic service, mining, and begging (Adetiba, 1990). Nigerian women and children are trafficked from Nigeria to many West and Central African nations, including Gabon, Cameroon, Ghana, Chad, Benin, Togo, Niger, Burkina Faso, and the Gambia, for similar exploitative objectives. Children hailing from West African nations such as Benin, Togo, and Ghana, where the regulations of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) facilitate effortless access, are compelled to engage in labour within Nigeria. Furthermore, a portion of these children are subjected to perilous occupations within Nigeria's granite mines. Idia Renaissance, a local NGO founded in 1999, has been actively engaged in combating trafficking based on empirical evidence. With funding from the Swedish International Development Agency, Idia Renaissance and UNICEF opened a youth resource centre in 2004. The initiative teaches participants important life skills including problem-solving and negotiation, and also provides them with therapy, vocational training, information, and services. Idia Renaissance isn't the only NGO working to end human trafficking and help those who have been forced to leave their homes. Initiative for Youth Awareness on Migration, Immigration Development, and Reintegration (IYAMIR) and Girls' Power Initiative (GPI) are two such programmes. To protect victims of human trafficking, the Nigerian government operates a safe house known as the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP). Many people who have returned to Nigeria have benefited from business skills

training provided by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). To combat unemployment and aid victims of human trafficking, state officials in Edo launched an agricultural development initiative and the Edo State Taskforce against Human Trafficking (ETAHT) in 2017. Those who returned to Edo from other states were given a monthly stipend of 20,000 naira (\$56). The anti-trafficking task team reported disbursements of 60.17 million naira (\$168,543) through August of 2018 (Linus, 2019). Since its inception in 1994, Girls Power Initiative (GPI) has worked to address a variety of social and health concerns unique to young women. Ten (10) Libyan refugees were helped by the EU Trust Fund for Africa in 2019. Non-governmental organizations are helping refugees who have returned home to start businesses including barbershops, restaurants, and food markets. IOM, ETAHT, and NAPTIP are just a few of the NGOs that run educational programmes in places like supermarkets, classrooms, and neighborhoods. They promote safe migration practices and educate the public about the dangers of irregular migration through means like football tournaments, film showings, and radio dramas. People who have returned from dangerous situations can be significant resources in this profession because they can paint a more accurate picture of the situation and help get the word out faster. Employees of such groups work tirelessly because they feel compelled to solve a problem they care about. They grew up witnessing this issue and are committed to helping find a solution to it.

Child trafficking can result in the dual tragedies of disease and death. Hunger, a lack of education, child care, therapeutic abuse, and ritual murder are likely to occur. According to Adedoyin (1988), a disease study conducted in Lagos in 1985 revealed that starvation and famine were the top causes of death among children. Unfortunately, this causes health concerns and, in extreme cases, death (Anyanwu, 1993). Child trafficking results in unwanted pregnancies. This is the effect of sexual behaviour without protection. Children who are trafficked are vulnerable to exploitation in a variety of ways, including but not limited to sexual abuse, forced labour, and prostitution. Women and young girls are pregnant as a result of forced prostitution. If the pregnancy is unwanted, it's logical that the lady would prefer to end it at any cost. In the case of Attorney General of the Federation v. Ganiyu Ishola, a herbalist who impregnated a 13-year-old student and imprisoned her for 40 days. The defendant was found guilty and sentenced to two years in jail. The majority of victims are young women who may be embarrassed to show off their pregnancy or newborn. This is because children conceived in this manner are sometimes referred to as bastards or illegitimate offspring. Because of this, stigmatization can be a huge issue, producing stress within the family unit. Most young women who are forced to become pregnant flee to unknown regions, frequently far from their family and friends. Some victims find it difficult to return home to their parents and are treated with anger and rejection. As a result, the sufferer suffered indescribable pain because the cost of raising a newborn had risen to an unmanageable level. As a result, the victim may be more likely to engage in additional antisocial behaviour. A newborn baby is more vulnerable since the mother has the capacity to damage or abandon the child. This type of pregnancy accounts for a substantial proportion of orphans in Nigeria (Nwackuku, 2015), and in some circumstances, young girls sell their children for a pittance of between 150 and 200 thousand naira. The cause is unintended pregnancies (Alokan, 2010). We contend that child trafficking has had a disastrous impact on Nigerian women and girls, and we encourage the government to improve its anti-trafficking legislation to ensure that those who profit from the exploitation of children are held accountable.

Psychological trauma is defined as distress or grief caused by a stressful encounter (Ihejieta, 2020). This is identified as a result of child abduction. What adolescent victims of trafficking go through on their perilous journey to their destination countries is unfathomable. Most persons in Nigeria who take vows do so because they are forced to do so in unsafe shrines (Bello & Olutolu, 2015). The oath is a blood agreement that, if broken, will result in the annihilation of the victim and his whole family. Victims, most of who are between the ages of 16 and 25, have suffered bodily, psychological, and

spiritual harm as a direct result of accepting this promise. When child victims of sexual and other forms of exploitation see such atrocities, it is understandable that they feel hopeless. The unexpectedness of a job description could also be a sign of impending calamity. According to Konstantopoulos *et al.* (2013), girls are occasionally compelled to sleep with dogs, monkeys, and other family pets, a practice that can leave them feeling worthless and useless, as well as despairing. Human rights breaches, exploitation, and dehumanization are common characteristics of child trafficking, and they continue until the victim dies, is rescued, or is deported. Child trafficking victims have additional psychological distress as a result of being forced into servitude, denied access to education, and exposed to possibly lethal infections. The debate has made plainly clear that child trafficking involves a wide range of terrible activities that traumatize kids and must be faced head-on by proper and effective legislation regarding therapy, rehabilitation, and integration opportunities for victims. Young people in Nigeria have been exploited and pushed to work in dangerous situations, such as those containing pesticides, chemicals, heavy machinery, and toxic mines (March *et al.*, 2012). They work from nine (9) to sixteen (16) hour days without rest.⁷⁶ This will ensure that the youngster does not pursue greater education or higher levels of productivity in adulthood. When children are employed as labourers, adult productivity suffers (Anyanwu, 1993). Child trafficking perpetuates the cycle of poverty and illiteracy. Some children must drop out of school because their family cannot afford to continue paying tuition. Many girls, however, are denied an education because their parents either do not believe in sending them to school or force them to drop out so that they can be married off at an early age to help support the family. Most rural children in Nigeria are trafficked with the assistance of a parent or guardian, resulting in low school enrollment, which in turn supports child trafficking (Chuang, 2016). School-aged children who are victims of child trafficking are generally transported from their homes and communities to new locations. When traffickers utilize children for sexual or other sorts of exploitation, their freedom of movement is restricted, and they may be compelled to work for up to 18 hours a day. Child trafficking also has an impact on low school enrollment and increasing high school dropout rates.

As a result of the foregoing, it is critical that all parties involved in the fight against child trafficking in Nigeria collaborate to identify new methods used by traffickers to commit child trafficking crimes, so that these methods can be adequately captured in Nigeria's anti-trafficking laws.

As a result of child trafficking, the victims' loved ones will suffer as well. The families of trafficking children face physical danger. Children are more prone to encounter mental health concerns when working in the service and retail industries. As significant variables, public stigma, sadness, anxiety, personality issues, and estrangement and isolation from one's family have all been identified. Children between the ages of 10 and 14 in Nigeria are actively participating in the economy (Yen-Ovice, 2018). Emotional instability, delinquency, deviance, trauma, grief, frustration, and a variety of other behavioral issues are just a few of the many consequences of child trafficking that affect the victim's family. Because of the victim's emotional instability, relatives may form a negative opinion of them (Orakwe, 2014). As a result, more people will be unemployed, mentally ill, or developmentally disabled, which is bad news for everyone. The spread of sickness is one of the most horrific consequences of child trafficking. In modern-day Nigeria, the unfortunate and rapid spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) is a major public health concern. The spread of these diseases is closely related to child trafficking practices. In the child trafficking sector, gonorrhea, syphilis, HIV/AIDS, Ebola, and other lethal STIs are common. Sexual activity has the potential to spread the HIV/AIDS virus, which can be lethal. According to accounts, it is a biological weapon of mass destruction. It is killing at an unparalleled rate and, if allowed unchecked, has the potential to wipe out humanity. Victims of sex work are particularly prone to these ailments due to the hazardous conditions in which they usually labour. HIV/AIDS affects people of all ages, races, socioeconomic levels, and backgrounds.

Children living with HIV/AIDS may endure social stigma and rejection from their own families. In 2012, it was projected that 3.400.000 people in Nigeria were infected with HIV/AIDS. It went on to say that Nigeria was ranked second in the world, trailing only South Africa (Adesina, 2014). Child trafficking is a key contributor to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases in Nigeria, particularly HIV/AIDS, and it must be combated aggressively if the problem is to be totally eradicated (Cameron, Sayer, Thompson, & Wilson, 2015). Following an examination of the impact of child trafficking on the victims and loved ones, it is critical to consider the crime's broader societal ramifications. If nothing is done to halt child trafficking, it has serious and far-reaching social, political, and economic repercussions that endanger the very destiny of nations and their people. Child trafficking has a direct impact on the rise of juvenile delinquency and homeless adolescents. Pick pocketing, smuggling, theft, and robbery by children are all too common, as are tales of children participating in such activity as a kind of social deviance. Some of the children are compelled or forced to participate in these crimes as a result of poverty. Adults in society endure the brunt of children's illegal activities, as one might assume. As a result of child trafficking, a new generation of homeless youth has taken over Nigeria's streets, bridges, and other abandoned sites (Dovydaitis, 2019). According to Onyemachi (2010), using DeGoshie's research, young people in our country are increasingly engaging in armed robbery, theft, and violence.

Possible Solutions of Child Trafficking in Nigeria

Nigeria has enacted several laws to safeguard juveniles from trafficking, including the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1999, the Child's Right Act of 2003, and the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act 2003. Nigeria has ratified and is a member of several treaties of the International Labour Organization (ILO), including Convention 182 concerning the eradication of the most egregious forms of child labour. Child trafficking in Nigeria seems to have minimal repercussions, notwithstanding the heightened focus expressed by the government via legislation and policy.

The majority of efforts to combat human trafficking in Nigeria have been devoted to legislative measures. The endeavors of Schoolmates (2016:112) establish a precedent.

Non-governmental organization (NGO) Woman Trafficking and Children's Labour Eradication Foundation (WATCLEF) has initiated numerous public awareness campaigns and other initiatives to combat the detrimental effects of human trafficking, specifically the trafficking of girls and women into foreign countries to work as prostitutes and tarnish the reputation of Nigeria. Legislation prohibiting the trafficking of adolescents below the age of 18 was enacted by WATCLEF and NAPTIP. Idia Renaissance, an Edo State non-governmental organization founded by Eki Igbinedion to assist young people in acquiring marketable skills in order to combat human trafficking, is headquartered in Benin City.

Investment in Education: The government should spend adequately in education and education infrastructure, as well as incorporate issues to educate students about human trafficking into secondary and tertiary school curricula. This would help to educate individuals and make them less vulnerable to human trafficking. Also, parents should strive to keep their families small and provide their children with a basic level of education, as education is the best legacy a parent can leave for their children.

Rural Orientation: NAPTIP and other governmental and non-governmental organizations combating human trafficking in person should concentrate their efforts on rural areas because they are the most susceptible. Their awareness should also be directed towards restoring our society's lost morals and values.

Employment Creation and Skill Acquisition: The government should also generate jobs for the public, as many trafficked people were drawn into the act by unemployment and poverty. Skill acquisition centers should also be established to train people in the skills required to earn a living and to provide soft loans to trained persons to start their own enterprises.

Resolution of Conflicts in the Country: Additionally, the government should look into measures to lessen or eliminate the security problems that are plaguing the country in order to cut down on the number of people who are forced to flee their homes and the ongoing damage of people's businesses and property.

Proper Monitoring of Human Movements at the Borders: The government and its agencies that are responsible for combating this threat should collaborate with Immigration Services in order to monitor patterns of emigration and immigration in search of evidence of trafficking in persons.

Conclusion

Child trafficking in Nigeria in recent time has pose serious economic and political challenge to the Nigerian state. Absence of the government in proactively engaging traffickers has promoted this evil business for too long in Nigeria. According to the U.S Department of State, Nigeria serves as a country from where women and children are trafficked for forced labour and forced prostitution. It also acts as a transit and destination country for such victims. A significant attribute of the Nigerian trafficking system involves the utilization of voodoo curses as a means for traffickers to exert control over Nigerian victims and coerce them into conditions of subjugation. During the ritual, the victim is compelled to gather body parts such as fingernails, blood, and/or pubic hairs. They are then made to make an oath to repay their debt and are forbidden from reporting the matter to the authorities or disclosing the identities of their traffickers. The intense fear of violating the agreement has a significant influence over the victims, preventing them from seeking assistance. According to the National Agency for Prohibition of Traffic in Persons, almost 90 percent of individuals who are trafficked to Europe are compelled to visit shrines where they are required to take solemn vows of silence. The vulnerability of many Nigerian children to trafficking can be attributed to factors such as poor familial background, poverty, big family size, and fast urbanization. This study examined the causes and provided recommendations to address the situation.

Recommendations

Human trafficking unquestionably undermines the inherent worth and value of human life, resulting in significant repercussions. There is documented evidence of a significant number of victims who have perished either during transportation or at the hands of their traffickers. These factors hinder the progress of human resource and economic growth in the nation. The Nigerian Federal Government has made significant attempts to address the substantial losses caused by people trafficking with the establishment of NAPTIP. NAPTIP has the belief that the battle against human trafficking will have a more significant effect by promoting social change and instilling a new set of values in the population. Education is an essential and effective tool in this situation. The integration of human trafficking education into school curricula at all levels is intended to provide children in basic education with essential knowledge to resist manipulations from traffickers. In addition to these, NAPTIP also advocates for a comprehensive approach to combat the problem and prevent additional harm to the nation's socio-economic well-being.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations appear very necessary:

- Government should hold complicit officials as well as individuals affiliated with crime accountable for trafficking offenses.
- Government should strengthen efforts to identify trafficking victims among vulnerable groups.
- Government should facilitate training for local, state, and federal judges on human trafficking.
- Government should expand shelter capacity for identified victims in coordination with other entities, civil society, NGOs, international organizations, and the private sector.
- Government should Increase public awareness programming to educate more of the population on human trafficking indicators.
- Government should identify and implement mechanisms to ensure victims are not inappropriately penalized.
- Government should increase the budget committed to NAPTIP and anti-trafficking efforts.
- Government should increase efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers
- Government should increase efforts to creating more job opportunities as measures of abating human trafficking
- Government should increase efforts to eradicate poverty through innovations and encouraging entrepreneurship programs by promoting enabling environment
- Government should encourage and direct door to door sensitization campaign to rural areas across the country.

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