

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Human trafficking, as defined by the United Nations (2020), is a grave violation of human rights involving the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of individuals through force, fraud, or coercion for exploitative purposes such as forced labor, sexual exploitation, or organ trafficking. This global crime thrives in environments marked by socioeconomic vulnerabilities, disproportionately affecting marginalized communities where poverty, unemployment, and lack of education create fertile ground for exploitation (ILO, 2021). In Nigeria, human trafficking has emerged as a significant challenge, driven by systemic issues such as economic hardship, weak legal frameworks, and cultural practices that exacerbate vulnerability, particularly among women and children (Adeyemi, 2020). The impact of trafficking extends beyond individual victims, destabilizing families and communities by perpetuating cycles of poverty, trauma, and social exclusion (Osagie, 2020).

In the context of Osasogie Community in Ovia North East Local Government Area, Edo State, human trafficking is particularly pronounced due to the region's unique socioeconomic and cultural dynamics. Edo State is widely recognized as a major hub for human trafficking in Nigeria, with many victims trafficked domestically or internationally for sexual exploitation or forced labor (Okeke & Nwachukwu, 2021). According to Osagie

(2020), economic migration, driven by poverty and limited job opportunities, significantly contributes to the prevalence of trafficking in this region. Families in Osasogie Community, often grappling with financial instability, are susceptible to deceptive promises of better opportunities abroad or in urban centers, which traffickers exploit to lure vulnerable individuals (UNODC, 2020). The lack of awareness about the risks of trafficking, coupled with cultural norms that sometimes normalize risky migration, further compounds the problem (Musa, 2021).

The consequences of human trafficking in Osasogie Community are multifaceted, affecting victims' physical, psychological, and social well-being. Research by Eze (2020) highlights that trafficking victims often suffer from severe trauma, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder, due to the abuse and exploitation they endure. Socially, victims face stigmatization and exclusion, which hinder their reintegration into their communities (Musa, 2021). Moreover, trafficking disrupts family structures, as victims are often separated from their loved ones, leading to emotional and economic strain on households (Okeke & Nwachukwu, 2021). In Ovia North East, the interplay of poverty, unemployment, and migration has created a vicious cycle where trafficking not only exploits individuals but also undermines community cohesion and development (Ojo, 2020).

Despite the growing body of research on human trafficking, there remains a gap in understanding its specific dynamics within rural and semi-urban communities like

Osasogie. While global studies emphasize the role of socioeconomic factors in trafficking (ILO, 2021), localized studies are essential to uncover the unique drivers and impacts in specific contexts. For instance, Adeyemi et al. (2020) found that community-specific factors, such as limited access to education and weak local governance, exacerbate trafficking risks in Edo State. Similarly, Akor (2021) argues that inadequate enforcement of anti-trafficking laws allows perpetrators to operate with impunity in regions like Ovia North East. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the incidence and impact of human trafficking in Osasogie Community, focusing on the socioeconomic drivers, psychological and social consequences, and the role of community awareness in mitigating this pervasive issue.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Human trafficking has emerged as a critical issue in contemporary Nigeria, with significant implications for community stability and individual well-being. Characterized by exploitation through forced labor, sexual servitude, or other forms of coercion, trafficking undermines human rights and perpetuates cycles of poverty and marginalization. Globally, studies have documented that trafficking disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, particularly in economically disadvantaged regions (Adeyemi et al., 2020; ILO, 2021). However, the specific dynamics and consequences of human trafficking in rural and semi-urban Nigerian communities, such as Ovia North East, remain underexplored.

In Ovia North East, socioeconomic factors like poverty, unemployment, and cultural practices have contributed to rising trafficking cases, with anecdotal evidence suggesting severe impacts on victims and their families. Victims face challenges such as psychological trauma, social exclusion, and economic hardship, yet there is limited empirical evidence to clarify the scope and mechanisms of trafficking in this locality. Without a comprehensive understanding of these issues, interventions remain ineffective and fail to address the specific needs of affected individuals and communities. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the incidence and impact of human trafficking in Osasogie Community, Ovia North East Local Government Area.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The primary objective of this study is to examine the incidence and impact of human trafficking in Osasogie Community, Ovia North East Local Government Area. The specific objectives are:

1. To assess the socioeconomic factors contributing to human trafficking in Osasogie Community.
2. To evaluate the psychological consequences of human trafficking on victims in Osasogie Community.
3. To examine the social consequences of human trafficking on victims in Osasogie Community.

4. To analyze the relationship between community awareness and the prevalence of human trafficking in Osasogie Community.
5. To identify potential interventions to mitigate human trafficking in Osasogie Community.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The study will be guided by the following questions:

1. What are the socioeconomic factors contributing to human trafficking in Osasogie Community?
2. What are the psychological consequences of human trafficking on victims in Osasogie Community?
3. What are the social consequences of human trafficking on victims in Osasogie Community?
4. What is the relationship between community awareness and the prevalence of human trafficking in Osasogie Community?
5. What potential interventions can be identified to mitigate human trafficking in Osasogie Community?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study will provide empirical evidence and actionable recommendations to address the challenges posed by human trafficking in Osasogie Community. For

policymakers, it will offer insights into the specific drivers of trafficking in the region, aiding in the formulation of targeted interventions and policies to combat exploitation. Community leaders and organizations will benefit by gaining a deeper understanding of trafficking's impact, enabling them to design effective awareness campaigns and support systems for victims. Additionally, survivors and families will benefit from increased awareness and resources to prevent further exploitation. Researchers will find the study's findings valuable for filling gaps in the literature and providing a foundation for further investigations into human trafficking in Nigeria.

### **1.6 Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on examining the incidence and impact of human trafficking in Osasogie Community, Ovia North East Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria. It explores the socioeconomic factors contributing to trafficking, its psychological and social consequences, and the role of community awareness in mitigating its prevalence. The research draws on data collected from community members through surveys to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue. The study is geographically limited to Osasogie Community due to its unique socioeconomic and cultural context, which presents specific challenges related to human trafficking.

## 1.7 Definitions of Terms

- **Human Trafficking:** The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons through force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of exploitation, including forced labor or sexual servitude.
- **Socioeconomic Factors:** Economic and social conditions, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of education, that influence the vulnerability of individuals to trafficking.
- **Community Awareness:** The level of knowledge and understanding within a community about the risks, signs, and consequences of human trafficking.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter critically examines relevant literature to elucidate the research problem and acknowledge the contributions of scholars to the study of human trafficking. It aims to deepen the understanding of the issue and address perceived gaps in the literature. The chapter is divided into three sub-headings: Conceptual Review, Theoretical Framework, and Empirical Review.

#### **2.1 Conceptual Review**

##### **2.1.1 Concept of Human Trafficking**

Human trafficking is one of the most pressing human rights violations in contemporary society, often described as a modern form of slavery. The United Nations defines human trafficking as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power, or a position of vulnerability” for the purpose of exploitation (UNODC, 2000). Exploitation encompasses various forms, including forced labor, sexual exploitation, organ trafficking, and forced marriage. This definition underscores the coercive and exploitative nature of trafficking, which distinguishes it from voluntary migration or consensual labor arrangements.

Human trafficking is both a transnational and domestic crime. While much of the discourse emphasizes its international dimensions, research indicates that most victims are trafficked within their own countries or regions (Polaris, 2018). This challenges the common misconception that trafficking always involves cross-border movement. The essential element of human trafficking is exploitation, not necessarily transportation, which makes it fundamentally different from smuggling (Gallagher, 2010). Whereas smuggling is typically consensual and ends once the destination is reached, trafficking involves ongoing exploitation and control over the victim.

The causes of human trafficking are multifaceted, rooted in both structural and individual vulnerabilities. Poverty, unemployment, and lack of educational opportunities make individuals susceptible to traffickers' deceptive promises of better opportunities abroad or in urban centers (Adepoju, 2005). In addition, political instability, armed conflict, and weak legal systems provide fertile grounds for traffickers to operate with impunity. Social inequalities, particularly gender-based discrimination, make women and children disproportionately vulnerable, especially to sexual exploitation (UNICEF, 2014). Thus, trafficking thrives where systemic marginalization intersects with the demand for cheap labor and commercial sex. From a human rights perspective, trafficking undermines the fundamental dignity and autonomy of individuals. Victims are often subjected to physical violence, psychological abuse, and economic deprivation, stripping them of their agency (Bales, 2007). This aligns with the understanding that trafficking is not merely a criminal offense but also a profound violation of international human rights norms. Instruments such

as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) emphasize the right to liberty, security, and protection from exploitation—rights that are systematically violated in trafficking contexts.

Globally, human trafficking has reached alarming levels, affecting millions of people each year. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2017) estimates that over 40 million people are trapped in modern slavery, with nearly 25 million exploited through forced labor and 15 million in forced marriages. The clandestine nature of trafficking makes precise data difficult to obtain, but these figures highlight its scale and persistence. Efforts to combat trafficking have been spearheaded by international frameworks such as the Palermo Protocol (2000), which calls for prevention, protection of victims, and prosecution of traffickers. Despite such initiatives, challenges remain in law enforcement, victim identification, and addressing the socio-economic root causes.

Human trafficking also has devastating socio-economic consequences for both individuals and societies. At the micro level, victims suffer long-term psychological trauma, stigmatization, and loss of livelihood. At the macro level, trafficking undermines national development, weakens labor markets, and contributes to transnational crime networks (Shelley, 2010). Moreover, trafficking disproportionately affects developing nations, where institutional weaknesses and economic disparities create fertile ground for traffickers, yet its effects ripple globally through migration, public health, and security concerns. The concept of human trafficking encapsulates a complex web of coercion,

exploitation, and abuse that violates the most basic human rights. It is sustained by structural inequalities, global economic demands, and weak governance systems. Addressing it requires a multidimensional approach involving legal enforcement, socio-economic empowerment, international cooperation, and grassroots education. Understanding trafficking not just as crime but as a profound humanitarian crisis is essential for crafting effective responses and safeguarding human dignity.

### **2.1.2 Types of Human Trafficking**

Human trafficking manifests in various forms, including sex trafficking, forced labor, and organ trafficking. Scholars have explored these types to understand their impact on victims and communities.

#### **Sex Trafficking**

Sex trafficking involves the coercion or deception of individuals into commercial sexual exploitation. Adeyemi (2023) notes that sex trafficking disproportionately affects women and girls in Nigeria, driven by gender inequalities and economic desperation. Okeke and Nwachukwu (2021) argue that victims often face severe psychological trauma and social stigmatization, which hinder reintegration into society. The promise of employment or education frequently lures victims into exploitative situations, particularly in urban centers (UNODC, 2020).

Sex trafficking is one of the most prevalent and disturbing forms of human trafficking, involving the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation (UNODC, 2000). It is often characterized by coercion, fraud, or force, though in many cases traffickers exploit the victim's vulnerability, such as poverty, gender inequality, or lack of opportunities. The U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA, 2000) defines sex trafficking as "the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age." This legal definition underscores that minors cannot consent to prostitution, making any sexual exploitation of children automatically an act of trafficking.

Sex trafficking is deeply embedded in global patterns of demand and supply. On the demand side, the existence of commercial sex markets fuels the recruitment of vulnerable individuals into exploitative networks (Farley, 2006). On the supply side, poverty, gender-based discrimination, and lack of socio-economic opportunities make women and children particularly vulnerable to traffickers' recruitment tactics (Zimmerman & Watts, 2003). Many victims are deceived with promises of legitimate employment or education but end up in brothels, massage parlors, or street prostitution. In some cases, traffickers employ abduction, drug dependence, or debt bondage to maintain control.

The phenomenon disproportionately affects women and girls. Studies show that over 90% of detected victims of sex trafficking are female, and a significant proportion are children (UNODC, 2020). Traffickers exploit patriarchal cultural systems that normalize women's subordination, thereby perpetuating cycles of exploitation (Kara, 2009). The intersection of migration and trafficking is also critical: while some victims are trafficked across borders, many are trafficked domestically, especially from rural to urban areas where demand for sex work is higher (Shelley, 2010). The consequences of sex trafficking are devastating. Victims endure severe physical and psychological harm, including sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unintended pregnancies, substance abuse, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Hossain et al., 2010). Beyond health implications, victims often face stigmatization and rejection by families and communities, making reintegration extremely difficult. The trauma experienced can lead to long-term difficulties in trust, self-worth, and economic independence. Thus, sex trafficking is not only a legal and economic problem but also a profound humanitarian and public health crisis.

Efforts to combat sex trafficking have focused on legal reforms, law enforcement, victim protection, and awareness campaigns. International frameworks such as the Palermo Protocol (2000) and national legislations like the TVPA mandate states to criminalize sex trafficking and provide protection to victims. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a significant role in victim rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration programs. However, challenges persist, including corruption among law enforcement, inadequate victim protection, and cultural stigmatization (Gallagher, 2010). Moreover, the rise of

digital technology has introduced new dynamics, as traffickers increasingly exploit social media and online platforms to recruit and control victims (Latonero, 2011).

### **Forced Labor**

Forced labor entails compelling individuals to work under exploitative conditions, often in agriculture, construction, or domestic service. Osagie (2020) highlights that forced labor is prevalent in Nigeria due to high unemployment and poverty rates. Victims, including children, are often subjected to long hours, minimal wages, and physical abuse (ILO, 2021). Musa (2021) emphasizes that forced labor disrupts family structures, as victims are separated from their communities, leading to economic and emotional instability. Forced labor is one of the most widespread and insidious forms of human trafficking. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 1930) defines forced labor as “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily.” This definition emphasizes two essential elements: the involuntary nature of the work and the coercion involved, which can be physical, psychological, or economic. Forced labor is not confined to particular sectors but is pervasive across industries such as agriculture, construction, mining, manufacturing, and domestic service (ILO, 2017).

Unlike consensual labor agreements, forced labor is characterized by exploitation and control. Victims are often subjected to debt bondage, where they are compelled to work indefinitely to repay inflated debts, or threats of violence and deportation, especially in

cases involving migrant workers (Bales, 2004). In some instances, confiscation of identity documents, surveillance, and physical isolation are used to prevent victims from escaping. These coercive practices ensure that victims cannot freely terminate the labor relationship, making it fundamentally different from regular employment (Gallagher, 2010).

The persistence of forced labor is rooted in structural inequalities, poverty, and globalization. In many developing countries, high levels of unemployment and economic marginalization push individuals into precarious labor markets where traffickers and exploitative employers take advantage of their vulnerability (Adepoju, 2005). Migrant workers are particularly at risk because they often lack legal protections, are unfamiliar with host country laws, and may be subjected to xenophobia and discrimination (ILO, 2014). Gender inequalities also play a significant role, with women disproportionately trafficked into domestic servitude and garment industries, where they face isolation and sexual exploitation (UNODC, 2020). The consequences of forced labor are devastating both for individuals and societies. Victims endure hazardous working conditions, physical abuse, long hours, and denial of wages. These conditions result in severe health impacts, including occupational injuries, chronic illnesses, and psychological trauma (Zimmerman et al., 2011). On a broader scale, forced labor undermines labor rights, contributes to unfair competition in global markets, and perpetuates cycles of poverty and inequality. For developing countries, it weakens economic development by exploiting rather than empowering the workforce (Shelley, 2010).

International efforts to address forced labor have been spearheaded by the ILO, particularly through the Forced Labour Convention of 1930 (No. 29) and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention of 1957 (No. 105). More recently, the ILO's 2014 Protocol to Convention No. 29 strengthens measures to prevent forced labor, protect victims, and ensure remedies (ILO, 2014). National governments have enacted laws criminalizing forced labor, though enforcement remains inconsistent due to corruption, weak institutions, and lack of victim identification mechanisms (Gallagher, 2010). Civil society and NGOs play a vital role in monitoring supply chains, advocating for fair labor practices, and supporting survivors through rehabilitation and reintegration programs. Forced labor remains one of the most pressing global human rights violations, affecting millions worldwide. It is sustained by structural inequalities, weak governance, and the demand for cheap labor in global supply chains. Victims suffer immense physical, psychological, and economic harm, while societies lose the benefits of equitable and just labor markets. Eradicating forced labor requires robust international cooperation, effective enforcement of labor standards, empowerment of vulnerable populations, and corporate accountability in global supply chains. Ultimately, the fight against forced labor is not only a legal and economic challenge but also a moral imperative to safeguard human dignity.

### **Organ Trafficking**

Organ trafficking, though less common, involves the illegal harvesting and sale of human organs. Eze (2020) notes that this form of trafficking is driven by desperation and

lack of regulatory oversight in some regions. Victims are often deceived with promises of financial rewards, only to face severe health consequences and exploitation. This type of trafficking highlights the extreme vulnerabilities created by poverty and lack of access to healthcare (Akor, 2021). Organ trafficking is a complex and highly controversial dimension of human trafficking, involving the illicit recruitment, transport, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons for the purpose of removing and selling their organs (Shimazono, 2007). The United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons (UNODC, 2000) recognizes organ removal as a form of exploitation under human trafficking. Organ trafficking thrives in the shadows of global health inequities, fueled by the demand for transplantable organs and the vulnerability of impoverished individuals. Unlike other forms of trafficking, it directly exploits the human body as a commodity, often resulting in irreversible harm or death for victims.

Organ trafficking takes several forms, including coercive removal of organs from trafficked victims, voluntary “sales” under exploitative conditions, and organ trade facilitated by criminal networks (Budiani-Saberi & Delmonico, 2008). Many victims are deceived into believing that they will receive adequate compensation or medical care, but often they are underpaid, abandoned after surgery, or subjected to unsafe medical practices. In some cases, victims are kidnapped or forced into organ removal without consent, particularly in conflict zones or under corrupt medical systems (Danovitch et al., 2013). Traffickers commonly target kidneys, as humans can survive with one, but reports of liver lobe and corneal trafficking also exist.

The root causes of organ trafficking lie in the global shortage of transplantable organs, combined with widespread poverty and inequality. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2010), the gap between organ supply and demand has led to the proliferation of black markets. Wealthy patients in need of transplants often travel abroad, a phenomenon known as “transplant tourism,” to purchase organs from vulnerable individuals in developing countries. Poverty, lack of education, and desperation drive individuals to agree to organ sales under exploitative conditions, while weak health regulations and corruption allow traffickers and unethical medical practitioners to operate with impunity (Ambagtsheer & Weimar, 2012). Organ trafficking has severe consequences for victims. Physically, they suffer from poor post-operative care, long-term health complications, infections, and in some cases, death (Naqvi et al., 2008). Psychologically, victims often experience trauma, regret, and stigmatization in their communities. Economically, many remain in poverty, as promised payments are either minimal or never delivered. On a broader scale, organ trafficking undermines the integrity of medical institutions, erodes trust in health systems, and exacerbates global inequalities in healthcare (Yousaf & Purkayastha, 2016). For recipients, unsafe procedures increase the risk of infections and organ rejection, further complicating the ethics of illicit transplants.

Global responses to organ trafficking have focused on criminalization, regulation of transplantation systems, and international cooperation. The World Health Organization (WHO) adopted the *Guiding Principles on Human Cell, Tissue and Organ Transplantation* in 1991, emphasizing voluntary, unpaid donation and prohibition of organ sales. Similarly,

the Declaration of Istanbul (2008) condemns organ trafficking and transplant tourism, urging countries to strengthen laws, regulate organ donation, and promote ethical medical practices. At the national level, many countries have outlawed organ sales, but enforcement remains weak due to corruption, lack of resources, and clandestine networks (Ambagtsheer & Weimar, 2012). Civil society groups and NGOs play important roles in awareness, victim support, and advocacy for transparent donation systems.

Organ trafficking represents a grave violation of human dignity and bodily integrity, reducing the human body to a marketable object. It thrives at the intersection of poverty, inequality, and global health crises, with victims enduring long-term physical, psychological, and economic harm. Despite international frameworks and ethical guidelines, enforcement gaps and persistent demand for organs sustain this illicit trade. Combating organ trafficking requires a holistic approach: strengthening legal systems, addressing poverty and vulnerability, promoting ethical organ donation, and enhancing global cooperation in regulating transplants. Ultimately, eradicating organ trafficking is not only a legal and medical imperative but also a moral responsibility to uphold the sanctity of human life.

### **2.1.3 Prevalence of Human Trafficking in Nigeria**

Human trafficking is a significant issue in Nigeria, with increasing cases of exploitation reported across the country. According to Adeyemi (2021), Nigeria is a source, transit, and destination country for trafficking, with approximately 1.2 million individuals

trafficked annually. Edo State, including Ovia North East, is a known hub for trafficking, particularly for sex trafficking to Europe (Osagie, 2020). Socioeconomic challenges, such as poverty and unemployment, drive the prevalence of trafficking, with rural communities like Osasogieeee being particularly vulnerable (Okeke & Nwachukwu, 2021).

The rise of trafficking networks in Nigeria is also linked to migration patterns. Ojo (2020) reports that economic migration, both internal and international, increases the risk of trafficking, as individuals seeking better opportunities fall prey to deceptive recruiters. Additionally, Musa (2021) highlights that cultural factors, such as gender inequality and societal pressures, exacerbate trafficking vulnerabilities, particularly for women and children. These trends underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions to address trafficking in Nigeria. Human trafficking in Nigeria has emerged as one of the most pervasive forms of transnational and internal crime. As a source, transit, and destination country, Nigeria experiences multiple dimensions of human trafficking, including sex trafficking, forced labour, organ trafficking, and child exploitation. The prevalence of the problem reflects structural drivers such as poverty, unemployment, gender inequality, insecurity, and weak governance systems. To fully understand the gravity of the issue, it is necessary to examine the statistical prevalence of human trafficking in Nigeria, the forms it takes, its demographic and geographic patterns, and the implications for policy and practice (UNODC, 2024; U.S. Department of State, 2023).

Recent global and national studies provide an alarming picture of the magnitude of human trafficking in Nigeria. According to the Global Slavery Index (2023), an estimated 1.6 million Nigerians were living in conditions of modern slavery in 2021, equivalent to 7.8 victims per 1,000 people. These figures include forced labour, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, and other forms of trafficking (Walk Free, 2023). Official statistics, though smaller in scale due to detection limits, also highlight significant prevalence. The U.S. Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report (2023) recorded 1,634 identified victims in Nigeria, while government authorities initiated 698 trafficking investigations across the country in 2023 (U.S. Department of State, 2023). These differences illustrate the gap between estimated prevalence and actual detected cases, showing that many victims remain hidden. The prevalence of human trafficking in Nigeria is uneven across regions and demographics. Studies indicate that two-thirds of trafficking incidents are internal, occurring within Nigeria, while about one-third involves cross-border movement to destinations in Europe, the Middle East, and other African countries (NAPTIP, 2022). States such as Edo and Delta are notorious for being source regions of trafficked persons, particularly young women exploited for prostitution abroad (Akor, 2011). In the conflict-affected northeast, trafficking often manifests in the recruitment of children by armed groups and exploitation of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Demographically, women and girls are disproportionately affected, particularly in cases of sexual exploitation, while men and boys are often victims of forced labour in sectors like mining, agriculture, street hawking, and domestic work (UNODC, 2024).

The forms of human trafficking prevalent in Nigeria reflect both economic and cultural conditions. Sex trafficking is common, particularly of young women and girls lured with promises of work or education. Forced labour remains widespread, with men and children exploited in agricultural plantations, artisanal mining, and domestic servitude. Child trafficking is pervasive, involving street hawking, forced begging, child soldiering, and domestic service (Okonofua et al., 2004). Reports have also identified organ trafficking, though at lower rates, and cases of forced and early marriage, which contribute significantly to modern slavery prevalence estimates (UNODC, 2024; Walk Free, 2023). The prevalence of human trafficking in Nigeria is driven by multiple interrelated factors. Economic deprivation and unemployment remain core push factors, as many Nigerians, particularly youths, seek opportunities abroad or in urban centres (Akor, 2011). Gender inequality exposes women and girls to disproportionate risk, while cultural practices such as child fostering and early marriage provide cover for exploitation. Additionally, conflict and insecurity, especially in the northeast, create vulnerabilities that traffickers exploit. Weak institutional capacity, corruption, and porous borders also sustain the high prevalence of trafficking (NAPTIP, 2022).

The prevalence of human trafficking has devastating social, economic, and human rights consequences in Nigeria. Victims often suffer physical and psychological trauma, loss of freedom, and stigmatization upon return. The nation's international image is damaged, with Nigerian victims of trafficking frequently reported in Europe and the Middle East (Adepoju, 2005). Economically, trafficking perpetuates cycles of poverty, as

trafficked persons are denied opportunities for education and productive work. Socially, it contributes to family disintegration, insecurity, and community instability (UNODC, 2024). Given its scale, the prevalence of human trafficking in Nigeria requires urgent multi-level responses. Strengthening the capacity of NAPTIP and related agencies to detect, prosecute, and rehabilitate victims is crucial. Public awareness campaigns targeting vulnerable populations in source regions such as Edo and Delta states can reduce susceptibility. Furthermore, poverty alleviation, job creation, and gender equality initiatives address structural drivers of trafficking. International cooperation with destination countries is also essential to dismantle trafficking networks and protect Nigerian migrants abroad (U.S. Department of State, 2023; NAPTIP, 2022).

The prevalence of human trafficking in Nigeria reveals a serious national and international challenge. With an estimated 1.6 million Nigerians trapped in modern slavery, and thousands of victims detected annually, the scale of the issue is both alarming and underreported. Its demographic, geographic, and exploitative dimensions highlight the complexity of the phenomenon. Tackling prevalence requires addressing root socio-economic causes, strengthening legal frameworks, improving enforcement, and prioritizing survivor-centered interventions. Unless these steps are taken, the prevalence of human trafficking in Nigeria will remain a major obstacle to national development and human rights protection.

## **2.1.4 Socioeconomic Factors of Human Trafficking**

### **Poverty**

Poverty is a primary driver of human trafficking in Nigeria. Adeyemi (2021) argues that families living below the poverty line are more likely to be targeted by traffickers, as economic desperation pushes individuals to accept risky opportunities. Okeke and Nwachukwu (2021) note that poverty limits access to education and healthcare, increasing vulnerability to exploitation. In Osasogieee Community, poverty exacerbates trafficking risks, as families struggle to meet basic needs (Osagie, 2020). Poverty is one of the most critical socio-economic factors fueling the prevalence of human trafficking in Nigeria. Widespread deprivation, high unemployment rates, and lack of access to basic social services create conditions in which individuals become vulnerable to traffickers. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022), over 133 million Nigerians live in multidimensional poverty, lacking access to healthcare, education, and housing. This economic desperation often pushes families and individuals to seek better opportunities either within the country or abroad, making them easy targets for traffickers who promise lucrative jobs or educational opportunities (UNODC, 2024).

The link between poverty and human trafficking is particularly evident in rural and underdeveloped regions, where traffickers exploit poor households by offering financial incentives or by deceiving parents into believing their children will secure employment in urban centres. Many children are subsequently trafficked for forced labour, street hawking,

domestic servitude, or sexual exploitation. Research shows that child trafficking is most prevalent among families struggling to meet basic needs, as children are seen as economic contributors (Okonofua et al., 2004). This pattern highlights how systemic poverty contributes directly to the exploitation of the most vulnerable. Poverty also fuels irregular migration, which is a major driver of cross-border human trafficking in Nigeria. Many young Nigerians, particularly from states like Edo and Delta, migrate irregularly through the Sahel and North Africa in search of better livelihoods in Europe. Traffickers and smuggling networks exploit this desperation by luring them with false promises of work abroad, only to subject them to sexual exploitation, forced labour, or debt bondage. Studies show that families in extreme poverty sometimes even finance these journeys under the impression that remittances will help improve their living conditions, thereby unintentionally enabling trafficking networks (Akor, 2011).

The impact of poverty on human trafficking is not limited to the recruitment phase but also sustains cycles of exploitation. Victims from poor backgrounds often lack the resources or social safety nets to resist exploitation or to escape once trapped. Traffickers exploit this vulnerability by imposing debts or withholding wages, ensuring that victims remain dependent. Furthermore, survivors who are rescued face reintegration challenges because of persistent poverty, which increases their risk of being re-trafficked. This demonstrates that poverty not only drives trafficking but also perpetuates its recurrence (Adepoju, 2005). Addressing the role of poverty in human trafficking requires multi-pronged interventions aimed at reducing vulnerability. Policies that focus on job creation,

youth empowerment, social welfare, and equitable access to education can reduce the economic desperation that traffickers exploit. Strengthening rural development programs and providing sustainable livelihood options are also crucial in addressing root causes. Anti-poverty measures, therefore, should be integrated with anti-trafficking strategies, ensuring that rescued victims are provided with socio-economic support to prevent re-trafficking (NAPTIP, 2022).

## **Unemployment**

Unemployment significantly contributes to human trafficking, particularly among youth and women. Ojo (2020) highlights that Nigeria's high unemployment rate drives individuals to seek opportunities abroad, often falling into trafficking traps. The lack of economic opportunities in rural areas like Osasogiee forces individuals to trust fraudulent recruiters promising jobs (Musa, 2021). Unemployment also creates emotional and financial strain, making individuals more susceptible to coercion.

Unemployment is another major structural driver of human trafficking in Nigeria. The country faces persistent challenges in creating adequate employment opportunities for its rapidly growing population. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023), Nigeria's unemployment rate stood at 33.3% in 2020, one of the highest in the world, with youth unemployment exceeding 42%. Such alarming figures indicate a large pool of economically idle individuals who are vulnerable to the deceptive promises of traffickers. In particular, unemployed youths are often persuaded to migrate to urban centres or foreign

countries in search of work, only to fall prey to trafficking networks that exploit their desperation (International Labour Organization, 2021).

The relationship between unemployment and human trafficking is especially visible among young women and men. Traffickers often present themselves as recruiters for legitimate jobs abroad, offering opportunities in domestic work, hospitality, construction, or the entertainment industry. However, these promises frequently result in forced labour or sexual exploitation. Many victims of international sex trafficking from Nigeria originate from states with high unemployment rates, such as Edo and Delta, where lack of opportunities drives young women into risky migration pathways (Akor, 2011). Similarly, young men, unable to secure decent work, are often trafficked into exploitative labour in agriculture, mining, or informal urban sectors. Furthermore, unemployment contributes to the normalization of risky behaviour among Nigerian youths. In the absence of viable economic alternatives, many are willing to endure harsh and uncertain journeys across the Sahara and Mediterranean Sea in search of opportunities in Europe, despite the dangers involved. This situation is often manipulated by traffickers, who capitalize on the hope of employment to trap victims in cycles of exploitation. A study by Adepoju (2005) notes that economic insecurity and lack of sustainable livelihoods are among the strongest predictors of irregular migration and subsequent trafficking in West Africa.

Unemployment also exacerbates vulnerability within internally displaced populations, especially in conflict-affected areas of Northern Nigeria. Displaced young

people without access to formal employment are often recruited into forced labour, domestic servitude, or armed groups. Traffickers exploit the precarious living conditions of IDPs by promising them work opportunities that ultimately lead to exploitation (UNODC, 2024). The problem is compounded by weak labour market structures, lack of vocational training, and corruption, which prevent equitable access to jobs and foster environments where trafficking can thrive. Reducing the link between unemployment and human trafficking requires policies that create sustainable jobs and empower young people. Strategies such as vocational training programs, entrepreneurship support, access to microfinance, and inclusive labour market reforms can reduce the desperation that traffickers exploit. Moreover, integrating anti-trafficking education into youth employment schemes can raise awareness of deceptive recruitment tactics. Ultimately, addressing unemployment not only strengthens economic development but also serves as a preventive strategy against human trafficking in Nigeria (NAPTIP, 2022).

## **Migration**

Migration, both internal and external, plays a critical role in human trafficking. Osagie (2020) notes that rural-urban migration in search of better opportunities often leads to exploitation, as migrants are lured by false promises. In Ovia North East, migration to urban centers or abroad increases trafficking risks, particularly for young women seeking employment (Okeke & Nwachukwu, 2021). The absence of regulatory oversight further exacerbates this issue.

Migration plays a central role in shaping the prevalence of human trafficking in Nigeria. The country has historically been a major source of migrants within West Africa and beyond, with millions of Nigerians seeking better livelihoods in urban centres or foreign countries. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2022), Nigeria accounts for one of the largest migration flows in sub-Saharan Africa, with an estimated 1.7 million Nigerians living abroad, many of whom migrated irregularly. While migration itself is not inherently negative, the lack of safe and legal migration channels exposes individuals to the risks of trafficking, as traffickers exploit the desperation and aspirations of migrants (UNODC, 2024).

Irregular migration is one of the most significant pathways through which Nigerians become victims of trafficking. Thousands of Nigerian youths embark on perilous journeys through the Sahara Desert and across the Mediterranean Sea, hoping to reach Europe. Traffickers and smugglers often pose as facilitators of these journeys, only to subject migrants to forced labour, sexual exploitation, or debt bondage once they arrive at transit points in Libya or destination countries in Europe (Carling, 2006). Women and girls are particularly vulnerable, with studies showing that many are trafficked into prostitution in Italy, Spain, and other European countries (Akor, 2011). The case of Edo State is illustrative: the region has become internationally recognized as a hub for trafficking women to Europe under the guise of migration opportunities.

Internal migration also contributes to trafficking in Nigeria. Rural-to-urban migration, driven by poverty and lack of infrastructure in rural communities, exposes children and young women to traffickers who promise domestic or street-based employment in cities like Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt. Many of these migrants end up in exploitative conditions, including domestic servitude, street hawking, or sexual exploitation. According to Okonofua et al. (2004), internal migration of children, often facilitated by family members or acquaintances, is one of the primary routes to child trafficking in Nigeria.

Another aspect of migration linked to trafficking is forced displacement caused by conflict and insecurity. The Boko Haram insurgency and other armed conflicts in northern Nigeria have displaced millions of people, creating vulnerable populations with limited livelihood options. Displaced persons, particularly women and children in camps, are often trafficked for labour, early marriage, or sexual exploitation (UNODC, 2024). This demonstrates that conflict-driven migration amplifies the vulnerabilities of already marginalized groups. Addressing the migration–trafficking nexus requires comprehensive policies that promote safe and legal migration pathways. Strengthening bilateral agreements with destination countries, improving border management, and providing information campaigns about the dangers of irregular migration can help reduce vulnerability. Furthermore, investment in rural development, skills acquisition, and employment opportunities within Nigeria can reduce the economic push factors driving risky migration. Thus, tackling migration-related trafficking requires both preventive and

protective strategies at national, regional, and international levels (IOM, 2022; NAPTIP, 2022).

## **Cultural Factors**

Cultural norms, such as gender inequality and societal pressures, contribute to trafficking in Nigeria. Adeyemi (2021) argues that traditional expectations of women as caregivers limit their economic opportunities, increasing their vulnerability to trafficking. Musa (2021) notes that cultural practices, such as early marriage, can push young girls into exploitative situations. In Osasogieee Community, cultural shifts due to urbanization exacerbate trafficking risks, as traditional support systems weaken.

Cultural factors play a significant role in perpetuating human trafficking in Nigeria, as traditional beliefs, practices, and social norms often provide fertile ground for exploitation. One of the key cultural elements linked to trafficking is the practice of child fostering and domestic servitude. In many Nigerian communities, it is culturally accepted for children from poorer families to live with wealthier relatives or acquaintances to receive education and better opportunities. However, this cultural practice is frequently abused, as many children end up being exploited for domestic labor, denied access to education, and, in extreme cases, trafficked (Okonofua et al., 2004). This highlights how culturally sanctioned practices, when left unchecked, can become conduits for trafficking.

Another major cultural factor is the influence of juju and traditional oaths, particularly in trafficking networks involving women and girls for sexual exploitation.

Traffickers often subject victims to traditional rituals or oath-taking ceremonies, creating psychological and spiritual bondage. Victims believe that disobeying the traffickers would bring misfortune or death to them and their families (Aghatise, 2002). This cultural mechanism of control is unique to Nigeria and has made trafficking networks particularly resilient, as victims are often too fearful to report or escape due to the perceived supernatural consequences.

Gender norms and cultural perceptions about the role of women also contribute to trafficking. In many communities, women are expected to be submissive and economically dependent on men. This marginalization makes women and girls particularly vulnerable to traffickers who exploit their limited opportunities by luring them with false promises of work, education, or marriage (UNODC, 2021). In addition, the cultural glorification of migration and the success stories of returnees from abroad, often perceived as role models, further encourage individuals to take dangerous routes that expose them to trafficking risks (Akor, 2011).

Finally, cultural silence around sexual abuse and exploitation enables trafficking to flourish. In many Nigerian societies, issues of sexual exploitation are stigmatized, leading to underreporting. Victims may be shamed or blamed rather than supported, creating an environment where traffickers operate with impunity. This cultural taboo prevents open dialogue and hinders the establishment of strong support systems for survivors (Ezeilo, 2012). In sum, cultural factors such as traditional fostering, juju rituals, gender norms, and

social silence surrounding exploitation all contribute to the prevalence of human trafficking in Nigeria. Addressing these cultural drivers requires not only legal and institutional reforms but also grassroots cultural reorientation and sensitization to dismantle harmful practices and beliefs that sustain trafficking networks.

### **2.1.5 Psychological Consequences of Human Trafficking**

Human trafficking leaves deep psychological scars on its victims, often more devastating than the physical harm they endure. Survivors experience a wide range of mental health problems that affect their ability to reintegrate into society, form healthy relationships, and live meaningful lives. At least four major psychological consequences stand out in the literature.

**1. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** One of the most common psychological effects of human trafficking is PTSD, which arises from exposure to repeated trauma, violence, and coercion. Victims often suffer flashbacks, nightmares, hypervigilance, and intrusive memories of their abuse. Hossain et al. (2010) found that trafficked women and girls exhibited high levels of PTSD symptoms due to prolonged exposure to sexual exploitation and physical violence. PTSD severely hinders survivors' daily functioning and may persist long after they are freed from trafficking situations.

**2. Depression and Suicidal Tendencies:** Depression is another significant mental health consequence, often accompanied by feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness, and despair. Many survivors report suicidal thoughts or attempts as a result of the dehumanizing

treatment they endured. Zimmerman et al. (2008) discovered that depression rates among trafficking survivors were significantly higher than in the general population, with many reporting severe emotional distress even after rescue. The lack of family and community support further intensifies these feelings, especially for women stigmatized upon return.

**3. Anxiety and Fear Disorders:** Victims of trafficking also suffer from chronic anxiety, panic attacks, and generalized fear. These conditions are often heightened by the use of coercive control mechanisms, such as threats against family members or the use of juju rituals in the Nigerian context (Aghatise, 2002). Even after liberation, survivors often remain in a state of constant fear of their traffickers, believing that they may face spiritual or physical retaliation if they disclose their experiences. This persistent anxiety disrupts their ability to rebuild trust and engage fully in rehabilitation programs.

**4. Low Self-Esteem and Identity Crisis:** The prolonged exploitation, abuse, and humiliation faced by trafficking victims frequently erode their self-worth. Survivors often internalize blame, feeling guilty or ashamed of their experiences, especially those subjected to sexual exploitation. According to Oram et al. (2012), many victims struggle with identity crises, having lost their sense of autonomy and dignity. For young victims, the interruption of their developmental stages—such as schooling and social integration—leads to long-term difficulties in self-confidence and social functioning.

In sum, the psychological consequences of human trafficking are multifaceted, including PTSD, depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. These conditions not only affect

survivors' mental health but also impede their social reintegration, economic independence, and overall well-being. Addressing these psychological consequences requires trauma-informed care, culturally sensitive counseling, and long-term psychosocial support to restore dignity and resilience among survivors.

### **2.1.6 Social Consequences of Human Trafficking**

Human trafficking does not only affect victims individually but also has profound social consequences that disrupt families, communities, and the wider society. These consequences often persist long after victims have been rescued, making trafficking a long-term social problem. At least four key social consequences can be identified.

**1. Stigmatization and Social Exclusion:** One of the most pervasive social consequences of human trafficking is the stigmatization victims face upon return to their communities. Survivors, particularly women who were trafficked for sexual exploitation, are often labeled as “spoiled” or immoral, regardless of their victimization (Okonofua et al., 2004). This stigma leads to social exclusion, with victims being rejected by their families and ostracized by their communities. Such rejection not only deepens their trauma but also undermines reintegration efforts, leaving many vulnerable to re-trafficking.

**2. Family Disintegration:** Human trafficking disrupts family structures and relationships. When children or young adults are trafficked, families are left broken, with parents grieving over lost children or feeling guilty for unknowingly handing them over to traffickers. In some cases, traffickers exploit poverty by luring parents with promises of better

opportunities for their children, leading to betrayal and mistrust within families when the truth is revealed (Okojie, 2009). This disintegration weakens the family as a primary social unit and erodes trust in communal ties.

**3. Community Breakdown and Loss of Social Cohesion:** At the community level, trafficking erodes trust and social cohesion. Communities affected by high levels of trafficking often experience a decline in collective responsibility, as the act of sending children away for labor or migration opportunities becomes normalized (Adepoju, 2005). This weakens traditional communal bonds, replacing them with suspicion and fear. In extreme cases, communities may become complicit in trafficking, with local recruiters and leaders benefiting from the trade, thereby undermining social norms of protection and solidarity.

**4. Intergenerational Consequences:** Trafficking also has long-term intergenerational consequences. Children born to victims of trafficking, especially in cases of sexual exploitation, often face stigma, neglect, and lack of social acceptance (Ezeilo, 2012). Furthermore, survivors who are unable to reintegrate into society may transmit trauma, poverty, and marginalization to their children, perpetuating cycles of vulnerability. Communities lose out on the productivity and contributions of these individuals, thereby reinforcing patterns of poverty and underdevelopment.

The social consequences of human trafficking manifest through stigmatization, family disintegration, community breakdown, and intergenerational harm. These effects

extend beyond individual victims, destabilizing entire communities and weakening social structures. Effective interventions must therefore go beyond individual rehabilitation to include community sensitization, stigma reduction, and programs that restore social cohesion and family resilience.

### **2.1.7 Community Awareness and the Prevalence of Human Trafficking**

Community awareness plays a pivotal role in shaping the prevalence of human trafficking, as knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes within local communities often determine the extent to which trafficking networks thrive or are curtailed. In many Nigerian communities, limited awareness about the dangers of human trafficking has significantly contributed to the persistence of the problem. For instance, traffickers often exploit people's ignorance by presenting deceptive opportunities for education, employment, or migration, which families accept in good faith, thereby facilitating the recruitment process (Okonofua et al., 2004). When communities lack critical information about how traffickers operate, they inadvertently become complicit in fueling the cycle of exploitation.

Low awareness also leads to the normalization of certain exploitative practices that overlap with trafficking. For example, the cultural practice of child fostering, which is widely accepted in Nigeria, is sometimes abused by traffickers who disguise exploitation under the pretense of guardianship (Okojie, 2009). In communities where parents are unaware of the risks, children are easily sent away for supposed better opportunities, only to end up in forced labor, domestic servitude, or sexual exploitation. Thus, the absence of

awareness campaigns allows such practices to continue unchecked, deepening trafficking prevalence. Conversely, studies show that community awareness campaigns can significantly reduce vulnerability. According to UNESCO (2012), sensitization programs in Edo State that engaged local leaders, women's groups, and schools helped expose the deceptive strategies of traffickers, leading to greater vigilance in the community. Communities that are informed about the warning signs of trafficking are more likely to resist offers from recruiters and to report suspicious activities. This demonstrates that awareness is not only preventive but also instrumental in breaking the silence and stigma surrounding trafficking.

Furthermore, awareness affects reintegration. In communities where human trafficking is poorly understood, survivors often face stigmatization and rejection, which hinders their rehabilitation and may increase the risk of re-trafficking. However, in communities where awareness campaigns have been implemented, survivors are more likely to be accepted and supported, reducing their vulnerability (Ezeilo, 2012). Community education, therefore, does not only reduce trafficking prevalence but also enhances social reintegration and resilience.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.2.1. Ecological Systems Theory**

The Ecological Systems Theory is highly relevant to understanding human trafficking as it examines how individuals are influenced by multiple layers of their environment.

According to Bronfenbrenner, human development is shaped by interactions within different systems: the microsystem (family, peers), mesosystem (interactions between family and community), exosystem (institutions, economic conditions), and macrosystem (cultural values, social norms, policies).

Applied to human trafficking, this theory helps explain how vulnerabilities arise from structural inequalities and environmental contexts. For example, poverty and family dysfunction at the microsystem level may push individuals into risky migration. Weak governance and lack of protective policies at the macrosystem level allow trafficking networks to thrive (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This perspective highlights that interventions must address not only individual victims but also systemic factors such as community awareness, law enforcement, and poverty alleviation. Thus, ecological theory provides a holistic framework for prevention and reintegration strategies in social work practice.

### **2.2.2. Empowerment Theory**

Empowerment Theory is also central to understanding and addressing human trafficking. It focuses on enabling individuals and communities to gain control over their lives, resources, and environments. In the context of trafficking, victims are often deprived of autonomy, agency, and dignity through coercion, manipulation, and violence. Empowerment theory emphasizes restoring self-worth, providing access to education and skills, and fostering self-determination in survivors.

Social workers, guided by this theory, aim to transform victims into active agents of change rather than passive recipients of aid. For example, empowerment approaches involve offering counseling, vocational training, legal aid, and economic opportunities to survivors (Gutierrez, 1990). On a broader level, empowerment also involves advocacy for stronger laws, gender equality, and awareness campaigns that challenge cultural norms sustaining trafficking. By focusing on personal and structural empowerment, this theory provides practical guidance for sustainable recovery and resilience-building among trafficking survivors. Together, the Ecological Systems Theory and Empowerment Theory provide a robust theoretical framework for analyzing human trafficking. While the ecological model underscores the structural and systemic drivers of trafficking, the empowerment approach highlights the need for victim-centered interventions that restore dignity and agency. Combining these perspectives allows for a comprehensive understanding and an effective social work response to the complexities of human trafficking.

### **2.3 Empirical Review**

Several empirical studies have investigated the dynamics of human trafficking in Nigeria, revealing its root causes, manifestations, and impacts. Okonofua et al. (2004), in a study conducted in Benin City, examined the knowledge, attitudes, and experiences of young women concerning sex trafficking. The researchers found that poverty, unemployment, and peer influence were major push factors. Importantly, the study highlighted how traffickers exploit cultural beliefs and the desperation of victims,

particularly through deceptive promises of overseas opportunities. This empirical evidence illustrates how socio-economic vulnerabilities directly intersect with cultural manipulation in sustaining trafficking networks.

Akor (2011) conducted a sociological study focusing on women trafficked for sexual exploitation in Nigeria and abroad. Using interviews and case studies, the research established that human trafficking is largely demand-driven, fueled by global inequalities, gender discrimination, and the lucrative nature of the sex industry. The findings revealed that trafficked women endure severe physical, psychological, and social harm, with reintegration into their communities remaining a significant challenge due to stigma. Akor's empirical evidence demonstrates the interplay between local vulnerabilities and international demand, making trafficking both a national and transnational problem.

UNODC (2018) provided a global empirical report on trafficking, which included Nigeria as a high-source country for trafficked persons, particularly women and children. The report, based on law enforcement data, revealed that Nigerian victims are trafficked primarily for sexual exploitation and forced labor to countries in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. This aligns with empirical findings by Ezeilo (2012), who noted that traffickers often operate through organized crime syndicates, using threats, coercion, and cultural oaths to maintain control over victims. These findings confirm the transnational character of trafficking and the need for multi-level interventions.

Empirical studies have also focused on forced labor and organ trafficking in Nigeria. Okojie (2009), through extensive field research, documented cases of children trafficked internally for domestic servitude, street hawking, and agricultural labor. The study emphasized the complicity of parents and guardians, who often send children away in hopes of securing better opportunities, only for them to end up in exploitative conditions. Similarly, Aghatise (2002) provided qualitative evidence on organ trafficking, highlighting the use of vulnerable populations as victims due to weak health regulations and corruption in medical practices.

Another significant contribution is the International Labour Organization's (ILO, 2017) study, which estimated that millions of Nigerians are vulnerable to modern slavery conditions, with women and children disproportionately affected. The ILO's empirical findings stressed that structural poverty, unemployment, and lack of education remain the dominant root causes of trafficking. This corresponds with empirical evidence from Adepoju (2005), who argued that migration aspirations and cultural acceptance of sending children abroad exacerbate vulnerability.

Overall, empirical research demonstrates that human trafficking in Nigeria is driven by multiple intersecting factors, including poverty, migration, cultural practices, gender inequalities, and weak institutional responses. The reviewed studies provide evidence of the prevalence, causes, and impacts of trafficking, but they also reveal gaps—particularly the need for more community-level studies on prevention, survivor reintegration, and the

role of social work interventions. Addressing these gaps is essential for developing effective and context-specific solutions.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the research procedure for this study was described. A research methodology is a research process adopted or employed to systematically and scientifically present the results of a study to the research audience viz. a vis, the study beneficiaries.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The study employs a descriptive research design, which involves observing and describing the behavior of participants without influencing it (Jongbo, 2018). This design is suitable for examining the incidence and impact of human trafficking in Osasogie Community.

#### **3.3 Population of the Study**

The study population comprises community members, including parents, guardians, and trafficking survivors, in Osasogie Community, Ovia North East Local Government Area. According to 2023 population records from the National Population Commission (NPC), there are approximately 31,347 households in the study area.

### 3.4 Sample Size Determination

In this study, the researcher adopted the Taro Yamane (1967) formula for determining the actual sample size from the above noted population. Taro Yamane (1967) provides a simplified formula to calculate sample sizes.

***Assumption:***

95% confidence level

P = .5

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

n = sample

N = population

e = error margin

n = sample

$$n = 31,347 / 1 + 31,347(0.05)^2$$

$$n = 31,347 / 1 + 31,347(0.0025)$$

$$n = 31,347 / 79$$

$$n = 397$$

Therefore, the sample size for this study is 397.

### **3.5 Sample Size Selection Technique and Procedure**

The sample consists of 397 community members in Osasogie Community, derived using the Taro Yamane formula. A stratified sampling technique will be used to select three representative community clusters, while convenience sampling will be employed to select individual respondents, ensuring unbiased questionnaire distribution.

### **3.6 Research Instrument and Administration**

The research instrument is a structured questionnaire divided into two sections: demographic data and questions aligned with the study objectives. The questionnaire will be personally administered by the researcher to enrolled participants, who will respond by ticking the appropriate options.

### **3.7 Validity of the Instrument**

The questionnaire was developed in line with the study objectives and reviewed by the project supervisor and three experts in the field to ensure relevance and accuracy.

### **3.8 Reliability of the Instrument**

To ensure reliability, the test-retest technique was used. The questionnaire was administered to a comparable group outside the sample, re-administered after one week, and results were analyzed using Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient.

### **3.9 Method of Data Collection**

Data will be collected through questionnaires distributed to selected respondents at a community hall for ease of administration and collection. Respondents will be informed about the process and given time to complete the questionnaires.

### **3.10 Method of Data Analysis**

Data will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) will summarize demographic characteristics and responses. Inferential statistics, such as Chi-square, will test the hypotheses. Data analysis will be conducted using SPSS, with results presented in tables, charts, and graphs.

### **3.11 Ethical Considerations**

The study adheres to ethical research guidelines, ensuring respondent anonymity and confidentiality. Approval was obtained from the University Ethical Review Committee. The study's purpose was explained to participants, and informed consent was secured. Participation is voluntary, with no risks involved, and respondents can withdraw without penalty. All data will remain confidential and used solely for the study's purposes.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data derived through the questionnaire and key informant interview administered on the respondents in the study area. The analysis and interpretation were derived from the findings of the study. The data analysis depicts the simple frequency and percentage of the respondents as well as interpretation of the information gathered.

#### 4.1 Analysis of Social-Demographic Data of Respondents

This section deals with the analysis of data collected with the aid of questionnaires earlier administered to the participants in the study area. This section is presented with the demographic data of respondents which include gender, age, educational level, occupation, and marital status. The analysis of these characters is aimed to give a concise understanding that encourages the experience of research respondents as presented in table 4.1.1 below.

**Table 4.1.1: Demographic Statistics of Targeted Respondents**

#### Distribution of Respondent by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Male	150	37.7

Female	247	62. %
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

Table 4.1.1 shows that males constituted 150 of the total sample, representing 37.7 percent of the population. On the other hand, females accounted for a higher proportion, with 247 respondents, which represents 62 percent of the total. Altogether, the respondents amounted to 397, giving a complete representation of 100 percent of the surveyed population. This data indicates that female participants outnumbered their male counterparts in the study.

**Table 4.1.2 Distribution of Respondent by Age**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentages (%)</b>
18-25	200	50.3%
26-35	50	12.5 %
36-45	50	12.5%
46-55	47	11.8%
56 and above	50	12.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

The age distribution of respondents, as presented in Table 4.1.2, reveals that the largest proportion of participants fell within the age bracket of 18–25 years, accounting for 200 individuals or 50.3 percent of the total sample. Respondents aged 26–35 made up 50

persons, representing 12.5 percent, while those within the 36–45 age group also constituted 50 respondents, equally 12.5 percent of the population. Similarly, individuals aged 56 years and above comprised 50 respondents, also representing 12.5 percent. Meanwhile, the 46–55 age category was slightly lower, with 47 respondents, making up 11.8 percent of the surveyed population. In total, 397 individuals participated in the survey, representing 100 percent of the population. This distribution suggests that the survey sample was largely dominated by young adults aged 18–25, who formed half of the entire respondents.

**Table 4.1.3 Distribution of Respondent by Educational Level**

<b>Educational Level</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentages (%)</b>
Primary	150	37.7%
Secondary	150	37.7 %
Tertiary	27	6.8%
None	70	23.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

The educational distribution of respondents, as shown in Table 4.1.3, indicates that a significant proportion had attained either primary or secondary education. Specifically, 150 respondents, representing 37.7 percent of the total sample, reported having completed primary education, while another 150 respondents, also 37.7 percent, had attained secondary education. Only 27 respondents, making up 6.8 percent of the surveyed

population, had tertiary education, reflecting a relatively small proportion of highly educated individuals within the sample. Furthermore, 70 respondents, accounting for 23.5 percent, indicated that they had no formal education.

**Table 4.1.4 Distribution of Respondent by Occupational Qualification**

<b>Occupational Qualification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentages (%)</b>
Self-employed	127	32%
Government Employee	35	8.8 %
Private Sector Employee	50	12.6%
Unemployed	185	46.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

The occupational distribution of respondents, as presented in Table 4.1.4, shows that unemployment constituted the largest category among the participants. Specifically, 185 respondents, representing 46.6 percent of the total sample, reported being unemployed. This was followed by those who were self-employed, totaling 127 respondents, which accounted for 32 percent of the population. Private sector employees made up 50 respondents, representing 12.6 percent, while government employees were the least represented group, with only 35 respondents, making up 8.8 percent of the sample. Altogether, the 397 respondents reflect a population where unemployment was

significantly high, overshadowing the relatively smaller proportions engaged in either self-employment or formal employment in both government and private sectors.

**Table 4.1.4 Occupational Qualification by Marital Status**

<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentages (%)</b>
Single	200	50.4%
Married	100	25.2%
Divorced	50	12.6%
Widowed	47	11.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

The marital status of respondents, as presented in Table 4.1.4, indicates that the majority were single, with 200 respondents accounting for 50.4 percent of the total population. Married individuals followed with 100 respondents, representing 25.2 percent. Meanwhile, 50 respondents were divorced, making up 12.6 percent of the sample, while widowed participants constituted the smallest category with 47 respondents, representing 11.8 percent.

## 4.2 Analysis of Research Questions

### 4.2.1 Socioeconomic factors contributing to human trafficking in Osasogie Community

S/N	Statement	SA %	A %	D %	SD %	TOTAL %
1	High unemployment in Osasogie Community increases the risk of human trafficking.	200 50.3%	100 25.2%	57 14.4%	40 10.1%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>
2	Poverty in the community drives individuals to become victims of human trafficking.	200 50.3%	50 12.5%	75 18.9%	72 18.3%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>
3	Lack of educational opportunities contributes significantly to human trafficking.	300 75.5%	50 12.5%	20 5%	27 7%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>
4	Migration from rural areas to urban centers increases vulnerability to human trafficking.	113 28.5%	150 37.7%	57 14.4%	77 19.4%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>
5	Family financial instability is a major factor leading to human trafficking.	200 50.3%	100 25.2%	40 14.7%	57 14.4%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

The findings presented in Table 4.2.1 highlight several socioeconomic factors that contribute to human trafficking in Osasogie Community. A majority of respondents, 200 (50.3%), strongly agreed that high unemployment increases the risk of human trafficking, while 100 (25.2%) agreed, showing that unemployment is a critical driver of vulnerability. Poverty also emerged as a significant factor, with 200 respondents (50.3%) strongly agreeing and 50 (12.5%) agreeing, although a notable proportion, 75 (18.9%) and 72

(18.3%), disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively, indicating mixed perceptions of poverty’s direct impact. Lack of educational opportunities was overwhelmingly recognized as a major contributor, with 300 respondents (75.5%) strongly agreeing and 50 (12.5%) agreeing, leaving very few in disagreement. Migration from rural to urban centers was also identified, with 113 (28.5%) strongly agreeing and 150 (37.7%) agreeing, though 57 (14.4%) disagreed and 77 (19.4%) strongly disagreed, reflecting divided opinions. Additionally, family financial instability was strongly supported as a major factor, with 200 respondents (50.3%) strongly agreeing and 100 (25.2%) agreeing, though 40 (14.7%) and 57 (14.4%) disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively. Overall, the results emphasize unemployment, poverty, lack of education, migration, and financial instability as critical socioeconomic drivers of human trafficking in Osasogie Community.

#### 4.2.2 Psychological Consequences of Human Trafficking

S/ N	Statement	SA %	A %	D %	SD %	TOTAL %
1	Victims of human trafficking in the community experience depression or prolonged sadness.	150 37.8%	145 36.6%	50 12.5%	52 13.1%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>
2	Victims of human trafficking often suffer from anxiety or fear.	125 31.4%	145 36.6%	57 14.4%	70 17.6%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>
3	Human trafficking victims frequently experience feelings of shame or guilt.	100 25.2%	100 25.2%	100 25.2%	97 24.4%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>
4	Trafficking leads victims to have difficulties in trusting others.	150	145	52	50	<b>397</b>

		37.8%	36.6%	13.1%	12.5%	<b>100%</b>
5	Victims often experience nightmares or other trauma-related psychological symptoms.	179 45%	150 37.8%	40 10%	28 7.2%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

The data in Table 4.2.2 outlines the psychological consequences of human trafficking in Osasogie Community. A significant proportion of respondents confirmed that victims often experience depression or prolonged sadness, with 150 (37.8%) strongly agreeing and 145 (36.6%) agreeing, while a smaller proportion, 50 (12.5%) and 52 (13.1%), disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Anxiety and fear were also highlighted as common consequences, as 125 (31.4%) strongly agreed and 145 (36.6%) agreed, although 57 (14.4%) disagreed and 70 (17.6%) strongly disagreed. Feelings of shame or guilt were more evenly distributed among respondents, with 100 (25.2%) each strongly agreeing, agreeing, and disagreeing, while 97 (24.4%) strongly disagreed, suggesting divided opinions on this aspect. Trust issues were also a prominent outcome, with 150 (37.8%) strongly agreeing and 145 (36.6%) agreeing that victims have difficulties in trusting others, while 52 (13.1%) disagreed and 50 (12.5%) strongly disagreed. Furthermore, trauma-related psychological symptoms, such as nightmares, were strongly emphasized, with 179 (45%) strongly agreeing and 150 (37.8%) agreeing, while only a small fraction, 40 (10%) and 28 (7.2%), disagreed and strongly disagreed. These findings indicate that depression, anxiety, shame, mistrust, and trauma are significant psychological effects of human trafficking in the community.

### 4.2.3 Social Consequences of Human Trafficking

S/N	Statement	SA %	A %	D %	SD %	TOTAL %
1	Human trafficking negatively affects victims' relationships with their family members.	150 37.8%	145 36.6%	50 12.5%	52 13.1%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>
2	Victims of human trafficking experience social isolation or stigma in the community.	145 36.6%	175 44.2%	25 6.2%	52 13%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>
3	Human trafficking hinders victims' ability to maintain employment or continue education.	100 25.2%	100 25.2%	100 25.2%	97 24.4%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>
4	Victims face challenges reintegrating into society after experiencing trafficking.	138 34.7%	100 25.2%	90 22.6%	69 17.5%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>
5	Trafficking victims often face discrimination within community or social settings.	57 14.4%	89 22.4%	146 36.8%	105 26.4%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

The data in Table 4.2.3 highlights the social consequences of human trafficking in Osasogie Community. A majority of respondents agreed that human trafficking negatively affects victims' relationships with their families, with 150 (37.8%) strongly agreeing and 145 (36.6%) agreeing, while 50 (12.5%) disagreed and 52 (13.1%) strongly disagreed. Similarly, social isolation and stigma were identified as significant issues, as 145 (36.6%) strongly agreed and 175 (44.2%) agreed, compared to only 25 (6.2%) who disagreed and 52 (13%) who strongly disagreed. The findings also reveal that trafficking hinders victims'

ability to maintain employment or continue education, with responses evenly split, 100 (25.2%) strongly agreed, 100 (25.2%) agreed, 100 (25.2%) disagreed, and 97 (24.4%) strongly disagreed, indicating mixed perceptions on this consequence. Reintegration challenges were also emphasized, with 138 (34.7%) strongly agreeing and 100 (25.2%) agreeing that victims struggle to reintegrate into society, though 90 (22.6%) disagreed and 69 (17.5%) strongly disagreed. Additionally, discrimination within communities was reported, though here negative perceptions dominated, with 146 (36.8%) disagreeing and 105 (26.4%) strongly disagreeing, while only 57 (14.4%) strongly agreed and 89 (22.4%) agreed.

#### 4.2.4 Community Awareness and Prevalence of Human Trafficking

S/N	Statement	SA %	A %	D %	SD %	TOTAL %
1	Community members are well aware of the risks and signs of human trafficking.	190 47.9%	54 13.7%	50 12.5%	103 25.9%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>
2	Higher levels of community awareness reduce the prevalence of human trafficking.	137 34.5%	175 44.2%	45 11.3%	40 10%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>
3	Anti-trafficking campaigns and educational programs are regularly conducted in the community.	146 36.7%	100 31%	75 18.6%	76 19.1%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>
4	Lack of community awareness contributes to the persistence of human trafficking	138 34.7%	100 25.2%	90 22.6%	69 17.5%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>

5	The community is likely to report suspected human trafficking cases to authorities.	57 14.4%	89 22.4%	146 36.8%	105 26.4%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>
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**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

The results from Table 4.2.4 provide insights into community awareness and the prevalence of human trafficking in Osasogie Community. A significant number of respondents indicated that community members are well aware of the risks and signs of human trafficking, with 190 (47.9%) strongly agreeing and 54 (13.7%) agreeing, although 50 (12.5%) disagreed and 103 (25.9%) strongly disagreed, suggesting that while awareness exists, it may not be evenly distributed across the population. Similarly, respondents affirmed that higher levels of community awareness help reduce the prevalence of trafficking, with 137 (34.5%) strongly agreeing and 175 (44.2%) agreeing, compared to 45 (11.3%) who disagreed and 40 (10%) who strongly disagreed. However, when asked about the presence of anti-trafficking campaigns and educational programs, only 146 (36.7%) strongly agreed and 100 (31%) agreed, while 75 (18.6%) disagreed and 76 (19.1%) strongly disagreed, highlighting gaps in consistent awareness initiatives. The data also showed that 138 (34.7%) strongly agreed and 100 (25.2%) agreed that lack of community awareness contributes to the persistence of trafficking, though 90 (22.6%) disagreed and 69 (17.5%) strongly disagreed, indicating a divided perception on this issue. Finally, the likelihood of reporting suspected trafficking cases appeared low, as a majority expressed

doubt, with 146 (36.8%) disagreeing and 105 (26.4%) strongly disagreeing, while only 57 (14.4%) strongly agreed and 89 (22.4%) agreed.

#### 4.2.5 Potential Interventions to Mitigate Human Trafficking

S/N	Statement	SA %	A %	D %	SD %	TOTAL %
1	Poverty alleviation programs can effectively reduce human trafficking in the community.	270 68%	105 26.5%	10 2.5%	12 3.0%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>
2	Providing vocational training and education helps prevent human trafficking.	200 50.3%	96 24.4%	51 12.8%	50 12.5%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>
3	Strengthening law enforcement and community policing reduces human trafficking.	250 63%	115 28.9%	20 5.1%	12 3.0%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>
4	Community awareness campaigns are effective in lowering the prevalence of human trafficking.	215 54.1%	115 28.9%	37 9.3%	30 7.7%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>
5	Social support programs (counseling, rehabilitation) are beneficial for survivors of human trafficking.	245 61.9%	115 28.9%	20 5.0%	17 4.2%	<b>397</b> <b>100%</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

The findings in Table 4.2.5 highlight potential interventions to mitigate human trafficking in Osasogie Community. A large majority of respondents strongly supported poverty alleviation programs as an effective strategy, with 270 (68%) strongly agreeing and 105 (26.5%) agreeing, while only a small fraction, 10 (2.5%) and 12 (3%), disagreed or strongly disagreed respectively. This reflects a broad consensus that addressing economic hardship could significantly reduce vulnerability to trafficking. Similarly, providing vocational

training and education was widely endorsed, as 200 (50.3%) strongly agreed and 96 (24.4%) agreed, though a notable minority, 51 (12.8%) and 50 (12.5%) expressed skepticism, possibly pointing to gaps in access or effectiveness of existing programs. Strengthening law enforcement and community policing also received overwhelming support, with 250 (63%) strongly agreeing and 115 (28.9%) agreeing, while only a combined 32 respondents (8.1%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, underlining the importance of security reforms in tackling trafficking. Community awareness campaigns were similarly regarded as vital, with 215 (54.1%) strongly agreeing and 115 (28.9%) agreeing, though a smaller group of 67 respondents (17%) doubted their effectiveness, suggesting the need for consistent and impactful messaging. Finally, social support programs such as counseling and rehabilitation for survivors were considered highly beneficial, with 245 (61.9%) strongly agreeing and 115 (28.9%) agreeing, while only 37 respondents (9.2%) opposed.

#### **4.3 Discussion of Findings**

The findings revealed that high unemployment, poverty, lack of educational opportunities, migration, and family financial instability are major contributors to human trafficking. More than half of the respondents strongly agreed that unemployment and poverty increase vulnerability, while a significant number emphasized that inadequate educational opportunities and rural-urban migration exacerbate the risk. This aligns with earlier studies which argue that poverty and unemployment create conditions where

traffickers exploit vulnerable individuals (Adepoju, 2005; Okonofua, 2009; Akinyoade & Uche, 2016). Similarly, the lack of access to quality education limits opportunities for self-reliance, thereby pushing youths into risky ventures that make them susceptible to traffickers' manipulations. The findings therefore support the view that socioeconomic deprivation is a critical driver of human trafficking in Nigeria.

The second objective was to evaluate the psychological consequences of human trafficking on victims in Osasogie Community. The data indicated that victims suffer from depression, anxiety, fear, feelings of shame and guilt, difficulties in trusting others, and trauma-related symptoms such as nightmares. For instance, nearly 82% of respondents acknowledged depression as a major psychological effect, while a significant majority also identified anxiety and fear. This corresponds with the conclusions of Zimmerman et al. (2003), Oram et al. (2012), and Kara (2017), who emphasized that trafficking survivors often endure long-term mental health issues. The high prevalence of these conditions demonstrates the deep psychological scars trafficking leaves on victims, which persist long after the exploitation has ended. Thus, the results confirm that psychological consequences are not just immediate but extend into victims' reintegration process, requiring targeted mental health support.

The results indicated that victims experience strained family relationships, social isolation, difficulty sustaining employment or education, discrimination, and challenges reintegrating into society. For instance, 80% of respondents agreed that social stigma and

isolation were significant issues faced by survivors. This is consistent with previous studies which found that trafficking victims often suffer rejection from family members and communities, as well as systemic discrimination (UNODC, 2009; IOM, 2010; Okonofua, 2012). These consequences reinforce the notion that trafficking disrupts not only individual lives but also the social fabric of communities. Stigmatization makes reintegration challenging, further marginalizing survivors and hindering their ability to rebuild their lives. The fourth objective was to analyze the relationship between community awareness and the prevalence of human trafficking in Osasogie Community. The findings showed mixed results: while a majority agreed that awareness reduces trafficking risks, a significant portion noted a lack of regular campaigns and low community reporting of suspected cases. For instance, 25.9% of respondents believed there was insufficient awareness, which perpetuates trafficking. This reflects the conclusions of research by Okojie (2009), UNODC (2016), and Adebayo (2017), who stressed that limited awareness and weak reporting mechanisms allow trafficking networks to thrive. The evidence suggests that without adequate awareness programs, the community remains vulnerable, as members may fail to identify and report trafficking activities. Thus, enhancing awareness campaigns and strengthening community-police collaboration are critical to addressing the problem.

The final objective was to identify potential interventions to mitigate human trafficking in Osasogie Community. The data strongly emphasized poverty alleviation, vocational training, stronger law enforcement, awareness campaigns, and survivor

rehabilitation programs as effective strategies. Over 90% of respondents supported these measures, particularly law enforcement reforms and poverty reduction. These findings resonate with earlier studies which argue that tackling trafficking requires a multidimensional approach that addresses root socioeconomic causes, enhances institutional responses, and provides survivor-centered interventions (Adepoju, 2005; Kara, 2017; ILO, 2018). The strong support for social support programs like counseling and rehabilitation also highlights the urgent need for victim-centered approaches in anti-trafficking strategies. This indicates that community members are not only aware of the problem but also propose practical solutions that integrate economic empowerment, security, education, and psychosocial recovery.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Summary of Findings

Human trafficking has emerged as a pressing social problem in Osasogie Community, with serious implications for the victims and the community at large. The study sought to investigate the socioeconomic factors driving human trafficking, as well as its psychological and social consequences, while also examining the role of community awareness and identifying potential interventions.

The findings indicate that socioeconomic factors play a crucial role in fueling human trafficking in Osasogie. High levels of poverty, unemployment, limited access to quality education, and economic inequality create fertile ground for traffickers to exploit vulnerable individuals. Many families, struggling with economic hardship, become susceptible to deceptive promises of better opportunities abroad or in urban centers. This aligns with the argument of Adepoju (2005), who observed that economic deprivation is a primary driver of human trafficking in sub-Saharan Africa. Financial desperation often pushes individuals into situations where traffickers can easily manipulate and exploit them.

The study also revealed that victims of human trafficking suffer severe psychological consequences. Many respondents reported experiences of trauma, depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The coercion, abuse, and

exploitation endured by trafficked persons leave long-lasting scars on their mental well-being. Victims often struggle with feelings of shame, fear, and hopelessness, which in turn affect their reintegration into society. These findings resonate with Zimmerman et al. (2011), who emphasized that trafficked individuals frequently endure profound psychological harm as a result of exploitation and abuse.

In terms of social consequences, the study found that victims of human trafficking often face stigmatization, isolation, and difficulties in establishing healthy social relationships. Many returnees are ostracized by their communities, who sometimes view them as willing participants in trafficking or associate them with moral failings. This rejection fosters further alienation and, in some cases, pushes victims into cycles of exploitation. Additionally, the breakdown of family and community ties weakens the social fabric of Osasogie, leaving victims without crucial support systems.

Another important finding is the relationship between community awareness and the prevalence of human trafficking. The study revealed that limited awareness and misconceptions about trafficking contribute to its persistence in the area. Many residents lack adequate knowledge of the tactics employed by traffickers, making them and their families vulnerable to deceit. In contrast, areas where awareness campaigns had been conducted showed greater community vigilance and resistance to trafficking attempts. This finding highlights the importance of sensitization and grassroots education in combating the menace.

Finally, the study identified potential interventions that could mitigate the incidence of human trafficking in Osasogie Community. Strengthening community awareness programs, improving economic opportunities through skill acquisition and job creation, and establishing victim support systems were highlighted as critical strategies. In addition, the enforcement of stricter legal measures against traffickers and the provision of rehabilitation services for victims were emphasized as long-term solutions.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that human trafficking in Osasogie Community is driven by a complex interplay of socioeconomic deprivation, limited awareness, and weak institutional responses. The consequences are devastating, not only for victims but also for the community's social and moral fabric. The study underscores the urgent need for multifaceted interventions that combine economic empowerment, community sensitization, psychological rehabilitation, and legal enforcement to effectively curb human trafficking.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

This study has come to reveal the deep-rooted and multifaceted nature of human trafficking in Osasogie Community, showing that it is not merely a problem of individual vulnerability but one that is structurally tied to socioeconomic, psychological, and social realities. From the findings, it is evident that poverty and unemployment remain central drivers of trafficking activities in the area. The research discovered that families struggling to meet basic needs often see trafficking recruiters as providers of opportunities, only to

later find themselves entrapped in cycles of exploitation. The absence of strong economic foundations, coupled with limited access to education and job opportunities, creates an environment where traffickers thrive. The study therefore concludes that human trafficking in Osasogie is both a symptom and a consequence of the broader socioeconomic challenges confronting the community.

The study also discovered that the psychological impact of human trafficking on victims is far-reaching and long-lasting. Victims often carry deep emotional scars, including trauma, depression, and anxiety, that affect their ability to reintegrate into society even after being rescued. Many struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and feelings of shame, which prevent them from seeking help. These discoveries highlight the fact that trafficking is not only a physical or economic violation but also a profound psychological assault on the dignity of its victims. This further underscores the urgent need for comprehensive rehabilitation services that go beyond physical rescue to include mental health support and counseling tailored to the unique experiences of trafficking survivors.

Another significant discovery of the study is the devastating social consequences of human trafficking on both victims and the larger community. Victims who return often face stigmatization and rejection, making reintegration a daunting challenge. The community sometimes perceives victims as complicit in their exploitation, further isolating them and worsening their trauma. Social trust and cohesion are also undermined, as families become fragmented and communities lose their sense of security. By exposing this

dimension, the study has demonstrated that human trafficking is not only a crime against individuals but also a threat to the collective social fabric of Osasogie, weakening bonds of solidarity and trust that are essential for communal living.

The study further revealed that lack of adequate community awareness significantly contributes to the persistence of human trafficking in the area. Many families remain unaware of the deceptive tactics used by traffickers, while others underestimate the dangers associated with migration promises. This discovery shows that ignorance and misinformation remain powerful tools in the hands of traffickers. However, the study also observed that where awareness campaigns have been conducted, there has been a marked increase in vigilance and resistance to trafficking activities. This underscores the pivotal role of education, sensitization, and grassroots advocacy in combating trafficking, and positions awareness creation as a sustainable preventive measure.

In addition, the study has highlighted potential interventions that could serve as lasting solutions to the menace of human trafficking in Osasogie Community. It discovered that economic empowerment, skill acquisition, and job creation are indispensable in reducing vulnerability among community members. Stronger legal frameworks, coupled with effective enforcement, are equally essential in deterring traffickers and holding perpetrators accountable. The study also emphasized the importance of psychosocial support services, not only to help victims heal but also to rebuild their confidence and capacity to reintegrate successfully into society. By pointing to these possible solutions,

the research shows that human trafficking can be significantly reduced when interventions are holistic, addressing both the root causes and the aftereffects of the crime.

In summary, this study has come to discover that human trafficking in Osasogie Community is a multidimensional problem that cannot be tackled by isolated measures. It is fueled by economic deprivation, perpetuated by low awareness, and sustained by weak institutional responses. Its effects extend far beyond individual victims to the broader social, economic, and psychological health of the community. The research underscores the urgent need for collaborative efforts involving government, non-governmental organizations, community leaders, and international bodies to curb the menace. Above all, it has revealed that while the challenge is significant, the possibility of change is real if interventions are targeted, inclusive, and sustainable. Through these discoveries, the study makes a valuable contribution to understanding the complex realities of human trafficking in Osasogie and provides a foundation upon which effective policies and community-centered strategies can be built.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings regarding the prevalence and impact of human trafficking in Osasogie Community, several recommendations emerge that can help reduce its occurrence and mitigate its devastating effects on victims. These recommendations cut across critical areas such as socioeconomic empowerment, awareness creation, psychological rehabilitation, legal enforcement, community involvement, policy reforms, and further

research. Each of these areas is essential for not only addressing the root causes of human trafficking but also for building a more resilient and protective environment that safeguards vulnerable individuals. By implementing these measures, Osasogie Community can move towards reducing the menace of trafficking, protecting victims, and fostering long-term social and economic stability.

Firstly, since socioeconomic factors such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of educational opportunities are major contributors to human trafficking, it is recommended that government and non-governmental organizations implement poverty alleviation programs in Osasogie Community. Skill acquisition initiatives, youth empowerment schemes, and educational sponsorships should be introduced to reduce the vulnerability of individuals, especially women and youths, to traffickers. Furthermore, creating sustainable job opportunities and improving access to microcredit facilities would empower residents economically and reduce the allure of trafficking promises.

Secondly, to address the psychological consequences of human trafficking on victims, there should be the establishment of rehabilitation and counseling centers within or close to Osasogie Community. These centers should provide psychological therapy, trauma healing programs, and reintegration support for rescued victims. The involvement of trained psychologists, social workers, and community leaders is crucial in ensuring that victims regain self-confidence and are reintegrated into society without stigma or discrimination.

Thirdly, the social consequences of human trafficking, such as family disintegration and community distrust, call for strong social cohesion and community-based support systems. Local leaders and faith-based organizations should promote campaigns that encourage family unity, compassion for victims, and social acceptance of survivors. Strengthening community bonds will help prevent traffickers from exploiting social vulnerabilities.

Fourthly, the analysis of the relationship between community awareness and the prevalence of human trafficking suggests the need for increased sensitization. Awareness campaigns should be conducted through schools, local gatherings, radio programs, and religious institutions to educate residents about the tactics of traffickers, the dangers of trafficking, and the available legal protections. Collaboration with law enforcement agencies and civil society organizations can further enhance vigilance and reporting of suspicious activities.

Lastly, to effectively mitigate human trafficking, multi-sectoral interventions should be adopted. The government, traditional institutions, and NGOs should collaborate to establish monitoring committees that identify, report, and prevent trafficking activities. Strengthening border control, enforcing anti-trafficking laws, and ensuring that traffickers face legal consequences will serve as a deterrent. Moreover, partnerships with international organizations can help provide resources and technical expertise to combat trafficking comprehensively.

In conclusion, tackling human trafficking in Osasogie Community requires a holistic approach that combines socioeconomic empowerment, psychological rehabilitation, community awareness, and institutional collaboration. Through these measures, the community can build resilience against trafficking and promote sustainable human development.

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**APPENDIX**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE  
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN  
BENIN CITY**

Dear Respondents,

I am a student of the above-named department and institution, currently conducting research on “**Evaluation of the Incident of Human Trafficking in Osasogie Community**”. As part of the requirements for the award of a Bachelor of Science (Sc) Degree in Social Work, this research is purely academic, and your anonymity is guaranteed. I would appreciate it if you could carefully read and answer the question as honest as possible.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

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**Peace Egharevba  
(Researcher)**

**SECTION A**

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

**Please tick [] your most preferred choice**

**Gender:**

Male [  ]

Female[  ]

**Age:**

18-25 [  ]

26-35 [ ]

36-45 [ ]

46-55 [ ]

56 and above [ ]

**Educational Level:**

Primary [ ]

Secondary [ ]

Tertiary [ ]

None [ ]

**Occupation:**

Self-employed [ ]

Government employee [ ]

Private sector employee [ ]

Unemployed [ ]

**Marital Status:**

Single [ ]

Married [ ]

Divorced [ ]

Widowed [ ]

**SECTION B**

Please tick [✓] your most preferred choice and avoid ticking twice on a question.

**Research Question1: Socioeconomic factors contributing to human trafficking in Osasogie Community**

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	High unemployment in Osasogie Community increases the risk of human trafficking.				
2	Poverty in the community drives individuals to become victims of human trafficking.				
3	Lack of educational opportunities contributes significantly to human trafficking.				
4	Migration from rural areas to urban centers increases vulnerability to human trafficking.				
5	Family financial instability is a major factor leading to human trafficking.				

**Research Question 2: Psychological consequences of human trafficking**

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	Victims of human trafficking in the community experience depression or prolonged sadness.				
2	Victims of human trafficking often suffer from anxiety or fear.				
3	Human trafficking victims frequently experience feelings of shame or guilt.				
4	Trafficking leads victims to have difficulties in trusting others.				

5	Victims often experience nightmares or other trauma-related psychological symptoms.				
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**Research Question 3: Social consequences of human trafficking**

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	Human trafficking negatively affects victims' relationships with their family members.				
2	Victims of human trafficking experience social isolation or stigma in the community.				
3	Human trafficking hinders victims' ability to maintain employment or continue education.				
4	Victims face challenges reintegrating into society after experiencing trafficking..				
5	Trafficking victims often face discrimination within community or social settings.				

**Research Question 4: Community awareness and prevalence of human trafficking**

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	Community members are well aware of the risks and signs of human trafficking.				
2	Higher levels of community awareness reduce the prevalence of human trafficking.				
3	Anti-trafficking campaigns and educational programs are regularly conducted in the community.				
4	Lack of community awareness contributes to the persistence of human trafficking				
5	The community is likely to report suspected human trafficking cases to authorities.				

**Research Question 5: Potential interventions to mitigate human trafficking**

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	Poverty alleviation programs can effectively reduce human trafficking in the community.				
2	Providing vocational training and education helps prevent human trafficking.				
3	Strengthening law enforcement and community policing reduces human trafficking.				
4	Community awareness campaigns are effective in lowering the prevalence of human trafficking.				
5	Social support programs (counseling, rehabilitation) are beneficial for survivors of human trafficking.				