



The Role of Poverty in the Prevalence of Human Trafficking in Nigeria

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Key words: Poverty, greed, ignorance, human trafficking, prevalence, human trafficking

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Page No.: 19-25

Volume: 13, Issue 04, 2019

ISSN: 1994-8212

Journal of Economics Theory

Copy Right: Medwell Publications

Abstract: The study examined the role of poverty in the prevalence of human trafficking in Nigeria with particular reference to Sokoto State. The study was carried out within the ambit of relative deprivation theory and adopted the primary and secondary methods of data collection. The study which interrogates the interface between poverty and the prevalence of human trafficking in Sokoto State, Nigeria, found out that poverty, greed and ignorance are largely responsible for the prevalence of human trafficking in the state. The research concluded by recommending that human trafficking can be effectively eradicated through the development of a robust and dynamic counter human trafficking strategy which focuses on a comprehensive synergy among relevant stakeholders aim at supporting the efficient prosecution of criminals involved to serve as a deterrent to others as well as alleviate poverty and empower the people. As such it recommended creating and making available employment and other economic empowerment opportunities to the people, access to quality and affordable education, especially, among rural dwellers and the less privileged in the society in order to channel their energies towards productive ventures and discourage the practice of human trafficking in Sokoto State, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a condition in which a person experiences chaos due to the absence of material things that he needs in order to survive while unemployment is the absence of opportunity to generate money for a living in exchange of someone's time, effort and talent. Human trafficking entails a forceful or deceitful recruitment of people, especially, young and able bodied people for forced labour, prostitution, domestic and other forms of exploitation. It also involves the exploitation of the desperation and ignorance of parents particularly those in the rural areas to procure women and children for commercial and exploitation purposes.

The protocol of human trafficking assumes that adults and children of both sexes can become victims of human trafficking. It also postulates that individuals free will of victims must have been manipulated, constrained, subdued in some manner to allow for manipulation (Ashcroft, 2004).

There is very little doubt that human trafficking is a lucrative business and may be one of the most difficult to combat. Its corrupting effects on government and institutions are barely perceptible because they are less visible than those caused by gun running and drug trafficking. Exploiting the poverty and low status of women and children in the society, middlemen are able to supply and meet the demand for cheap labour and sex in violation of human rights and international conventions. Accordingly, trafficking in persons is a major violation of human rights, particularly that of women and children. It is a major contributory factor to the exploitation of human beings for commercial and business purposes. Human trafficking is therefore, a societal problem involving almost every Community or State in Nigeria either as a source, transit or destination. It is therefore, not limited to a section or part of a population in the country. The United States (US) State Department Trafficking in Persons Report 2009 described Nigeria as a source, transit and destination country for the trafficking of human

beings for the purpose of forced labour and commercial sexual exploitation. Within Nigeria, women and girls are primarily trafficked for domestic labour. Trans-nationally women, girls and boys are trafficked into Nigeria from other African countries and from Nigeria to countries within and outside Africa (Nwogo, 2005). Every year hundreds of thousands of women and children are trafficked across borders for the purpose of exploitation. Their survival and development are threatened and the right to social and other essential services protection from exploitation are abused and denied. Poor economic opportunities have indeed led families into more desperate measures as seen in the increasing number of women, young boys and girls and children are being trafficked from one part of the country to another and from neighbouring countries into Nigeria and from Nigeria to other countries for exploitation purposes (NAPTIP., 2003).

The 2010 national poverty numbers (statistics) for absolute, relative, dollar/day and food poverty indicated that about 70% of Nigerians live below the poverty line and Sokoto State has the highest statistics of poverty in the country as more than (80%) of the population live below the poverty line. The unemployment rate in the state is about 73.9% (NBS., 2017). This is based on the various measurements indicated above showing the incidence of poverty across states of the federation that are above and below national average. For example, the percentage of people in Sokoto living in poverty ranges between 56.6, 81.2, 86.4 and 81.9% for food, absolute, relative poverty and dollar per day measurement based on an adjusted Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), respectively (NBS, 2017). It is against this backdrop that this study focuses on the role of poverty on human trafficking in Nigeria with particular reference to Sokoto State. The study is structured in five sections: the introduction, literature review, methodology, presentation and discussion of results and finally, conclusion and recommendations (Anonymous, 2017, 2018).

Literature review: Ozurumba (2012) looked at poverty and human trafficking in Africa: implications for educational development in the Niger Delta. Although, slavery has been abolished from the world, the trade in human beings otherwise known as human trafficking still continues. Consequently, hundreds of thousands of African women and children of school age are being forced into situations of labour and sexual exploitation both on the continent and abroad every year as a result of the scorching poverty in the land. At the international scene, trafficking in persons has been identified as a serious threat to human security and development by governments, non-governmental organizations, pressure groups and the United Nations. Undoubtedly for many

African countries, the problem has only recently been acknowledged. Finally the study recommended that African governments, non-governmental organizations community based organizations and the media should sustain the current public and media interest in human trafficking through more public education programmes based on research, conferences, workshops and intervention strategies.

Enaikele and Olutayo (2011) examined human trafficking in Nigeria. They see Nigeria as a country of origin, transit and destination for human trafficking. Their study articulated the potential vulnerability of the victims, appraise the link between trafficking and Human Immune Deficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) pandemic, assess the potency of the Nigeria legal instruments to curb human trafficking and recommend possible solutions. Because of unemployment, victims are frequently lured with promise to get a job with fat pay. Trafficking victims are exposed to unprotected sexual intercourse with multiple partners. They are also hired for pornography and bestiality. These experiences make them vulnerable to Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), HIV/AIDS and other female reproductive health challenges. The Nigeria local laws and the international conventions and protocols which she is signatory to, all have legal potencies to curb trafficking.

Chauhan (1978) posited that there is a positive correlation between poverty and crime involving very high earnings and very low risks. He observed that the highest percentage of criminals came from low socio-economic conditions. Furthermore, he observed that it is not necessarily true that all persons who come from under-privilege class are criminals. The crucial factors in poor homes are that parents cannot even fulfill the legitimate needs of their children. This financial incapacity makes parents vulnerable to the deceit of traffickers who deceive them which they are going to give their children jobs, only to end up getting them into forced labour or prostitution

Jong on her part attributed the cause of human trafficking to the vicious circle of poverty prevalent in Africa. To her, the vicious circle of poverty connotes interrelated network of deprivations. These deprivations as she maintained showcase the poor as a ready market for traffickers

Relative deprivation theory: Relative deprivation theory refers to the idea that feelings of deprivation and discontent are related to a desired point of reference (i.e., reference groups). In other words, feelings of relative deprivation arise when desires are blocked by society. Relative deprivation theory is applicable to socio political, economic and organizational problems. For example, the theory encourages the exploration of an individual's feeling of deprivations that may result from comparing his

or her situation with that of a referent person or group as well as the behavioral effects of deprivation feelings (Morrison, 1971). Relative deprivation basically distinguishes between egoistic deprivation and fraternal deprivation. Egoistic deprivation refers to a single individual's feeling of comparative deprivation. Fraternal deprivation also called group deprivation refers to the discontent arising from the status of the entire group as compared to a referent group. Fraternal deprivation may strengthen a group's collective identity (Singer).

Poverty and human trafficking in Nigeria; A focus on Sokoto State: Poverty is a global phenomenon threatening the survival of humanity, the incidence of poverty in Sokoto State, Nigeria has reached an alarming level and is blamed on non-clear government social policies. Indeed, the inability of successive governments to streamline and harness the enormous potentials for improved service delivery in all the existing structures of poverty eradication has resulted into persistent poverty. Sadly, traffickers have exploited the quest for better and alternative source of survival and desire for material wealth at all cost and the vantage position of Sokoto as a gate-way to neighbouring countries enroute Europe, Asia and other parts of the world perceived to be "greener pasture" to introduce human trafficking as a new dimension of wealth creation into the psyche of the people.

Accordingly, the reality of the Nigerian State as a state in economic and political comatose where millions of the youths see migration out of the country as a solution to their economic misfortunes is a subject of concern just as an army of jobless people take to crime such as drug and human trafficking. Due to the collapse of certain structures such as the economic structure to address poverty, welfare, a system to address unemployment, low wages and salaries and attendant result of human trafficking made Nigeria to acquire a reputation of being the leading African country in human trafficking. Nigeria is a country of origin, transit and destination for human trafficking (Falola). The phenomenon of human trafficking has considerably increased throughout the world and most, especially in Nigeria. Generally speaking, human trafficking conditions in most African countries have greatly deteriorated, particularly during the last few decades. Real disposable income have declined steeply, malnutrition rates have risen sharply, food production has hardly kept pace with population growth and the quality and quantity of health and education services have also deteriorated (Biya and Ogwumike).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Description of location of study: Sokoto State is located in the extreme Northwest of Nigeria, near the confluence of the Sokoto River and the Rima River. A State

(North-Western) based in Sokoto was established in 1967 and occupies 25,973 km². As at 2006 it has an estimated population of more than 4.2 million. This covered what is now Niger State which was split off in 1976, Kebbi State (split off in 1991) and Zamfara State which was split off in 1996. Sokoto State lies to the North-West of Nigeria and shares its borders with Niger Republic to the North, Katsina State to the East, Niger State to the South-East, Kwara State to the South and Benin Republic to the West.

Types and sources of data: Primary and secondary data was used for this study. The primary data was obtained from staff of NAPTIP and Save the child initiative in Sokoto State, Nigeria Immigrations service Sokoto Zonal Command, Ministry of Social Welfare and Culture and Poverty Alleviation Agency Sokoto State directly during the field work via survey questionnaire, in-depth interview and observation this is because there is a greater scope for reliability of the information.

Sample size and sampling techniques: The sample size for the study is (143) respondents and (30) victims derived from the various organizations dealing with human trafficking and 8 management officials who constituted the key informants interviewed making a total of (151). This study adopted both the probability and non-probability sampling techniques.

Instruments of data collection and techniques of analysis: Both quantitative and qualitative data were used in collecting data for this study through survey instrument questionnaire and through an in-depth interview and observation, so, as to enrich the data collected for the study. In this research, data elicited from the questionnaires were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation coefficient with the help of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 20.0.

Research hypothesis: Poverty has no significant impact on human trafficking in Sokoto State.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the in-depth interviews conducted were analyzed together with the questionnaires and presented below.

Victims assessment: Table 1 shows victim's socio demographic characteristics. The data reveals that majority of the victims 19(63.3%) are female while 11(36.7%) are male. Also, 14(46.7%) of the victims ranges between the ages of 15-19 years. In terms of the state of origin of victims, majority 8(26.7%) said they are from Sokoto State and 6(20.0%) said they are nationals (natives) of Benin Republic while 5(16.7%) said they are

Table 1: Victims assessment (Bio-data)

Sex trafficked	Frequency	Percentage
Male	11	36.7
Female	19	63.3
Total	30	100.0
Age trafficked (years)		
Below 15	7	23.3
15-19	14	46.7
20-24	5	16.7
25-29	3	10.0
30-34	1	3.3
Total	30	100.0
State of origin of victims		
Niger Republic	5	16.7
Togo Republic	3	10.0
Benin Republic	6	20.0
Kogi	1	3.3
Katsina	1	3.3
Sokoto	8	26.7
Edo	3	10.0
Kano	2	6.7
Nasarawa	1	3.3
Total	30	100.0
Family size of victims		
1-5	5	16.7
5-10	14	46.6
10-15	8	26.7
15 and above	3	10.0
Total	30	100.0
Number of siblings of victims		
1-5	1	1.3
5-10	23	76.7
10-15	5	16.7
15 and above	1	1.3
Total	30	100.0
Position in the family of victims		
1	2	6.7
2	7	23.3
3	3	10.0
4	3	10.0
5	12	40.0
Others	3	10.0
Total	30	100.0

nationals (natives) of Niger Republic and 3(10.0%) said they are indigenes of Edo State and nationals (natives) of Togo Republic, 2(6.7%) are from Kano State and 1(3.3%) nationals (natives) of Niger Republic and 3(10.0%) said they are indigenes of Edo State and nationals (natives) of Togo Republic, 2(6.7%) are from Kano State and 1(3.3%) said they are from Kogi, Katsina and Nasarawa States. This indicates that there exists both internal and external trafficking in Sokoto State.

In addition, majority of the victims 14(46.6%) are between 5-10 family members while 8(26.7%) are between 10-15 members. Similarly in terms of the position of victims in their respective families the table shows that 12(40.0%) said they fall at position (5th position) while 7(23.7%) fall at position (2nd position).

Table 2 shows the number of times victims of human trafficking were trafficked. Majority (19) (63.3%) of the victims said they were trafficked once while 7(23.4%)

Table 2: Victims response on the number of times she/he was trafficked

Views	Frequency	Percentage
Once	19	63.3
Three times	7	23.4
Severally	4	13.3
Total	30	100.0

Table 3: Victims response on the ways they were lured into trafficking

Views	Frequency	Percentage
I was told of a job offer but did not know it was a lie	11	36.7
Promise school and better living condition	17	56.6
Was to prostitute or do force labour	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0

were trafficked three times. This means that majority of the victims were trafficked only once as at the time this research was conducted. It also means that some victims have accepted human trafficking as a means of livelihood. Hence, their willingness to be trafficked as many times as possible and as the opportunity unfolds.

Table 3 shows victims response on some of the ways traffickers used in luring (deceiving) them into human trafficking. Majority of the victims 17(56.6%) said they were promised school and scholarship to pursue their education and better opportunities in life while 11(36.7%) said they were told of a job opportunity but it turned out to be a ploy to subject them into different form of exploitation. This means that most of the victims were not empowered with relevant information about human trafficking and lack basic means of livelihood which made them vulnerable to deception by traffickers.

One of the informants interviewed explained some of the ways in which victims are deceived into human trafficking. He said that: "Indeed, most of the traffickers or their agents are relations, friends and well known citizens within the community. The peculiar nature of our African culture and tradition which promote extended family system is being exploited by the traffickers to deceive unsuspecting parents to recruit children (victims) into human trafficking". Another informant also said that: "Some of the traffickers who recruit the victims into human trafficking are relations, friends and or business associates. A good number of the traffickers are mostly people who engage in buying and selling of goods and services within the community. In fact they are mostly familiar persons to the victim's families or to the victims themselves". One of the informants said that: "The trafficker adequately understand what is happening within the community and this give them the leverage (advantage) to plan strategies on how to lure and convince the unsuspecting victims and their parents or guardians to surrender their children or relations in "trust" to them".

Another informant also said that: "Based on the information available to me, traffickers are people well known in the community where they recruit unsuspecting

victims. In fact they (traffickers) sometimes recruit victims through agents; middle men and women who are known and reside in the community. They use this channel to operate under cover. It is on the strength of familiarity that the care givers (guardian and parents) willingly submit their children and some of the victims present themselves to traffickers and from there the process of human trafficking begins”.

While the above presentation is true, however, contrary to the claim above a key informant interviewed said: “There are also instances where some parents send their children to city or towns to work for money for the family while some victims are sent to the cities without any connection or knowing anybody that will provide accommodation for them. Many of such people many at times fall in the hand of criminals or traffickers who deceive them under the guise of helping them to achieve their goals in life or give them a bright future. As a result of this development, one can be entrapped as a victim of circumstances”.

Nature of human trafficking in Sokoto State: Table 4 shows that all 132(100%) of the respondents are aware of the incidence of human trafficking in Sokoto State. This means that the respondents studied are aware of contemporary developments with regard to the incidence and nature of human trafficking in Sokoto State. In agreement with the above views, all the key informants attested to the fact that human trafficking exists in Sokoto State. One of the informants interviewed said that: “Trafficking in Sokoto today revolves around poverty and ignorance. Many people do not know that what they are doing constitute human trafficking nor do they know the impact or effects of human trafficking. All they know is that they do not have money and want to have it at all cost in order to meet up the growing needs of their respective families”.

The analysis above confirmed the research assumption that suggest that “the nature of human trafficking in Sokoto State Nigeria involved the forceful or deceitful recruitment of young and abled bodied people for prostitution and other forms of exploitation”. It also established the objective of this study which seeks to ascertain “the nature of human trafficking in Sokoto State, Nigeria”.

Table 5 shows what constitute human trafficking in Sokoto State. The result collected indicated that majority 56(42.4%) of the respondents said that poverty, greed and ignorance are the major causes of human trafficking, 17(12.9%) of them said that unemployment and quest for materialism causes human trafficking, 5(3.8%) of the respondents said that illiteracy and lack of Western education, 32(24.2%) of them blamed prevalence of human trafficking in the state on quest for cheap child

Table 4: Respondent’s awareness of human trafficking in Sokoto State

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	132	100.0

Table 5: Respondent views on factors responsible for human trafficking in Sokoto State

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Poverty, greed and ignorance	56	42.4
Unemployment and quest for materialism	17	12.9
Illiteracy and lack of Western education	5	3.8
Child labour and quest for domestic service	32	24.2
Abuse and exploitation of some children brought into Sokoto in the name of ‘Almajiranchi’s	8	6.1
Pornographic and prostitution business	14	10.6
Total	132	100.0

Table 6: Respondents views on their knowledge of the prevalence of human trafficking in Sokoto State

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	122	92.4
No	7	5.3
No response	3	2.3
Total	132	100.0

labour and domestic services, 8(6.1%) of them blamed it on the abuse of children brought into Sokoto State in the name of Almajiranchi while 14(10.6%) of them blamed the prevalence of human trafficking in the state on the upsurge of political vanguards (hooliganism), strip/club dancers and prostitution as means of wealth acquisition. This means that poverty, greed and ignorance are the major factors that constitute human trafficking in Sokoto State as confirmed by majority of the respondents studied.

The informant further stated that: it is unfortunate that today our sense of moral value and judgment has degenerated to a level that the crime of human trafficking is more or less acceptable in our society. It, therefore, encourages traffickers to sustain the business and makes it difficult to curb the prevalence of human trafficking in Nigeria”

He went further to state that “Unfortunately the society today accepts human trafficking as a norm; the community no longer frowns at it. The matter is even made worst when members of the community understand that many people who have been involved in human trafficking, continue in the illegal business without any form of prosecution against them by the law enforcement agencies. This tends to encourage the illicit business”.

Table 6 indicated that an overwhelming majority 122(92.4%) of the respondents are aware of the prevalence of human trafficking in Sokoto State, 7(5.3%) of them said they are not aware, 3(2.3%) of the

respondents did not respond. This means that majority of the respondents studied are aware of the prevalence of human trafficking in the state. One of the informants interviewed provided a perspective on the prevalence of human trafficking in Sokoto, thus, "Human trafficking here involves mostly women and children. The prevalence of human trafficking in this state has been a thing of concern because we have been receiving useful information from some victims which led to the arrest of some traffickers. The ladies (women) are mostly trafficked to different cities in Nigeria to work as house maids where they work without opportunity to go to school and some are subsequently trafficked abroad, exploited by their employers and later moved into sex industries to work as commercial sex workers"

Another informant said that: "Sokoto is a strategic international route or border town (gateway) to some countries where traffickers from different parts of the country explore Sokoto as a transit route to Europe through Niger Republic-Libya-Morocco and across the European coastal waters to Italy, Spain and other European countries".

Table 7 shows that all 132(100.0%) the respondent are aware of the incidence of poverty in Sokoto State. This means that all the respondents studied are aware of the incidence of poverty in Sokoto State. The findings above corroborated with the findings of the interview conducted where all the key informants stressed that poverty in Sokoto State is wide spread across the state. The incidence of poverty among women and young children is high as they are considered most vulnerable to socio-economic depression.

Table 8 shows that the correlation figure is positive and significant (0.961), therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative accepted that there exist a positive and significant relationship between poverty rate and human trafficking in Sokoto State. This means that as poverty rate increases, activities of human trafficking also increase.

Major findings: To ascertain the role of poverty in the prevalence of human trafficking in Sokoto State, the views of 132(100.0%) of the respondents said they are aware of the high incidence of poverty and human trafficking in Sokoto State, Nigeria. While majority 56(42.4%) of the respondents said that poverty, greed and ignorance are the major causes of human trafficking, 17(12.9%) of them said that unemployment and quest for materialism causes human trafficking, 5(3.8%) of the respondents said that illiteracy and lack of western education, 32(24.2%) of them blamed the quest for cheap child labor and domestic servants as the factors

Table 7: Respondents view on the incidence of poverty in Sokoto State

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	132	100.0

Table 8: Correlations of the relationship between poverty rate and human trafficking

Variables	VAT	Tax Audit and investigation	
Poverty rate	Pearson correlation	1	0.961
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.001
	N	132	132
Human trafficking	Pearson correlation	0.961	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	
	N	132	132

responsible for the prevalence of human trafficking, 8(6.1%) see the abuse of children brought into Sokoto in the name of Almajiranchi as the source of human trafficking and 14(10.6%) of them see human trafficking as the exploitation of youthful energies and potentials through engaging victims in commercial prostitution, strip/pornographic performances and political hooliganism.

CONCLUSION

Human trafficking has intensified in Sokoto State, Nigeria, due to widespread poverty, economic desperation, greed and ignorance among people in the state. Over the years traffickers have taken advantage of the proximity of Sokoto as the gateway to neighbouring West and North African countries Enroute Europe, Middle-East and other countries of the world couple with the high incidence of poverty in the state to recruit people into human trafficking. Based on the findings, the study recommended that government should formulate policies and programmes that would address the effects of poverty, create opportunities and empower the people to be self-reliant and punish erring offenders as a deterrent to other people who engage and drive the crime of human trafficking as a means of wealth creation at all cost.

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