

PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF FEMALE TRAFFICKING IN OREDO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EDO STATE			Social Science
			Keywords: Brain drain, exploitation, female trafficking, poverty, unemployment.
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Abstract			
<p>Female trafficking is the unauthorized movement of females to another country for sexual exploitation. Recently, it has become a scourge which defies all efforts at curbing it; on this ground this study examined public perception of female trafficking. This study was conducted among 400 residents in Oredo local government area of Edo State. The instruments used were the questionnaire and focus group discussion interview. Findings from the study revealed that the causes of female trafficking in Oredo local government area include: increase in population, lack of employment opportunity, limited access to education and poverty while the social implications of female trafficking include tarnishing of the image of the Benin people, brain drain, exposure of the females to all forms of inhuman treatment and deprives the girls of educational opportunity. The study concludes that the public perception of female trafficking is negative as the people are of the opinion that the act gives a bad name to the Benin people and Nigeria as a whole. It therefore recommends that government should provide more jobs and encourage the girl child to acquire education. More awareness should be created by the Government, Non-Governmental Organizations and media houses should enlighten the public on the dangers associated with female trafficking.</p>			

Introduction

Trafficking in persons became well known in the last two decades as a result of the difficult socio-economic situation of the African continent. After arms dealing and drug trafficking, trafficking in person takes the third position in terms of profit yielding businesses. The United Nation estimate shows that trafficking in persons brings about \$10 billion for the crime annually (Louise, 2010). Female trafficking is a modern type of slavery that affects human dignity, and results to psychological and physical harm.

According to Akor (2011), trafficking in persons, is the movement of persons from one destination to another most times for the purpose of forced labour, sex exploitation or for both. To him, no matter the purpose of trafficking, it is an act that takes people’s free will in exchange for coercion. At the Palermo Convention (2015), the United Nation Trafficking in Person Protocol (2015) defined trafficking in persons as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of threat or use of force. Furthermore, it include other form of coercion, deduction, fraud, deception, as well as a person having control of another person for exploitative purpose.

Trafficking for the purpose of economic and sexual exploitation is seen as a modern type of slavery which violates the rights of the women. According to Aghatise (2011), Nigerian women are trafficked for the main purpose of sex and other related social vices.

In the last decade, many females were trafficked into the sex industry, particularly in Europe. As a result of this, most people in Nigeria see trafficking as prostitution alone and not any other form of labour. The girls are gotten from markets, salon and other open places in the country. The girls do not tell their parents of their intention to travel out, as they are warned by the traffickers not to do so. With the aid of corrupt immigration officers, traffickers succeed in taking the girls out of the country (Manbe, 2016). This occurrence not only exists to date but goes on unabated. It has not only brought disrepute to the image of Nigeria but has very severe social implications on the trafficked persons. This study is particularly concerned with an analysis of public perception of female trafficking in Oredo local government area.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the knowledge of what female trafficking is all about and the concerted efforts of both government and non-governmental agencies to eradicate trafficking in the country, trafficking of girls in Benin metropolis is still at an alarming rate. Scholars and researchers have enumerated inexhaustible factors necessitating female trafficking such as greed, ignorance, illiteracy, lack of opportunity, inequality, cultural bias, persistent unemployment, poverty (basic driving force), large family size, high demand for cheap labour, inadequate political commitment and human deprivation (Eghafona, 2009; Attoh, 2009 and Adepoju, 2010).

Elezi (2011) states that the effects of female trafficking are grievous to the victims and the society at large, as the individuals are deprived of the opportunities of developing their potentials. The victims of trafficking are exposed to various psychological issues, they suffer from alienation in their countries while social exclusion, stigmatization and intolerance make it hard for them to get integrated back into their own country. The female victims suffer untold hardships like health problems, sometimes due to unprotected sex. The damage done by female trafficking varies from physical injury, health issues like infection, internal injuries, and other intense psychological harm. Many victims usually go through serious physical and psychological damage (International Organization for Migration, 2008). In spite of these glaring social psychological implications, many females still fall victim in Benin to trafficking.

Although, there are laws and policies in place to ensure that the people involved in female trafficking are severely punished, they have not deterred females in Benin metropolis from still falling victim to this inhuman act. Sabella (2011) states that poverty, increase in population, lack of job opportunities, women maltreatment, political unrest, armed conflict or natural disasters which leads to physical and economic insecurity contribute to increase in trafficking. Plambech (2014) has identified the pull factors (demand) and push factors (structural adjustments) that initiate the trafficking of women towards Europe; Njoku (2015) states that trafficking of women is not only an act of indignity and degradation against the victims, but also portray them as less humans without protective rights. This study therefore seeks to investigate the menace associated with female trafficking with the aim of discovering public perception of female trafficking in Oredo local government area of Edo State.

Objectives of the Study

The study was designed to:

1. examine public view on the causes of female trafficking in Oredo local government area of Edo State.
2. ascertain the social implications of female trafficking in Oredo local government area of Edo State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. what are the public views on the causes of female trafficking in Oredo local government area of Edo State?
2. what are the public opinions on the social implications of female trafficking in Oredo local government area of Edo State?

Brief Review of Related Literature

According to Ndifon, Apori and Ndifon (2012), there are different reasons why people of different age and gender are trafficked. These reasons include sex exploitation, forced labour, exploitation in agriculture, construction and manufacturing industries, harvesting of organs etc. Trafficking of persons is a phenomenon that involves many people. It is believed that a transnational network of organized crime is in charge of many trafficking in persons that is connected to other trafficking like drugs, firearms, consumables and other crimes like smuggling, money laundering, bribery and corruption. It is a huge global business that is demand driven (UNESCO, 2006). Trafficking in person is the acquisition of persons for sale by the use of force and deceit that has continuously taken place in global and national crime agenda and that the interpretations of the issue is normally reflected in the economic and political interest of particular organizations and agencies, as well as in cultural contexts and traditional practices of various countries (United Nations Children's Fund, 2007). According to Troung and Angeles (2005), human trafficking is a long time practice found in almost every human society.

Nigeria is known for two major types of trafficking which are internal and external trafficking. Internal trafficking has to do with using victims as domestic servants and street beggars while external trafficking mostly deals with using the victims for domestic labour and sex trafficking. Ogun and Lagos states use victims mostly for domestic servitude and child labour while Sokoto and Benue states use victims as beggars in the streets (Adepoju, 2010). According to Braimah (2013), Edo State is the major place for the recruitment of persons for trafficking into Europe. However, the first generation of females from Edo that went to Italy went for business purpose such as buying and selling of goods. It was in the process of doing this business that a lot

of the women got involved in prostitution and started introducing their friends and relatives into the business since 1990.

Most trafficked victims come from Benin City and nearby villages although these days, rural areas are more common for recruitment into trafficking. In poverty stricken areas in Benin city, parents put pressure on their young daughters to take care of the family (Plambech, 2014). Women are also recruited from other states like Delta, Abia, Anambra, Cross River, Enugu, Osun, Ondo, Imo, Kaduna, amongst others (Frontex, 2015). The point should be made here that females are also trafficked from other major Nigeria cities aside Benin like Lagos, Ibadan, Sapele and Warri (Cherti, Pennington and Grant, 2013).

Causes of Female Trafficking in Oredo Local Government Area

Some causes of female trafficking are government corruption, unemployment, poverty, cultural and social exclusion as well as little or no access to education and these are briefly reviewed below.

Government Corruption

According to Falola and Heaton (2008), majority of Nigerians live in poverty, despite the large amount of oil and mineral resources the country has. Poverty leads to the problem of sex trafficking which appears to have come to stay in Edo State. Therefore, the Nigerian government is responsible for the difficulty in stopping sex trafficking in the State. It is true that prostitution and sex trafficking are problems, but the blame rest squarely on the government for creating economic hardship (Evbayiroso, 2013).

Unemployment

According to Ikein, Alamiyeseigha and Azaiki (2008), unemployment is a serious socio-economic problem in Nigeria. In Edo State, most individuals carve out job opportunities for themselves by becoming self-employed. Also as a result of no job opportunities, some girls and women use sex as a means of economic sustenance. This happens not only in Nigeria but in other countries. Therefore, unemployment leads to sex trafficking as victims are desperate to earn a living (Vergara, 2007).

Poverty

Poverty refers to various bad conditions such as lack of food, hunger, malnutrition; illness; little or no access to education and other basic services; increasing mortality; homelessness and

inadequate housing etc. Poverty is not to be seen as the main cause of trafficking without defining the term because it is not necessarily the extremely poor people that fall victim to trafficking (International Labour Office, 2005)

The globalization impact brought new variables into traditional discussion of poverty. The World Bank analysis on the social effect of the economic collapse of countries of previous Soviet Union shows what is identified as new poverty, due to political decisions and structural adjustments that destabilized the state economies and put the entire sectors of the population into situations that constitute a new kind of poverty among people that have been poor. Many females seek jobs outside their country and this leads to exploitation, abuse and trafficking. Associating trafficking to poverty generally in this situation hardly shows the complexity of the cause and motivation, this therefore leads to inappropriate preventive measures (Dudwick, 2003).

Cultural and Social Exclusion

In all countries, some groups gain from access to resources and this makes them used to possible dangers of turndowns of economy, natural disaster or political instability. Those who are not under the selected category face discrimination in education, access to healthcare, employment and resources as well as political rights. Social exclusion stops groups from getting gains and protections that are meant for all citizens. Social exclusion can be due to policies and existing cultural practices and traditions. In developing preventive programmes, it is necessary to understand where changes need to be made (Lewis and Lockheed, 2007). Social exclusion is necessary when discussing prevention of trafficking as the victims go through challenges when they return home such as discrimination, shame and the humiliation of returning back with nothing to their families. Most times, these victims return with the trademark of having been arrested as 'illegal migrants' (United Nations, 2008).

Little Access to Education

People with little education or who are illiterates will likely have less opportunities of generating income, whether in the economic or formal sector. They do not have confidence or knowledge to find out the working conditions. Moreover, factors like community attitudes to education, lack of good teachers, need for children to make money or relevant curriculum contribute to little access of education (United Nations, 2008).

According to Sabella (2011), rise in population, poverty, mistreatment of women, lack of job opportunities, political or civil unrest, natural disasters which leads to economic and physical insecurity contribute to the increase in trafficking. The demand for labour in Europe and structural adjustment programme on the Nigerian employment market are factors that initially initiated the

trafficking of women into Europe (Plambech, 2014). While economic hardship and limited job opportunities are important determinant in sex trafficking in Nigeria (Frontex, 2015).

Social Consequences of Female Trafficking in Nigeria

Nigeria established National Agencies for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) and other organizations to fight against the issue of trafficking in persons. In spite of this, the issue of female trafficking has continued and presently paints a bad image of the country. It damages the country's image because many young prostitutes from Nigeria are seen in the streets of European countries looking for male clients (Njoku, 2005). It terminates the effort of government with regards to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) especially, education for all. A lot of child trafficking victims are not given the chance to get formal education. According to Ezinma (2010), more than 12 million Nigerian children are in child labour bondage and are at risk of joining the child labour condition.

Another aspect of trafficking in persons is brain drain which takes away skilled man power that the country needs for quick national development. According to Ibekwe (2016), brain drain has bad effects on developing countries, such as:

“Brain drain in developing countries has financial, institutional and social costs: little return from their investments in higher education; increasing dependency on foreign expertise due to dwindling professional sector; diminishing ability of several developing countries to offer basic health care services to their subjects; widening gap in science and technology between the rich and poor countries; crumbling middle class population; failed tax system and takes away the existence of jobs and the society ” (Ibekwe, 2010).

Trafficking in persons makes some Nigerian citizens open to different kinds of inhuman treatments in other countries such as rape, assault, detention and in some situations death. Most Nigerians suffer in prison in some countries of the world as a result of the misadventure connected to trafficking in persons. Nigerians that fall victim to these acts of trafficking are treated as less humans without protective rights (Njoku, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

Ritzer (1996) defined a theory as set of interrelated ideas that deal with systemization of experience, knowledge and prediction of social life, as well as the development of new research hypothesis. In other words, it means that it is a set of statements that say how and why several concepts are related. For the purpose of this study, the operant conditioning theory was used to explain the phenomenon under investigation. Operant conditioning also known as instrumental conditioning was first described by a psychologist B.F. Skinner in 1938. According to Skinner, the way we behave is affected and learned by drawing a connection between the ways we behave and

the consequences that our behaviour leads to. We either encourage or discourage the consequences by behaving in a particular way.

Burgess and Aker's theory (1966) which is purely a social learning theory was also adopted to explain the idea of female trafficking. According to this theory, some behaviours are learned because they have been rewarded in the past. Therefore, people engage in female trafficking because it has been more rewarding in the past or present than any other behaviour. This means that some people's involvement in crime is as a result of the different socialization processes they were exposed to, at various situations of reinforcement (Hughes, 1990). This explains why some people choose to be trafficked while others do not because of different socialization processes and reinforcement they are open to. The position of this theory therefore is that, people choose to commit crime or not to, as a result of their convictions. It can also be said that those who traffic females and commit other crimes do so because of their orientation, socialization and moral upbringing (that is, crime is a counter-culture), while those that commit crime do so out of their free will because of the rewards it brings to them not minding the injuries and harm it leaves on the victims and country as a whole.

Methods and Materials

The research design for the study was the cross sectional survey design which is also known as one shot studies because this study involves only one contact with the study population. Both the qualitative and quantitative methods of collection of research data and analysis were used. The study population included all residents of Oredo Local Government Area in Edo State. The last Nigeria Population Census of 2006 in Nigeria shows that the population of Oredo Local Government in Edo State is 374,671. From this a sample size of 400 was scientifically selected for the purpose of this study.

Since the sampling population is large, cluster sampling was the most appropriate sampling technique and so was adopted. This study surveyed major areas in Oredo Local Government Area like Sakponba road, Sapele road, Mission road and Akpakpava road because the areas are close to one another. The simple random sampling technique was used to administer questionnaires in the four (4) major areas identified above.

The adjoining streets that made up these streets were sampled by administering questionnaires to both male and female adults in every fifth house along the street. In simple random sampling, each person or element in the population is given an equal and independent chance of selection. This gave residents in the above areas equal chances of being selected as a respondent in the research study. 390 respondents were administered questionnaires while a group comprising 10 people was interviewed. An addition of 20 questionnaires were added to the 390 questionnaire to make it 410. The 410 questionnaires were administered between the 4 major areas. Therefore, respondents were selected randomly from each of the areas for the research study

while the group of 10 participants that were gotten from residents within the Oredo local government area of Benin was interviewed on the topic under study.

The instruments for data collection were the focus group interview guide and questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two major parts: part one of the questionnaire focused on information relating to the respondents socio-demographic data while part two focused on questions that relates to the objectives of the study. The focus group discussion interview guide was structured.

The questionnaire and focus group discussion interview guide was written in simple English so that the respondents can comprehend the questions with ease. The questionnaire comprised both closed and open ended questions. The open ended questions enabled the respondents to freely express their views on the issues that were to be investigated. This therefore enriched the findings of the research while the focus group interview guide was used with an audio tape recorder and pencil or pen to take adequate record of information gotten from the focus group discussion.

To analyze the descriptive statistics, the frequency tables and percentage were used to present the variables and data that were generated in this study. The Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS version 22) was used in analyzing the structured questionnaire while the content analysis was used to analyze the data gotten from the focus group discussion interview.

Analysis of Data and Discussion of Findings

A total number of 400 questionnaires were administered to respondents out of which 390 were returned. This gives co-efficiency of 97.5% which was considered statistically significant while 10 respondents were interviewed. Below are the responses obtained from the questionnaires and presented in tabular form.

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

SEX	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Female	176	45
Male	214	55
Total	390	100
Age		
18-25	227	58
26-35	89	23
36-45	28	7
46-55	28	7
56-Above	18	5
Total	390	100
Educational attainment		
Primary school	32	8
Secondary school	136	35

Tertiary institution	222	57
Total	390	100
Marital Status		
Married	108	28
Single/never married	262	67
Divorced	8	2
Widow/widower	12	3
Total	390	100
Occupation		
Student	217	57
Civil servant	48	12
Business	105	27
Artisan	16	4
Unemployed	4	1
Total	390	100
Religion		
Christian	338	87
Islam	40	10
Traditional religion	12	3
Total	390	100
Zone		
Sakponba road	92	24
Sapele road	100	26
Mission road	100	26
Akpakpava road	98	25
Total	390	100

Source: Field survey, 2018

From table 1 above, of the 390 respondents, 214 (55%) respondents were male while 176 (45%) respondents were female. It is important to note that more than half of the respondents were male because they were more accessible. 227 (58%) respondents were in the age bracket of 18-25 while 89 (23%) were in the 26-35 age bracket. Furthermore, 28 (7%) and 28 (7%) respondents were in the 36-45 and 46-55 age brackets respectively while 18 (5%) were 56 years and above. For educational attainment, 32 (8%) respondents had only primary school education while 136 (35%) had secondary school education and 222 (57%) of the respondents had tertiary education. This was because they were the most accessible people that were ready to answer the questionnaires. For marital status, 108 (28%) of the respondents were married while 262 (67%) were single or never married because they were the most accessible of the respondents. Also, 8 (2%) respondents were divorced while 12 (3%) were widows or widowers. On occupation, 217 (56%) respondents were students while 48 (12%) were civil servants; this is as a result of inaccessibility. Also, 105 (27%) respondents were business men/women while 16 (4%) respondents were artisans. Furthermore, 4 (1%) respondents were unemployed. 338 (87%) of the respondents were Christians while 40 (10%) were Muslims and 12 (3%) of the respondents practiced traditional religion.

This was due to the works of the early missionaries who came to Benin and that of the preacher Arch. Bishop Benson Idahosa. For zone, 92 (24%) respondents were from Sakponba zone while 100 (26%) and 100 (26%) respondents were from Sapele and Mission road zones respectively and 98 (25%) respondents were from Akpakpava zone.

Table 2: Distribution of responses on the public views on the causes of female trafficking in Oredo Local Government Area

1. Which of the following is the cause of female trafficking in Benin?	Increase in population	6	2
	Lack of employment opportunity	56	14
	Limited access to education	16	4
	Poverty	85	22
	All of the above	227	58
	Total	390	100

Source: Field survey, 2018

From table 2 above, of the 390 respondents 6(2%) respondents believe that increase in population is the cause of female trafficking in Benin while 56(14%) believes that Lack of employment opportunity is the cause of female trafficking in Benin and 16(4%) respondents believes that limited access to education is the cause of female trafficking in Benin. In addition, 85(22%) respondents believes that poverty is the cause of female trafficking in Benin while 227(58%) believes that all the causes listed above are the causes of female trafficking in Benin. This agrees with Ndifon, Apori and Ndifon (2012) who said that there are different reasons why people of different age and gender are trafficked. These reasons are sex exploitation, forced labour, exploitation in agriculture, construction and manufacturing industries, harvesting of organs etc. Also, United Nations Children's Fund (2007) viewed trafficking in person as the acquisition of persons for sale by the use of force and deceit that has continuously taken place in global and national crime agenda and that the interpretations of the issue is normally reflected in the economic and political interest of particular organizations and agencies as well as in cultural contexts and traditional practices of various countries. The views of FGD participants collaborates this: with the views expressed by the FG Discussants, "*Greed, Ignorance, lack of job opportunities and poverty makes the girls to become victims of female trafficking*". Oredo residents, FGD, males and females)

Table 3: Distribution of responses on the public opinions on the social implications of female trafficking in Oredo Local Government Area

2. What are the social implications of female trafficking?	Dents the image of Benin people.	69	18
	Brain drain	Nil	Nil
	Exposes the females to all forms of inhuman treatment.	50	13
	Deprives the girls of education opportunity.	17	4
	All of the above.	254	65
	Total	390	100

Source: Field survey, 2018

From table 3 above, of the 390 respondents 69(18%) respondents said that the social implications of female trafficking is that it dents the image of Benin people while none of the respondents chose brain drain as a social implication. Meanwhile, 50(13%) said that the social implications of female trafficking is that it exposes the females to all forms of inhuman treatment

while 17(4%) said that it deprives the girls of education opportunity and 254(65%) respondents said that all of the above implications are the social implications of female trafficking.

This agrees with Njoku (2015) trafficking in persons makes some Nigerian citizens open to different kinds of inhumane treatments in other countries such as rape, assault, detention and in some situations death. Most Nigerians suffer in prison in some countries of the world as a result of the misadventure connected to trafficking in persons. Nigeria that fall victim to these acts of trafficking are treated as less humans without protective rights.

This was also in line with the opinions of the FGD participants on the implications of female trafficking during the interview session:

The girls return with deadly illnesses, sadness and low self-esteem. It also damages the image of the country as a whole. (Oredo residents, FGD, males and females)

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that the public perception of female trafficking in Oredo local government area of Edo state is negative as the people are of the opinion that the act gives a bad name to the Benin people and Nigeria as a whole and if not seriously looked into will go from bad to worse as the day go by. Based on the findings of this research study, the following are recommended:

1. Government should provide more jobs and educate the females in Benin. This will keep them busy and enable them remove their minds from travelling abroad because they will be more focused on been successful in what they are busy with in the country. The females will also have the opportunity of making money to take care of their needs.

2. More awareness should be created by the Government, Non-governmental Organizations and Media houses on the dangers associated with female trafficking. The public should be made aware of risks like inhumane treatments of the females by men abroad, getting infected with diseases as well as death amongst others. Public awareness of these things will help in reducing the rate at which females are been trafficked.

3. Parents should involve their children in skill acquisition programmes rather than just relying on the government for creation of jobs. The parents in Benin especially Oredo local government areas should ensure their children especially the females learns a skill like hair dressing, fashion designing, catering services and so on. This will make them less dependent on the government for jobs as they will become self employed.

4. Law enforcement agencies should do their jobs effectively to ensure female trafficking is stopped in the country as a whole especially in Benin. They should ensure anyone found in the act of trafficking be brought to book whether they are government officials in the state or not. They

should work with rule that says “what is good for the goose is also good for the gander”. Anyone guilty of trafficking should be punished in order to put an end to these evil act.

5. Everyone in Benin and the country as a whole should be their brother’s keeper and report cases of trafficking to the authorities. A lot of people in Benin has the attitude of not caring what happens to the next person around us even if the person is about making the biggest mistake that will likely cost him or her his or her life. Anyone that notice any female around him or her is planning on travelling abroad illegally, such person shouldn’t hesitate in letting the appropriate authority know about it and save the life of that person because the person might be falling victim to trafficking without knowing.

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