

THE ROLE OF POVERTY IN THE PREVALENCE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper 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.

Keywords: Poverty, Greed, Ignorance, Human Trafficking, Prevalence, privileged

1. 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(Nwogu, 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, 2018).

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 eighty percent (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-(National Bureau of Statistics, 2018). 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 paper is structured in five sections: the introduction, literature review, methodology, presentation and discussion of results and finally, conclusion and recommendations.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

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 paper 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.

Enaikeli 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

Ojong (2002) 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

2.1 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:-

- i. Egoistic deprivation refers to a single individual's feeling of comparative deprivation.
- ii. 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, 1992).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 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 square kilometers. 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.

3.2 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.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The sample size for the study is one hundred and forty three (143) respondents and thirty (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 one hundred and fifty one (149). This study adopted both the probability and non-probability sampling techniques.

3.4 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.

3.5 Research Hypothesis

Null: Poverty has no significant impact on human trafficking in Sokoto State

4. Presentation and Analysis of Results

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

4.1 Nature of Human Trafficking in Sokoto State

Table 1: Respondents' awareness of human trafficking in Sokoto State

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	132	100.0

Source: Author's Computation, 2018

Table 1 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 2: 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

Source:Author's Computation, 2018

The table above 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 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 3: 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

Source: Author's Computation, 2018

The table above 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 4: Respondents view on the incidence of poverty in Sokoto State.

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Yes	132	100.0

Source:Author's Computation, 2018

Table above shows that al 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 5: Correlations of the Relationship between poverty rate and human trafficking

Variables	VAT	Tax Audit and Investigation
Poverty rate	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 0.961 0.001 132 132
Human Trafficking	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	0.961 0.001 132 132

Source: SPSS output

Table 5above 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.

4.2 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 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.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

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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