

CHILD TRAFFICKING IN EDO STATE 2000 - 2023

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was carried out by **SONIA AGHOGHOMENA OTURU** with Matriculation Number: **ART1901240** in the Department of History and International Studies, University of Benin, under my supervision.

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DATE

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Oturu and my uncle, Ogo Isaac.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Child trafficking involves the illicit trade of children for various purposes, such as forced labour, sexual exploitation and domestic servitude. Child trafficking is a major problem that still exist both in developed and developing countries around the world including Nigeria.¹ The main purpose of this project is to secure the rights of children also known as minors below the age of 18 years, used for the purpose of sexual exploitation, forced labour, criminal activities, sales of organs and adoption.

International trafficking in Nigeria is mainly concentrated in Edo State where families try to escape poverty by sending a family member to Italy and other countries. Traffickers often offer women and mirrors to travel to Europe with promises of good jobs with an agreement of incurring debt which takes 1 – 3 years to pay.² Edo State, the heartbeat of Nigeria has been labeled as the most endemic source of human trafficking particularly in Benin City as it gained notoriety particularly for sexual exploitation.³ As the world has experienced globalization, the trafficking of human beings most especially minors for sex trade has taken yet another turn. Human traffickers, aware of the risks involved in the trafficking of human beings especially children have set up sophisticated channels and networks for the easy and undetected flow of trafficked children. Irrespective of the intervention by international bodies, non-governmental organization and nation

agencies to combat trafficking in Edo State, the region is still a hub for trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation.⁴ Though in this recent times children are not only trafficked for sexual exploitation but rather more for the extortion of their organs for organ buyers, trafficking of drugs and other illegal products and also for adoption.

More recently international instruments which embody international human rights standards have been adopted to combat human trafficking particularly for sexual exploitation and these include; the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children and the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrant by Land, Sea and Air.⁵ According to Gallagher the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children is the most significant international instrument on trafficking because it provided the first ever internationally agreed definition of trafficking which has now gained worldwide acceptance.⁶ Despite the fact that the incident of trafficking in children in Nigeria had been going on as far back as the 1960s, the public recognition and focus on the issue however heightened only since the mid 1990s.⁷ The recent awareness of trafficking in Nigeria resulted from the publicity generated by the deportation of trafficked persons for prostitution to Europe and the Middle East which started in 1994.⁸ The increasing number of departees who were trafficking victims who engaged in prostitution to the neglect of trafficking for other forms of labour in Nigeria.⁹

The dimension of the transnational trafficking network from Edo State have continued to grow by leaps and bounds as a result of the network's dynamism which involves connection with custom officers and police and adaptability.¹⁰ Child trafficking is a complex political and socio-economic issue particularly when it is considered from an African perspective. It is such a complex issue that even the governments have not been able to take a decisive action on it. A question one would be who is a child? According to the International Contentions a child is defined as anybody below 18 years. Oxford Advance Learners 1 defines a child as a young human being who is not yet an adult. On the other hand, child trafficking is about taking children out of their protective environment and preying on their vulnerability for the purpose of exploitation International Labour Organization 2000.

International Labour Organization is an organization that is devoted to promoting social justice and internationally recognized Human and Labour Rights, pursuing its founding mission that that Labour Peace is essential to prosperity and stands against the illicit trafficking of humans for forced labour which is against human right. The trafficking of children has been internationally recognized as a major human right violation, one that exists in every region of the world. In 2004, there were 218 million children working illegally in the eyes of international treaties.¹¹

Child trafficking which is considered as modern day slavery is not only a danger to the family but also to the society at large. In the Nigerian context, the prevalence of

children engaged in child labour is estimated at 12 million to 15 million, which is one in four children.¹² The International Labour Organization estimates that nearly half of the working children in Nigeria are stuck in child labour, with about 43% of children engaged in dangerous activities.¹³ a survey also estimated that over 10,000 Nigerians are engaged in prostitution in Italy which constitutes in the Italian se market. Most of these women and girls are initially trafficked victims. In 2001 according to the guardian newspaper of 17th January, report gathered from the office of the wife of the vice president and the founder of Women, Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF) has it about 1,116 trafficked girls were rescued from different countries in 2001 who were been trafficked for prostitution and to be used as sex slaves.¹⁴

Aim and Objectives

The purpose of this work is to investigate the societal problem of child trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria which would also involve examining the root causes of child trafficking and ways that have put forward to it's eradication. The research would also be helpful in educating local communities and children in schools which would be creating awareness on child trafficking and it's dangers to the society at large and also the Nation Nigeria. Some of the objectives this research would be focusing on include:

1. Elucidate on the concept of child trafficking and its effect to Edo State
2. Understanding the effect of trafficking on the mental health of children that happen to be victims of child trafficking

3. Understanding how the society play a role in the promotion of child trafficking
4. Research on the measures that the government and the society at large have put into the eradication of child trafficking in Edo State.

Scope of Study

The scope of the study is based on the evaluation of child trafficking in some selected places in Edo State, Benin, this is the largest city in Edo State and it is a major hub for trafficking networks. Many of the children trafficked through Benin City are sent to Europe or other part of Africa, some of the notorious area this project would cover would be places like ring road, New Benin, Upper and Akpakpava area where there are many brothers and hotels that are used for child trafficking. Another area this study would be covering would be Uromi, this town is located in the north of Edo State and it is a major source of trafficked children.

Research Methodology

In the course of research for the work relevant data and information were obtained from the main sources. These are the primary and secondary sources.

Primary Sources: The primary sources are deduced from archival research. Materials were consulted from the National Library, Benin City, Edo State. The primary sources also include report on gender and justice system in Nigeria and other documents relating

to the work, as well as interviews with NGO's in Benin that deals with child trafficking such as Girl's Power Initiative (GPI).

Secondary Source: Secondary Sources which consulted in some university and public libraries across the country include textbooks, journals and periodicals information obtained from primary sources. These sources helped to provide data and information relating to gender and justice system in Edo State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

In the book *Unveiling the Secret Behind Child Trafficking in Nigeria, Africa* by Lovely Wonah addresses the issue of child trafficking in Nigeria. Nigeria is home to the largest concentration of black people in the world, estimated to number 200 million. It has an abundance of natural resources, including oil, tin, zinc, limestone and natural gas, as well as good vegetation and a climate that is arid in the north, tropical in the center and equatorial in the south. Despite having the third-highest crude oil production rate in the world and an impressive 5.3% annual growth rate, 70% of Nigerians are thought to be impoverished.¹⁵ Child trafficking has become a new aspect of wealth creation in the minds of Nigerians due to their relentless pursuit of material wealth. Bad economic conditions like poverty, unemployment, broken homes, large families, greed, peer pressure, mental illness or imbalance, a lax system, insecurity and restrictive immigration and law enforcement policies are just a few of few the contributing factors. In Nigeria, human trafficking is not a recent occurrence. It coincide with a recent, difficult to measure trend,

children are being trafficked both inside and outside of Nigeria for a variety of reasons. Additionally, the majority of victims are unknown children within the country, this is due to a recent trend known as baby factory, which encourages human trafficking in Nigeria.

Child's Trafficking in Nigeria a book written by Titilayo Olamide Arinde-Simeon analyzed child trafficking as a social problem that is fast eating into the fabric of our national development Nigeria. The book further examined the public police cooperation and enforcement of Anti child trafficking laws in Ilorin, Kwara State.¹⁶ it furthered examined the relationship between the level of education and involvement in child trafficking, the willingness of the public to cooperate with the police in enforcing anti trafficking laws, impediments to public willingness to report child trafficking, the level of police readiness and capacity to enforce anti-child trafficking laws, and the assessment of the socio-demographic variables of the trafficked children.

In another exposition, Mary Dorothy Ezeh's book on *Human Trafficking and Prostitution* published in 2019 mainly focuses on the trafficking of women and girls from Edo State in Nigeria. Although the book also gives a general overview of human trafficking which however is a widespread phenomenon in the world today. It is a global problem. The book further gives a report from the United Nations office on Drug and Crime in 2014 says that human trafficking involves over three million people in the world, bringing their slave holders an annual profit, there is no place in the world where children, women and men are safe from human trafficking. In the background of the book it

explains the stark reality of poverty, unemployment, social marginalization, political crises, wars, interethnic conflicts and the militarization of entire territories has increased the massive displacement of the population further fuelling the illegal sex trade linked to them.¹⁷ The book further examines how young girls are tricked due to their desire to improve their living conditions and those of their families, these girls eventually become prey to criminal organizations who take advantage of them, exploit them and dehumanize them.

The journal “Child trafficking in Nigeria: it’s religious implications”, *Journal of Art, Humanity and Social Studies Pinisi 2022* focuses on child trafficking in Nigeria government and religious implications. The journal examined trafficking of children for the purpose of domestic services, prostitution and other forms of exploitative labour which is a widespread phenomenon in Nigeria. Sales of babies which has now become the new thriving business in the south eastern states of Nigeria, promoting unscrupulous Nigerian to set up baby factories for commercial purposes.¹⁸ The journal explains the vulnerability of women and children to trafficking. The journal further examines the types of trafficking which include internal and external trafficking. The journal seeks to take a critical assessment of child trafficking in Nigeria, identify the root causes of child trafficking and its effect. The journal further emphasizes on Nigeria churches and Islam which could use their positions to act as a powerful advocate through lobbying the United Nations human right group and others to fight the evil of child trafficking in Nigeria.

The *African Journal*, “Child Trafficking in Nigeria and the Law” by Dr. M. A. Nwanyanwu and Anumba F. N., also describes child trafficking being a major social ill in the contemporary world. The journal gives an insight of the ways the traffickers adopt to lure their victims into slavery. These perpetrators adopted coercion, fraud and deceit to lure victims to informal acceptance to travel to road, or leave their homes. Unfortunately only on arrival at their destination, did they realize too late that they have been sold into slavery.¹⁹ The Journal state reasons why these persons are trafficked which could be for forced labour, domestic services, house-maid services, prostitution, organ harvesting, armed conflict and so on for the purpose of exploitation. These experiences by the victims subject them to trauma and sometimes to unavoidable death, especially those involved in organ harvesting. The journal further identifies Nigeria as being a leading nation in child trafficking in Africa as it stated that child trafficking has preyed on Nigerian children in different forms and trends. The journal further examined the laws enacted to combat child trafficking and legalizing domestic and house maid services in Nigeria, in order to curb child trafficking in the country.

Chiori Joshua article “The Menace of Child Trafficking and Abuse in Nigeria” published 2023 emphasized that child trafficking as an illegal trade and abuse of children and it is aimed at exploiting and taking advantage of these innocent children. The article explained that through coercion, deception, abduction and the use of force these children are obtained and used for forced labour, commercial sex or sexual exploitation, hence precluding the child from basic human rights.²⁰ According to his article, in the 1900s

when the awareness started on child trafficking and abuses, the focus was predicated only upon anti-child labour and anti-sex trafficking and abuse have been tied to child slavery and together they have the consequences of causing death and psychological and physical damage to the child. This trafficking and slavery are sponsored by a lack of employment opportunities, corruption in government, political instability, armed conflicts is what the writer tags as the cause of child trafficking in this article. This article considers and engages the extent laws which delimit carrying out acts such as can be right termed as “child trafficking and abuse” and the shortcomings of the various governmental and non-governmental agencies responsible.²¹ The article also suggest the establishment and training of the key players in this sector such Nigerian immigration, police, etc in the practice of combating trafficking. Also the paper suggests training of the judiciary on matters bordering on child trafficking in case of witnesses and safety for the child from discrimination.

“Human trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria: Experience of Some Young Girls Who Have Survived Trafficking”, *A Journal of Contemporary Research* 2020 by Irele Abigail Olubukola. In this journal, it examines the weak border control and this make human trafficking in Nigeria a lucrative business, there is also a sort of collusion between the traffickers and immigration officials.²² The work focuses on 5 survivors of human trafficking in a community in Edo State, Nigeria. Findings from this study indicate that some factors like family instability, feminization of poverty and gender inequality are ingredients that facilitate girls trafficking.

Dr. Dagaci Aliyu Manbe journal “Trafficking of Women and Children in Nigeria: A Critical Approach” *American International Journal of Social Science* 2016 examined trafficking in women and children in Nigeria. Human trafficking is one out of Trans border crimes which represent a number of illegal and notorious human trading activities carried out by individuals or groups across national and international borders, either for financial or economic benefits or for sociological aims.²³ According to the journal trafficking in human being especially women and girls is not new, historically has taken many forms, but in the context of globalization, it has acquired shocking new dimensions, it is a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon involving multiple stake holders at the institutional and commercial level. The journal further explains the persistence of harmful cultural practices, the growth of the rich and influence of organized crime and lack of young women and children to sexual and forced labour exploitation required converted and constant attention. Nigeria has acquired a reputation for being one of the leading African countries in human trafficking with cross-border and trafficking. The work attributed reasons to the instutionalized violation of human rights and severe political, social and economic crises due to decades of military regimes in Nigeria, poverty also led to drive for better life either pushed or pulled women, girl or child to be more vulnerable to trafficking. The journal also examined agencies, NGO’s and individuals trafficking in human beings and their effort to curb the menace and the challenges confronting the campaign against trafficking in persons.

The book *Child Abuse and Human Trafficking in Nigeria* by Eke Kingsley 2020. The book explains traditional child rearing practices which adversely affect some children, such as purposeful neglect or abandonment of severely handicapped children and twins or triplets in some rural areas. With the alternation of society by rapid socioeconomic and political changes, various forms of child abuse have been identified, particularly in the urban areas. Trafficking in human beings, especially women and girls is never a new thing.²⁴ According to Eke, historically, it has taken many forms, but in the context of globalization, it has acquired shocking new dimension primarily women and girls, including boys are also trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation, forced labour and organ harvesting.²⁵ Poverty is the principle driving force behind both child abuse and human trafficking in Nigeria propelling vulnerable people into the hands of traffickers, with extensive criminal network around the world.

The article written by David Ibitayo, “Influence of Child Trafficking on Personality and Academic Adjustment Among Junior Secondary School Students in Edo State Nigeria” 2012 – 2013. The study investigated the influence of child trafficking on personality and academic adjustment among junior secondary school students in Edo State Nigeria.²⁶ This study employed ex-post-facto design. The population of the study was 264 for both victims and non-victims of child trafficking. It examines how children who are victims of child trafficking are affected academically and in his research victims of child trafficking are usually affected and this could cause a disruption in their academic. The

study carried out research on both children that were victims of trafficking and children that were not.

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CHAPTER TWO

CHILD TRAFFICKING IN EDO STATE

Introduction

The study of child trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria would involve a background study on the evolution of trafficking and its inclusion of children in the illicit act of human trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria. In this regard, this chapter would attempt explaining the concept of child trafficking and its evolution in Edo State, with further research which has been carried out in explaining the types of child trafficking which has evolved over time not just in Edo State but in Nigeria as a country, followed with the causes of child trafficking which with revolution and industrialization, various causes of child trafficking has taken new turns, which in turn has manipulated the ways of child trafficking. This chapter further explains the nature of child trafficking in Edo State would also involve roles in which the society plays in the encouragement and discouragement of child trafficking. This chapter ends with understanding the awareness and effect of trafficking in the families as well as the victims.

Concept of Child Trafficking

A child is been trafficked if he or she has been moved within a country, or across borders, whether by face or not, with the purpose of exploiting the child.¹ Trafficking of children is a form of human trafficking, it is defined as the recruitment, transportation,

transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation.² United State Department of States (2002, 2012) described child trafficking as all acts involved in the transport, harbouring or sale of persons within national or across international borders through coercions, force, kidnapping, deception or fraud, for purpose of placing persons in situations of forced labour or services such as forced prostitution, domestic servitude, debt bondage or other slavery like practices.³ In the case of minors, there is general agreement in the United States and the International Community that the trafficking term applies whether a child was taken forcibly or voluntarily.⁴

The word “child” has been defined specifically in both the local and international instruments dealing with the rights and welfare of the child. In Nigeria, a child is statutorily defined as a person under the age of 14 years, while a young person is a child above the age of 14 years but who has not attained the age of 18.⁵ The recognition of children’s rights and the resulting obligations for states parties on the right of children, provide a legal basis to combat child trafficking. Child trafficking is defined as a trade in human being for domestic, sexual, reproductive, labour and other purposes.⁶ The age ceiling in Nigerian law is lower than the age standard in the relevant international instruments. A child under international instrument is every human being below the age of 18 years.⁷ This definition has also been adopted by Nigeria Child Right Act and National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP) Act.⁸ The term child therefore in this project for all intend and purposes means a person below the age of 18. In another work, child trafficking was defined as a means of illegal

evacuation of people, or a trade in which women and or children are moved from one place to another as commodities or articles of trade for the purposes of exploitative labour or sex exploitation.⁹ The act of child trafficking is usually done in secrecy and it is difficult to detect, hence the former president of the United States of America, George Bush had described child trafficking as another human crisis hidden from human views which generates billions each year for its operators after drugs and gun running.¹⁰ Child trafficking has also been defined in the National Agency for the prohibition of Trafficking in Person's Act 2015 section 82 as the means of recruitment, transportation, transfer harbouring or receipt of persons by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse of power of a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person or debt bondage for the purpose of placing or holding the person whether for or not involuntary servitude (domestic, sexual or reproductive) in forced or bonded labour, or in slavery-like conditions, the removal of organs or generally for exploitative purposes.¹¹ Child trafficking in Nigeria dates as far back as 1980s following the severe economic hardship caused by structural adjustment programmes¹² imposed at the time by the Nigerian government. Although, the significant public recognition and focus on the issue only came to light in the mid-90s there are no exact figures and data on the number of trafficked victims.¹³ An International Labour Organization (ILO) estimate shows that over twelve million Nigerian children are engaged

in child labour, and that a large percentage of these children in labour are victims of trafficking.¹⁴

Edo State and Child Trafficking

The study area, Edo State was carved out of the defunct Midwestern state which was carved out of the defunct western region in 1963. It remained intact as part of a twelve-state federal structure created in 1967 by the Gowon Administration. The state was renamed Bendel State in 1976, and remained intact during successive creation of new states until 1991 when it was split into Edo and Delta State. It is now made up of 18 local government areas after increasing the number from 12. According to the 1991 census, the population of the state was 2.159 million persons. Edo State had enacted laws against human trafficking which is embedded in the criminal code (Amendment) Law, 2000.¹⁵

According to the Danish Immigration Service fact finding mission on human trafficking, two states, Lagos and Edo State and the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria, Abuja, the majority of female victims and children trafficking are from Benin City, Edo State.¹⁶ Similarly, the United States Department of State, in its 2012 trafficking report on Nigeria, stated that Nigeria women and young girls forced into prostitution in Italy were primarily from Edo State.¹⁷ The International Organization for Migration has stated that Edo State is a source of child trafficking by listing known endemic local government areas which include; Oredo, Ikpoba-Okha, Ovia North East, Uhunwonde, Egor, Orhionmwon, Esan North East, Esan Central, Etsako West, and Ovia South West.¹⁸

The modern child trafficking associated with Edo State is estimated to have begun in the late 1980's.¹⁹ Cole and Booth state that women from Edo State were among the first generation of prostitutes in Italy initially went abroad to conduct legitimate business such as buying and selling of goods which included clothes and jewelries. However, in the process of engaging in such business, a lot of women became compromised and augmented their business with prostitution. Carling agrees with this and maintains that it was Italy's demand for low skilled labour in agriculture and services in the 1980s sparked the migration of Nigerians, particularly from Edo State to Italy.²⁰ This immigration eventually led to the recruitment of children either forcibly or willingly from their parents by these madams that were based in Italy. With industrialization and revolution, the reason for child trafficking has changed which now mainly involves recruitment for child labour, organ donors, drug trafficking and adoption. Additionally Aronowitz states that approximately 95 percent of trafficked Nigerian women to Italy come from Edo State. Aronowitz shows his astonishment at the high percentage of trafficked victims from Edo State simply because of the fact that Edo State is not the most poverty –stricken region in Nigeria.²¹

With the governmental structure during the 1980s, which led to human trafficking which later began to involve the movement of minors as well which we now understand as child trafficking began to grow and the government over time have put in measures to curb the trafficking of children but due to the complex system that have been established by this traffickers,²² Child trafficking continue to persist. In Edo State, children are often

seen displaced doing odd jobs and most of them are victims of trafficking. Trafficking in children also happen within Edo State as children are taken away from their parents to other parts of Edo State where they are forced into child labour, early marriage, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and adoption.²³

Though it seems with the forces put together to curb child trafficking, there has been a reduction in the trafficking of children into slavery according to victor Ayeni in Punch newspaper, where he stated from the year 2021 and 2022 victims of trafficking from Edo State has reduced. However, Edo indigenes are the highest perpetrators of human trafficking within and outside Nigeria.²⁴ NAPTIP statistics from 2019 to 2022 indicate that 61 percent of human trafficking in Nigeria happen internally, while 39 percent is cross border.²⁵ Internal trafficking which is common in child trafficking often takes the form of recruitment and transportation of children from rural areas to urban and city centres for different forms of labour under exploitative conditions. On the other hand, external trafficking prey on vulnerable women and young girls (minors) who are sold false promises of working in well paid jobs in the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Italy, Libya and Lebanon among others.²⁶

Child trafficking in Edo State is a disease spreading fast that even the sales of babies is a trend that has been happening. Suspects were arrested by the Edo State taskforce against human trafficking over the sale of a one-month old baby.²⁷ According to Adeyinka in his report on Punch newspaper, the Edo State Taskforce Against Human

Trafficking had apprehended a 48 year old man and his girlfriend, for allegedly selling their one-month old baby to fund their drug addiction.²⁸

Trafficking of persons is a global problem with serious consequences for individual victims as well as communities and countries. Child trafficking being a big obstacle for the Nigerian government is caused mainly for the demand of child labour and sexual exploitation. The concept of child trafficking is asserted as the means' of recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children by means of threats or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power, a position of vulnerability of the giving or receiving of payments, benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over the child for the purpose of exploitation.²⁹ The international labour office 2014 stated that exploitation of people may come in the form of abusive conditions to which the victims is subjected, including physical and mental abuse or confinement, inadequate or non-existent health care, poor accommodation and hazardous work. They further stressed that exploitation can occur at any point in the chain of events that, when taken together, are recognized as trafficking, forcing a child or persons, or misleading him/her with false promises in the recruitment or transportation process is also considered exploitative.³⁰

Types of Child Trafficking

Okpalaobi and Umeobika opined that the convert nature of trafficking in persons hinders precise identification of types of trafficking in persons, that the country of origin,

trafficking routes, final destination, as well as age and sex of the trafficked are factors that determine the types of trafficking.³¹ Ikpeazu and Arinze identified the forms of trafficking as external and internal or domestic trafficking.³² The following types of trafficking in persons are discussed below.

Internal Trafficking

The concept of internal trafficking is applied to cases involving adults or children who are trafficked and exploited within their country or without crossing an international border. For decades children predominantly from rural communities are trafficked because of the structure of these rural communities. They are recruited by traffickers and trafficked to cities either outside Edo State like Lagos, Abeokuta, Ibadan, Calabar and Port-Harcourt or these children are taken to other communities within Edo State like Benin City.³³ The modes of trafficking range from voluntary place of children with traffickers by parents or guardians with their consent to have the children transported to the cities for labour. Sometimes the children out of peer pressure, curiosity for city life and or lack of alternative opportunities seek out the traffickers on their own. Occasionally the children are kidnapped by the traffickers or their agents.³⁴

United Nations report of 2006 clearly points out that, child victims in Nigeria are mainly recruited from remote villages and smaller towns. Child victims are recruited from Edo State and trafficked to Ondo State to work in cocoa plantation.³⁵ Internally children are trafficked for various purposes which include the following prostitutions, domestic

servants, bus conductors, street hawkers, agricultural work, brass melting, stone digging and scavenging. These children are usually transported in large numbers, cramped up uncomfortably in lorry roads through long distance to their various destinations. Research shows that the accommodations provided by traffickers in the cities are usually of very poor standards in most cases a one or two room apartment to accommodate 20 – 30 children. The children are made to sleep on bare floors while awaiting placements with prospective employers food is provided only for survival and invariably the cost of the provision of the food is deducted from the earnings of the children later at an inflated cost.³⁶

In the Eastern part of Nigeria, whereby parents give away their children to other families, or to family relatives, with the intention to better their lots, has greatly facilitated domestic child trafficking in Nigeria. Some of these from the Eastern part of Nigeria are also brought to the South-South part of Nigeria (Edo State) for the purpose of domestic servitude and other forms of children labour. Some of such other families do receive the children with genuine intentions, while others abuse, traffick and often cause their death.³⁷ Another type of trafficking in Nigeria is the trafficking of children for organized begging. Children and physically challenged persons are lured into the begging business in major Nigerian cities.³⁸ In Benin City for instance in an observation carried out, children mostly from the Northern part of Nigeria are trafficked to Benin to earn a living through begging, Hawking, wheel barrow pushers and shoe makers. Children and physically challenged persons are lured into the begging business in major Nigerian cities.

Baby harvesting or baby for cash is another form of child trafficking not just in Edo State but also in Nigeria as a whole. In states like Abia, Ebonyi, Lagos and Edo State, many cases have been reported to clinic, doctors, nurses and orphanages who help pregnant teenagers and other women who do not want to keep their babies after birth. They care for these women during pregnancy and provide money and shelters upon delivery the babies are sold to couples who pay a premium for the babies of their choice. The young mothers are paid off having signed papers repudiating their claims on their babies or swearing oaths of secrecy.³⁹

According to WOCON report, some of the trafficked children are also forced to work as catering assistants where they must assist in cooking before open fires sometimes in the hot sun for several hours. Like other trafficked victims, their salaries are collected by the traffickers, making these children prone to stealing and other vices due to lacks of means.⁴⁰ This category of trafficked children is also vulnerable to sexual abuse by the customers. Some of these trafficked children are taken to work. In bakeries as well and work strenuously for long hours before hot ovens.⁴¹ Some of the victims of internal trafficking are either directly forced into prostitution or end up in prostitution while escaping the hardship and abuses received in other forms of labour they have been forced into. Altogether it is estimated that about 12 million Nigerian children are forced into labour and it could be roughly estimated that about 80% of Nigerian children in forced labour are victims of trafficking.⁴²

External Trafficking

External trafficking of children is trafficking of children across National borders for different forms of labour also under exploitative and slave like conditions. Nigeria constitutes a recruitment, transit and destination centre for external trafficking of women and children. Like the internal trafficking, children also constitute the majority of the victims of external trafficking.⁴³ As a recruitment centre, Nigeria children are recruited predominantly from South Eastern and South-South States and are trafficked mostly by sea to Gabon, Cameroon and Guinea to work on farm plantations. Nigerian children are also trafficked to European countries and the Middle East for prostitution and sexual exploitation. The trend for the trafficking of Nigerians to European countries, especially Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Spain and more recently England started manifesting in the 1980s but reached alarming proportions towards the mid and latter part of the 1990s up until now.⁴⁴ According to NAPTIP statistics from 2019 – 2022, 61% of human trafficking in Nigeria happens internally, while 39% is generated from cross-border trafficking.⁴⁵ It is the third most common crime in Nigeria after drug trafficking and economic fraud according to United National Educational, scientific and cultural organization 2006 report.⁴⁶

Externally trafficked Nigerian children come from all parts of Nigeria but some tend to provide more trafficked persons than others. These states include Edo, Delta, Imo, Akwa-Ibom, Cross River, Ogun, Oyo and Lagos are trafficked to Italy, Belgium, Spain

and Netherland as well as Germany and the United Kingdom. The Middle East is another destination, especially, Libya and Saudi Arabia.⁴⁷ The recruitment of children trafficked to Saudi Arabia comes predominantly from the northern parts of Nigeria especially Kano, Kwara, Sokoto, Katsina, Kaduna, Niger, Borno, Taraba, Nasarawa and Zamfara.⁴⁸ The traffickers and victims travel by road across the land borders in the West African countries such as Benin, Togo, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Guinea and Coted' Ivoire routes take victims into the Northern African countries of Morocco, Algeria or Libya victims maybe flown out from any of these African countries directly into any of the European countries. If not, the victims cross by sea from Morocco into Spain and travel either by train or air to France or Italy.⁴⁹ The crossing from Algeria or Libya is usually by air to Europe or to Morocco and from there by sea.⁵⁰

In the context of external trafficking, victims are transported and transferred to countries abroad where there is an already existing established system that nurture and promote trafficking in the destinations. Nigerian children are trafficked to countries like Italy, Germany, Spain to work as domestic servants, farm labourers, sweet shop attendants, prostitution, harvesting of organs.⁵¹ Nigerian children are trafficked from cities in Nigeria such as Osun, Ogun, Edo, Beyelsa, Ebonyi to cities like Lagos before they are trafficked out of the country. In some situations, trafficked children are coerced into drug trafficking, terrorism and armed conflict.⁵²

In a report made by Patrick Ochoga on Leadership newspaper headlines, five children were rescued from traffickers in Edo State, Auchi. The children who travelled unaccompanied, were said to have been on their way from Kaduna to Onitsha, Anambra State when they were intercepted in Auchi. A source told Leadership that the children all girls aged between seven and nine had arrived Auchi in the evening from Kaduna and were trying to established contact with the two suspected female traffickers to take them to Onitsha when some curious co-passengers became suspicious due to the timid and innocent nature of the children who they deemed too young to travel on their own. With the help of the driver and his colleagues, the women were called to come over and pick the children were apprehended.⁵³ The traffickers were both indigent of Fugar, Etsako Central Local Government Area of Edo State. With this report, it is understood that trafficking of children in Edo State is still an on going disease that needs to be cured before it eats dipper into the society. External trafficking of children has over time changed as a result of globalization. Children most especially young girls were trafficked for sexual exploitation during the 1990s but from the twentieth century child trafficking took a new turn which now mostly involves for the purpose of child labour, organ harvesting, sales of babies, drug trafficking and abduction.

Causes of Child Trafficking

In Edo State, pesons are trafficked for prostitution, to work as domestic servants, bus conductors and street traders. They are exploited in agricultural work, brass melting,

stone digging and scavenging. The demand for cheap commercial sex workers in countries of destinations strongly contributes to the growth of this phenomenon and the success of this criminal network. Parents with a large family, often over burdened with the care of too many children, are prone to the trafficker deceit in giving away some of their children to city residents or even strangers promising a better life for them. Traffickers exploit the trust of people rooted in a widespread, culturally accepted common practice in West Africa of placement and fostering as part of the extended family safety net. In some instances, desperately poor and uneducated parents willingly cooperating with traffickers giving away their children in exchange for a small fee in the hands of unscrupulous guardians, these children are increasingly trafficked and exploited for money.⁵⁴

Commercial Sex Trade

It has earlier been stated that children have been trafficked in, within and outside Edo State for diverse purpose. One of the main aim of child trafficking, especially girls is sexual exploitation.⁵⁵ Young girls are often lured by agents, traffickers themselves or relatives into being trafficked with rosy promises of decent jobs and better life overseas, marriages, education abroad and many others. They informally agree to travel outside to strange countries, only to discover at their destinations that the promises were fake, and that they have been sold into slavery to engage in commercial sex transactions without remunerations for the services they are forced to render. Further, they are harboured in brothels attending to unending queue of pimps as well as their masters in addition. Eze

pointed out that internal trafficking of women and girls within edo State is primarily for domestic servitude and commercial sex exploitation.⁵⁶ Upon arrival at their destination, they are deprived of their travel documents and made to sign agreements to pay back their madams. In addition, prior to their travels or reaching their destination trafficked persons' body parts such as public hairs, finger nails, menstrual flows, as well as underwear and photograph are taken from them and sent to juju priests in Nigeria to ensure obedience, many of the girls are also coerced with threats to kill their parents and other relatives if they do not cooperate.⁵⁷

Poverty

Poverty is a major factor responsible for child trafficking. It cannot be denied that abject poverty, unpleasant economic environment, unemployment massive retrenchments, under employment and poor quality of life has made parents who would otherwise, have been most caring and loving, to neglect and even sometimes abuse their children. Some families are living from hand to mouth as a result of insufficient income to cater for their families. They are out of job or business either as a result of retirement or insufficiency of the income to settle the children school fees, rents and feeding. That is a perfect situation of parents and children to fall victims of bogus promises of a good time abroad with the prospect of earning foreign exchange that will convert into tons of naira back home in Nigeria.⁵⁸ This situation is mostly common among families living in rural areas where the bulk of the population resides, are not industrialized and characterized with lack of

electricity, unaccessible road, hospitals and insecurity among others. There are few job opportunities or institutions of higher learning. Consequently, even when the children do receive some education up to secondary school, there are no jobs at the end of their schooling nor additional institution for them to attend. The economic situation is such that most parents are unable to care and properly feed their families. Parents subject their children to various forms of labour, including trafficking for economic gains.⁵⁹

It cannot be denied that some female children that are engaged in child labour such as hawking, domestic servant are sexually abused. The women unit of the Federal Ministry of Education portrayed the situation, thus, a report in the magazine “Ladies Home Journal” estimates that sexual abuse of young girls is four times commoner than rape of adult women. The abuser is likely to persuade and pressurize the child using all built-in authority of an older person. Children who hawk wares for their parents fall victims easily, they are coerced or bought with girls. They are prevented from telling their parent or even close friends about the incidents because of the gifts they have received.⁶⁰

Armed Conflict

For more than a decade, terrorists appeared in Nigeria, and found the country a safe-haven for its diverse operations. Some of the groups were the Islamic States of West African Province (ISWAP), Bandits and Koko Haram. The terrorists replenish their stock by recruiting young men from outside Nigeria and trafficking them into the country. These terrorist go about inside farm lands in remote areas disturbing the residence and also

kidnapping children to be recruited or enslaved, some of these children are also trafficked out of the country or they train them to become child soldiers.⁶¹

Forced Labour

Trafficking for labour is also prevalent globally, including Nigeria. Young boys and girls are trafficked from cities within Nigeria across borders to other nations where they are forced to perform jobs detrimental to their health. One of the main aims of child traffickers is forcing children into labour. This can be hard, manual labour, which is when children are required to perform physical acts such as transporting goods and performing other dangerous jobs in highly unsafe environments. They may often have to operate machinery that poses threat to life, where they could come to significant harm. They may be forced to work in retail or factories, for little to no pay, for companies that pay cash in hand.⁶² According to the United Nations office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) on 26 September 2023, Nigerian police rescued 110 male children and young adults from slave camp inside Nigeria.⁶³ The rescued victims were used to crush granite and stones at quarry sites in the camps. Debt bondage is a system traffickers adopt to make the victims liable to pay debts they may not be able to offset. For example, after recruitment, traffickers often sponsor and obtain the victims requisite travel documents, and also fund their trip to their destinations abroad, where they quickly seize the documents and phones from the victims, to facilitate the restriction of their movement and keeping them always incommunicado, engage them in the forced labour they were trafficked to do.

Illiteracy

Illiteracy is another factor that causes trafficking in persons, especially children. The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 provide for the eradication of illiteracy, but even in states that practice the compulsory universal primary, secondary education, many parents still find it difficult to provide the accompanying items like books, uniforms and so on. It is more severe where both parents especially the mother is an illiterate because the mother is the one that trains the children morally. The effect is that such parents are easily deceived with rosy promises of better life for their children to which they easily give in. illiterates are unaware and hardly believe the existence of the buying and selling of human beings, hence traffickers prey on their ignorance perpetrating their clandestine sharp practices.⁶⁴

Unemployment

The rate of unemployment in Nigeria is alarming and for Edo State it is worse because there are no much industries or companies in Edo State to create job opportunities, and this appears to be one of the reasons why child trafficking is rampant. Youths have no jobs, loitering the streets idly, it is work with school leavers on whom parents have invested their scarce resources training in schools. Women are inculcated with gender roles of housekeeping, breeding children and raising them. Struggling with these situations with dearth of funds to access necessaries pushes them to the extreme without alternatives than to sale to send their children out in exchange for money. Some secondary school

dropout children whom their parents cannot longer take care of their education due to lack of funds, end up in the streets doing odd jobs and most times especially the young girls fall pregnant and when they cannot abort the pregnancy, they give birth to the child and give out the new born baby to orphans.⁶⁵ In Benin, some of these orphanages are used for child trafficking. In punch newspaper Faithland Orphanage in Benin City was shut down after the discovery of the sale of baby for N1.7m.⁶⁶ Unemployment is one of the major causes of child trafficking not just in Edo State but also in other cities in Nigeria where child trafficking is rampant.

Globalization

Globalization has to a very great extent made the crime of human, especially child trafficking blossom globally. Human trafficking has been referred to as the darkest sides of globalization. It has led to ever increasing international organizations and an explosion in global movement of capital and free trade which is facilitated by liberation-restricted of tariffs on trade barriers which nation, states normally impose on cross-border economic and socio-political cooperation. The concept of capitalism from the West has the tendency to reinforce human trafficking on the free market and the flow of goods and services across international borders.⁶⁷

Corruption and Lack of Political Will by Stakeholders

Corruption and lack of political will by governments and stakeholders to combat it. Child trafficking prevail in Nigeria due partly to endemic corruption, especially official corruption in Nigeria. Trafficked persons often allege that some Nigerian officials collude with traffickers by aiding them with forged and fake documents and then facilitate their movement across borders and through the ports. The dragging of feet by the government and other stakeholders to fully accelerate the wheels of the child Rights Law appears to contribute to the prevalence of the crime.⁶⁸

High Profit and Less Risks involved in Trafficking

These two factors also promote trafficking in persons. Trafficking in persons appears to be lucrative and thriving because of the exceptional high profit margin derivable in the business. Trafficking operates in secrecy, which makes for less risk in discovering and apprehending perpetrators. Its clandestine nature and flexibility also shield acts of trafficking in persons from the prying eyes of law enforcement agents. Many law and child protection measures appear to have been observed in breach, hence child trafficking has prevailed in spite of the numerous laws enacted to combat and prevent it.⁶⁹

Sales of Organs

Organ harvesting is a very profitable and illegal trade child and adults are trafficked to be killed for their organ which are then transplanted into a high paying

customer in need of a healthy organ. In 2017, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking In Persons (NAPTIP) discovered a criminal network involved in the unlawful removal and trafficking of human kidneys. A mass number of people, including doctors and medical staff have been arrested and accused of crimes related to organ harvesting.⁷⁰ Organ harvesting is the unlawful trafficking of human organs for transplantation, known as organ harvesting, is an increasing global concern. Nigeria, like many other countries, is not immune to this bleak reality. It can happen as a result of compulsion, fraud or abduction and may exploit vulnerable persons, particularly those living in poverty or marginalized groups. The victims may be made into believing the procedure is both safe and equitable. Abduction or kidnapping can also be employed in which victims are forcibly removed from their homes and their organs are harvested without their consent. The removal of organs such as kidneys, liver, heart, lungs, corneas, pancreas and other body parts from living a deceased people connotes organ harvesting. Kidneys are the most commonly illegally harvested organs due to their high demand and survival rate.⁷¹

Ways of Child Trafficking

The ways of trafficking is of three types, the land journey, trafficking by air and crossing the Mediterranean sea into Europe. There are three major exit points for victims being trafficked out of Nigeria. These are Lagos, Calabar and Katsina. Information from the case files under investigation reveal that victims of trafficking from Edo or Delta State

use Lagos and Katsina States as exist point. The Katsina route is exclusively for victims travelling by land while those travelling by air and by land use the Lagos exit points.⁷²

The Overland Journey

The vast majority of the trafficking cases encountered involve migration by land through Niger and Libya, with the intent of crossing the Mediterranean to Europe by boat for external trafficking. The research from the UNODC observatory on smuggling of migrants, notes that many Nigerians surveyed (30 percent) believed there was no alternative to being smuggled in order to achieve their migration goals. Many Nigerians believe that using a smuggler will be cheaper, easier or safer than undertaking the journey alone. Half of smuggled Nigerians survey in 2021 reported physical violence, while 25 percent cited being detained and 20 percent described sexual violence.⁷³

The journey from Edo State in the South of Nigeria to Europe takes a relatively well define route, young girls (minors) and young women are loaded into buses are driven to connection houses in northern Nigeria cities such as Kaduna, Kano and Sokoto. They are then driven across the border into neighbouring Niger. Victims are then brought by connection men to Agadez, a dusty city on the edge of the Sahara desert, where they will assemble in ghettos before embarking on the next leg of the journey. There is very little comfort and shortages of food and water are common. Girls (minors) and young women are subjected to abhorrent abuses while in transit and rape and beatings are the norm. The final leg journey before reaching the shores of the Mediterranean consists of traversing the

bast expanse of Libya. The ousting of Muammar Gaddafi in Late 2011 left a dangerous political vacuum and Libya has since descended into a chaotic structure in which governments, armed groups and international Islamist movements compete for power. The illegal migration trade is big business in Libya. From the Nigerian border to Tripoli on Libya's Mediterranean coast, migrants travel over 1000 kilometres and face immense hardship along the way.⁷⁴

Trafficking by Air

Trafficking by air is the movement of persons illegally with flights. Mostly these victims are given proper documents but upon arrival at destination, their documents are taken from them and most times these victims are forced into exploitative labour such as domestic servitude. The victims being strangers in a foreign land have no way back home. In a report made to National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking In Persons (NAPTIP) in 2019, a Nigerian woman Adaora was offered a ticket to Oman to start work as a house help but upon arrival she was confronted with a slave like condition of service and psychological abuse and eventually was forced into prostitution. Her passport was taken from her, she had managed to send a distressed call home to her family who reported to NAPTIP which flew her back to Nigeria.⁷⁵ Air trafficking remains one of the primary ways of transportation utilized by human traffickers. According to UNODC 2018 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 20% of the 225,000 victims detected worldwide between 2003 and 2016 have been trafficked by plane.⁷⁶ Children are not exempted from

trafficking by air though it is mostly common with babies. On Business Day newspaper in 2021, the personnel of Nigeria's leading airline Air peace stopped the attempt to traffick two babies by a man and woman at the Murtala Muhammed Airport Lagos.⁷⁷ Another report found on Punch Newspaper, Air peace crew members foiled an attempt by two Nigerian women to traffick a three month old baby on the airline's Lagos-Banjul flight.⁷⁸ Trafficking by air is used both for adults and children in Nigeria.

Trafficking by Sea (Mediterranean)

The ocean is central to global illicit trade. Criminal network plunder marine resources, scour shipping lanes for vessels to hijack and traverse coastal state waters. Human trafficking has been one of crimes being committed on the sea. Human traffickers make use of the Mediterranean sea for the transportation of traffick victims across to Europe. The journey of crossing the Mediterranean seas is incredibly hazardous. It is known that many migrants have drowned while attempting this journey as many instances go undocumented. The Mediterranean is infamous for its notorious waves exceeding conventional rogue thresholds. However, it is a principal route for migrants moving from Libya and Tunisia in hope of getting to Europe via Italy.⁷⁹ Several cases of migrants have been reported dead over the years. In the news headline reported 2023 by Business Day, Nigerians among 61 people feared dead as migrant boat sinks in Mediterranean Sea off Libya's coast. The international organization for migration confirms that there were approximately 86 migrants abroad, including women and children from Nigeria.⁸⁰

Children are not exempted from the sea journey as several cases have been reported of children being rescued during the process of migration.

Nature of Child Trafficking in Edo State

Historically, the overwhelming majority of trafficking victims and migrants made the treacherous journey from Edo State particularly Benin City and Delta State to Kano, from where they are smuggled into Niger or Algeria before traversing 500 miles over the Sahara Desert into Libya.⁸¹ Prior to 2020, however, Edo State was the most trafficked through destination in Africa. It should be noted that according to the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking In Persons (NAPTIP) latest figures reported in its 2021 Data Analysis Report, Edo State is no longer featured in the top five states for trafficking victims. According to international organization for migration, approximately 11,000 women and young girls (minors) arrived via the Mediterranean sea into Italy in 2016, again mostly from Edo State.⁸² Over the past few years, trafficking in women and children from Edo State has declined. Previously, however according to international organization for migration, an astounding 94% of all Nigerian women and young girls trafficked to Europe for prostitution hailed from Edo State, with Italy being the number one destination country. A 2003 United Nations interregional crime and justice Research institute report concluded that virtually every Benin family has one member or the other involved in trafficking either as a victim, sponsor, madam or trafficker and children are not excluded. The souls and bodies of survivors turned into commodities for financial gains while the

survivors themselves are had in debt bondage, severely abused, starved, tortured or infected with various sexually transmitted diseases before being deported back to Nigeria. Others who are victims of organ trafficking are murdered and never make it back to Nigeria.⁸³

Several factors in Edo State play a role in the encouragement and discouragement of child trafficking. For this project three main factors would be discussed.

The Family Structure

Children from unstable family structure are exposed to human trafficking most especially young girls.⁸⁴ The family in most polygamous homes is unstable because some wives are favoured over others and children from most polygamous homes are deprived of basic fundamental rights and education most especially the female child. Some parents attach higher importance to the education of boys than girls and thus bring about the disempowerment of girls who are then exposed to traffickers. The financial capacity of the family also either encourages or discourages child trafficking. Family with low income and large family are easily prone to child traffickers as these parents willingly give out their children to traffickers in exchange for money. These young girls are taken to Europe and forced into prostitution in order to feed their families as they made to believe by the traffickers.⁸⁵ The educational background of the parents of the children also play a role, if both parents are educated about the dangers of trafficking, surely they would not allow their children embark on such risk. Illiterate parents easily fall for child traffickers as they

do not believe in the dangers of child trafficking and the harvesting of organs. Most of the families in rural areas in Edo State are easily deceived by these traffickers and willingly give out their children for the promises of a better life abroad.⁸⁶

Broken homes are also a trend in the family structure that encourages child trafficking in Edo State. a broken home is a serious and recurrent issue emanating from the home environment and as well, facilitates the trafficking of children in the contemporary societies. Profiles of trafficked children interviewed revealed that most of the trafficked children were products of broken homes or orphaned children. The divorce of the child's parents and the broken home environment are contributory factors of child trafficking in some polygamous family, where a husband takes another wife, some step wives are cruel to children of the estranged or former wife and would not hesitate to abuse such children.⁸⁷

The Society

The environments, like Nigeria that have severe gender inequality, those environments are more susceptible to trafficking. In other words those at the lower ladder like women are trafficked. The traditional culture and practices in Nigeria societies are prone towards making women vulnerable to trafficking because women are considered as inferior to men. Young girls are therefore easy targets for trafficking. In some cases, the family heads trafficked their young girls and they do not have any say or power to resist

being trafficked because they are coerced into trafficking. Thus in Edo State young girls are deceived and lured into trafficking.⁸⁸

Corruption is another factor in the society that both encourages and discourages child trafficking in Edo State. The public institution an example of the Nigerian Police Force have in different ways encouraged and discourage child trafficking in Edo State. Although the enactment of laws to combat child trafficking in Nigeria and Edo State are clearly in place, the ability to implement them is non-existent. Like all other branches of government in Nigeria, corruption is endemic in the Nigerian police force.⁸⁹ According to Human Rights watch:

The police routinely extorts money from victims to investigate a given criminal case, which leave those who refuse or are unable to pay without access to justice, meanwhile criminal suspects with money can simply bribe the police to avoid arrest, detention, or prosecution, the influence the outcome of a criminal investigation, or to turn the investigation against the victims.⁹⁰

With the high percentage of police corruption in Nigeria and Edo State, there is a grave danger that the police may not arrest sex traffickers or child traffickers who offer them bribes. In Edo State, particularly in Benin City, prostitution abroad has been normalized by portraying prostitution as glamorous and a way to make hard currency which represents a lot of money. According to Adams, the prosperity stories of many Edo women who migrated to Italy in the 1980s and 1990s have resulted in a high rate of sex trafficking in the region.⁹¹ Encouraged by these success stories, young girls are willing to

be trafficked because of trafficked women who come home with riches from sex trafficking are represented as being empowered and liberated. Peer group pressure is also one of the societal factors that influences child trafficking. Children fall victim of child trafficking because of peer pressure and lack of alternative opportunities within their impoverished communities. They often seek out traffickers on their own initiative and are thus recruited.

Religion

Understanding the cultural tools people use to make sense of their world illuminates how they construct reality and also their explanation of inequality. Religion plays a key role in certain peoples cultural construction of reality and provides a set of tools with which they make sense of and negotiate their realities.⁹² The interpenetration of religion, politics and social life produces tangible results which construct material realities with human trafficking and migration increasingly becoming a political matter in contemporary time, it is imperative to anticipate the points at which the spiritual and political intersect because religio-political and religio-social relations will continue to play a prime role in human trafficking for the foreseeable future.

Religion in Nigeria has played a key role in both encouraging and discouraging sex and child trafficking as well as trafficking in adults. African traditional religion has much to do with human trafficking in Edo State. one of the practices still employed by the Edo is juju sometimes known as voodoo or magic is significant part of the West African

culture which is particularly prevalent in the Edo State of Nigeria.⁹³ Due to the fear of juju, juju practitioners employ it as a medium to install fear into their victims. Several studies, conducted mostly in Edo State, have reported how juju has played a role in aiding traffickers to make their victims loyal to them. Before victims begin journey, they are taken to these juju practitioners who perform rituals on the victims and young girls and women are mostly the target. The ritual process mostly involves taking of finger nails, public hair, underwear of the victims by the priest and the victims are made to swear an oath such as “if I don’t pay, I will go crazy or I will be killed”.⁹⁴ This ritual pact which instills fear in a victim’s mind that, if broken, the victim would come under a curse which would have an effect on her and her family and in this way is used as a means of bondage by traffickers.

Christianity and Islam have also played a role in human trafficking in Edo State. Although the two belief preach against prostitution and adultery thereby discouraging child trafficking but there are no punishment imposed and as such child and adult trafficking still continues. The African tradition has also in its own way discouraged child and adult trafficking for sexual exploitation because it is a taboo in Edo State for woman who is not married to have martial affairs and for women that are married and have marital affairs outside marriage is made to undergo cleanings because it is a big shame. ⁹⁵ Religion continues to remain a big factor in encouraging and as well discouraging child and adult trafficking.

Awareness and Effect of Trafficking on the Family in Edo State

During the 1980s, when human trafficking started in Edo State, it was mostly for working in commercial farms abroad to make money but with time, the women who travelled trafficked young girls for sexual exploitation, although these young girls and their families were deceived with the increasing number of young girls that were being trafficked, awareness campaign have been carried out to curb the trafficking of children in Edo State, not just external trafficking of children but also internal child trafficking. The trafficking of children has high risk which could also lead to death of the trafficked children.

Many poor and lower or middle class inhabitants of Benin City consider having a family member abroad to be the sole mechanism to achieve social mobility.⁹⁶ Sex trafficking in young girls is not necessarily perceived negatively in Edo State. In many cases those who are victims of sex trafficking do not consider themselves as victims of trafficking either. Attitudes towards trafficking victims who have engaged in prostitution depend on the extent to which they have gained money and sent remittances back home. In case of unsuccessful returns of victims of trafficking the actual responses of families and communities varies.⁹⁷ Another source indicated that the extent to which a victim would be stigmatized or welcomed also depends on prior relations between the victim and her family members. There have been cases in which returned trafficked victims including minors, were physically attacked, mocked, insulted or bullied by family or by community

members have been reported. The added burden of a child can result in most hostile attitudes by family members.⁹⁸

It is understood that some families are fully aware of trafficking and also the dangers involved in trafficking, but still choose to send their children most especially the young girls abroad for forced labour and sexual exploitation. Internal trafficking is not excluded as these family send these children to do odd jobs to bring money for the family and this is usually common in broken homes. Parents forcing their children into child labour is not a new thing in Edo State as children are seen on the streets hawking wears and doing other types of hard labour to earn a living. When these children refuse to engage in this child labour, they are usually abused by their parents. With the new trend of baby harvesting, sales of organs and the use of children for drug trafficking, awareness programmes have been carried out to educate the public on child trafficking but still it continues to persist in Edo State. reports have been made of orphanages where children are been sold to traffickers and also sexually exploited. Some of these children are used for arm begging and are physically abused.

Poverty has been identified as a causal root of the global injustice of human trafficking. Patterson asserts that the desperate need for jobs to support their families make women and young girls susceptible to traffickers who offer them high salaries.⁹⁹ The other effect of poverty is migration and this was one of the conclusions of a field survey conducted by Okojie and others in Edo State in 2003.¹⁰⁰ Poverty as one factor drives

people to seek the services of human traffickers. Young girls tend to sometimes seek out human traffickers even knowing all the dangers involved. Young boys are involved in trafficking as well as these young boys eager to make money involve themselves with traffickers even with knowing the dangers involved in trafficking. In as much as so much awareness programmes and campaign have been carried out in the spreading of the dangers of trafficking but due to illiteracy many parents in the rural areas are still not aware of the dangers of trafficking in children. Illiteracy remains one of the key problems faced in the curbing of trafficking in Edo State. whereas those who are school drop out have basic education up to primary or secondary level, there are those who lack any basic education. The latter are the easier prey to human traffickers.¹⁰¹

Effect of Trafficking

With the dwindling economy especially since the misrule of the military regime in Nigeria came the unprecedented escalation of children in labour. The labour industry particularly the informal sector has been fed by the trafficking trade.¹⁰² The social implications are manifold on the development of the nation. As the subjection of children to slave-like labour, some of which are the worst forms of labour, has seriously impaired the growth and development of Nigeria children who are the bedrock of the society. The trafficked children are denied education, basic standard of living and fundamental human rights, dignity and freedom in negation of the Nigerian constitution and international instruments for the protection instruments of the rights of the child.¹⁰³ The effect of

trafficking in children as well as adults are usually disclosed to victims and as such families that encourage trafficking do not know what effect trafficking has on the victims and the families as well.

Health Issues: Trafficking in persons, particularly in children undoubtedly impacts negatively on their health. As the children are exposed and forced to perform hazardous works detrimental to their health. Children who are exposed to heavy duty equipments, toxic chemicals, dangerous machines and noisy environments are often injured by these equipments, yet, due to the informal nature of their jobs, they rarely have quick and proper medical attention. Some have to squat, bend or stand manning machines all day long. Too much squatting, bending or standing affect young persons and sometimes cause them permanent physical disability leading to death.¹⁰⁴ Children exposed to such dangerous machines and environment often suffer permanent eye damage, lung diseases, sexually transmitted diseases and several others. The families of these trafficked children are now left with the duty of treating these children and if the child dies, the family begins to mourn the loss of the child.

Psychological Issues: Severing children away from their parents and relatives and excommunicating them from their fellow children affects their emotional growth.¹⁰⁵ Their emotional life is already at risk may be negatively affected for life too, as the restriction of their movement and social exclusion seeing others to school and engage in many social activities which they remain manning monotonous beats: working, hawking and rendering

strenuous services all day without rest, retard their psychological and emotional development.

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CHAPTER THREE

ROLES OF GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION IN CHILD TRAFFICKING

Introduction

This chapter would mainly be concentrated on the roles, the government have played in the curbing of child trafficking in Edo State and the country Nigeria as a whole. Child trafficking is not just an issue in Edo State but also in other cities in Nigeria. Involvement of the police and child traffickers and the collection of bribes which act as a means to silence the authority of the government and laws against trafficking. The difficulty of curbing child trafficking in Edo State and effort made by the government in creating awareness of child trafficking. Non-governmental organizations and its active role in child trafficking eradication in Edo State and its involvement with the government in eradication of child trafficking and carrying out awareness campaign on the issue of child trafficking. This chapter would end with understanding the role which the primary and school play in creating awareness and eradication of child trafficking.

The Government and Child Trafficking

In a recent newspaper report, the Edo State government has said its collaboration with the United States consulate in Nigeria will curb human trafficking in the state.¹ According to report the Edo State government and the United States consulate talked

about capacity building, collaborating with the US Government to enhance the capacity of the people at the rural level, awareness creation and further strengthen programmes to reduce irregular migration to the barest minimum and even those that are in shelters to better help them to be economically viable.² This shows the effort put in by the Edo State government in the eradication of child and adult trafficking in Edo State.

Several laws have been established in the curbing of trafficking in persons and severe punishments for those caught in the act of trafficking have also been established to reduce the rate at which persons are involved in the act of trafficking in persons. Starting with the United Nations that over the years establish laws against the trafficking in persons. In 2000, the United Nations launched the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, which established a victim centred approach to trafficking. It has since been signed by 177 countries.³ The United Nations Declaration of human rights states human rights are universal and hence victims of trafficking are entitled to the full range of human rights, irrespective of their sex, age, race, ethnic origin, nationality, migratory status or other distinction.⁴ In 1989, world leaders made a historic commitment to the world's children by adopting the United Nations convention on the Rights of the child.⁵ Contained in this treaty is a profound idea that children are not just objects who belong to their parents and for whom decisions are made. The convention says childhood is separate from adulthood and lasts until 18, it is a special, protected time, in which children must be allowed to grow, learn, play, develop and flourish with dignity. The convention is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. It has inspired

governments to change laws and policies and make investments so that more children finally get the health care and nutrition they need to survive and develop, there are stronger safeguards in place to protect children from violence and exploitation.⁶

Other international organizations also established laws against human trafficking taking African Union which the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights which provides that "Every individual shall have the right to the respect of the dignity inherent in a human being and to the recognition of his legal status. All forms of exploitation and degradation of man particularly slavery, slave trade and torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment and treatment shall be prohibited."⁷ Nigeria is a signatory to the African Charter and obliged to bring her municipal law in compliance with the African Charter. There is also the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Declaration and Plan of Actions Against Trafficking in Persons 2001, which urges member states to commit themselves to measures that prevent trafficking, promote awareness raising activities and establish cooperation for law enforcement officials at borders, share data amongst ECOWAS nations and the United Nations.⁸

The establishment of the minimum age convention on the protection of Labour Rights. The convention belongs to the eight fundamental international labour organization conventions. The minimum age convention addresses child labour and requires state parties to introduce domestic policies that specify a minimum age of work.⁹ The Nigerian government has over the years adopted most of these international conventions in

combating trafficking, which led to the establishment of National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking In Persons (NAPTIP) charged with the responsibility of coordinating all the nations' crime prevention and law enforcement resources to stamp out human trafficking and uplift the vulnerable from exploitative tendencies.

There are several international conventions affecting Nigeria. Nigeria is signatory to and has ratified a number of international customary laws which are directly or indirectly related to trafficking.¹⁰ These include:

- The universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948
- ILO convention on minimum Age and forced Labour, 1999.
- Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989.
- Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of Prostitution of Others, 1949
- United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2000.
- Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons especially women and children, 2000.
- African charter on Human and People's Rights, 1981.
- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) convention A/P 1/7/92 on Mutual Assistance in Criminal matters, 1992.¹¹

With regards to these conventions, various codes and international conventions exist which can be implemented to reduce trafficking in minors and young women out of Nigeria to foreign countries.¹² Agencies in Nigeria responsible for combating child trafficking in Nigeria. These are laws agencies that have been established by the Nigerian government to tackle trafficking problem. Examples of these agencies are:

- **The National Agency for the Prohibition of Person (NAPTIP)**

This agency is the created pursuant to section 2 Trafficking in persons (prohibition) enforcement and administration Act, 2015. The National Agency was created on 14th of July 2003. The Agency is the Federal Government of Nigeria's response to addressing the scourge of trafficking in persons. It is a fulfillment of the country's international obligation under the trafficking in persons protocol to prevent, suppress and supplementing the United Nations Transnational Organized Crime Convention (UNTOC).¹³ The agency in a bid to fully discharge of this duty, the organization has set up four regional offices in Lagos, Uyo, Benin and Kano and also established a Nation Investigation Task Force (NITF) made up of the Nigerian Police, immigration, and Directorate of the State services to monitor, look into and respond to the distress requests of victims and their families.¹⁴ NITF has established small units and trained its members on the requirements of the anti-trafficking law, victim care, Interpol standards, corruption and human rights issues.¹⁵ Officials from NAPTIP have taken part in awareness-raising initiatives on human trafficking and the NAPTIP ACT, focusing on traditional leaders,

students, parents organization, they have over the years opened two shelters and set up around the clock hotline to help trafficking individuals.¹⁶

The Nigerian Immigration Service:

The Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) is a paramilitary organization established to control the entry and exist of all persons in Nigeria and monitor the largely porous border. Its duties include all international migration activities, identity or migrants and the process of leaving the Nation State or entering the state. it also guards the borders of the country by its officers who have been placed in those areas.¹⁷ Border security has become a source of concern to nation. States because of various security reasons which includes the issue of trafficking as well. The NIS has embarked and reported cases of trafficking to NAPTIP.¹⁸

The Nigerian Police:

Section 194 of the constitution designates the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) as the national police with exclusive authority over the whole nation.¹⁹ It is in charge of jail, immigration, customs and internal security services in addition to traditional police duties, investigation, arresting and prosecution of traffickers are all part of the police's responsibilities when it comes to this issue, along with educating the public about it.²⁰ The NPF has set up specialized Anti-Human Trafficking Unity (AHTU) at the national office and juvenile welfare centres in twelve of the federation's states. While few cases of child

trafficking are now being addressed at the federal level, the bulk of cases currently handled by the state police involve young adults.²¹ In a report made on Leadership newspaper, 2023, it reported Kano State police command successfully dismantled a notorious gang specializing in child trafficking.²² In another report made by the Punch newspaper in 2021, operatives of Edo State police command rescued six girls and a boy who were allegedly being trafficked to Coted' Ivoire and Libya.²³ The Nigeria Police Force have over the years operated as agents against trafficking.

Laws Against Child Trafficking in Nigeria

Laws have been enacted in Nigeria against the trafficking of children and adults in Nigeria.

- **The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) as amended.**

The constitution of Nigeria is the supreme law of the land where all other laws operating in Nigeria derive their validity. It is also the basis for the applicability of international and regional treaties and conventions in Nigeria. The constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria 1999 guarantees fundamental human rights with chapter IV of the constitution containing fundamental rights and chapter II outlining the objectives and directive principle of state policy. Trafficking in persons involves the violation of these fundamental human rights. Its provision in chapter iv on Fundamental Human Rights especially section 33 on Right to Life, 34 on the Right to dignity of human person and 35

on the Right to personal liberty is relevant to human trafficking. According to section 34, no person should be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or held in slavery or servitude or required to perform forced labour or compulsory labour.²⁴

Subjecting a person to trafficking and its end product is degrading and desecrates the humanity in him, because trafficked persons end up being used for so many criminal and anti-social acts which include sexual exploitation, forced labour, organ harvesting, forced begging and others victims of trafficking are usually assaulted, harassed, imprisoned, tortured and made to live in a very terrible condition.²⁵

- **Child's Rights Act (CRA) 2003**

In an effort to combine all regulations pertaining to children into a single piece of legislation, the Child Rights Act (CRA) was passed in 2003.²⁶ The purpose of the CRA is to guarantee and defend the rights of Nigerian children, independent of the state of origin, ethnicity, sex, race or circumstances of their parents or guardians' birth.²⁷ The CRA creates a number of new child rights in accordance with an African centric distribution of rights and obligation, while also stipulating special rights for children who are in conflict with the law in agreement with the provision of chapter iv of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Child Right Act provides replete protection for the child from partaking actions that is tantamount to infringing on the child fundamental rights as guaranteed under part II, section 3 – 20 CRA.²⁸ Also the Child Right Act 2003 prohibits the exposure, to use production and trafficking of narcotic drug.²⁹ Thus children cannot be

used for the purpose of trafficking, production of hard drugs. The CRA also prohibits trafficking in children for labour or sexual exploitation.³⁰

- **Trafficking in Person (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015**

The trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement Administration Act (TIPPEAA) 2015 was used to protect children from child trafficking and exploitation and some of the treacherous and notorious forms of child abuse. The Act addresses many issues of violence against children including child labour, sale, slavery and incidences of slavery particularly women and children.³¹ It set its objectives as to provide an effective and comprehensive legal and institutional framework for the prohibition, prevention, detection, protection and punishment of human trafficking and related offences in Nigeria to protect victims of human trafficking and promote and facilitate national and international cooperation in order to meet the objectives set up in TIPPEAA.³²

- **Universal Basic Education (UBE) ACT 2004**

This Act is relevant to this project being that illiteracy and poverty have direct contact or connection with the menace of child trafficking, especially in Nigeria. Consequently, the compulsory free Universal Basic Education Act provides that every government in Nigeria shall provide free, compulsory and universal basic education for every child of primary and junior secondary age.³³ It further mandates any parent to ensure their child or ward attends and completes his primary and junior secondary school.³⁴ The establishment of

this not has helped in the reduction of child trafficking with children gaining knowledge in primary and junior secondary school, they become aware of the dangers in child trafficking.

- **Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015**

The Act provides that deprivation of a persons' liberty except pursuant to a court order, is an offence that attracts not more than 2 years jail term or a fine not exceeding N500,000 or both.³⁵ This Act prohibit the unlawful detention of a person's liberty.

- **Criminal Code**

Human trafficking and forced labored prohibition were dispersed across the criminal, penal and labour codes prior to the adoption of anti-trafficking legislation in 2003.³⁶ The criminal code which went into effect on June 1, 1916 deals with external trafficking for prostitution and servitude but does not specify what constitutes trafficking.³⁷ It however declares that procuring women and girls for prostitution inside or outside Nigeria is against the law,³⁸ procuring a child with intent to become an inmate in a brothel.³⁹ The act also prohibit slave trade, illegal confinement or detention of a person's liberty.⁴⁰

Edo State Government and Child Trafficking

In August 2017, the current Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, launched the Edo State Task Force Against Human Trafficking to fight the scourge of human trafficking and unsafe migration in the state.⁴¹ The multiagency and Multidisciplinary

Task Force was a recommendation by path finders to the Governor following our successful consultation for the state and organization of the Edo State workshop on human trafficking in May 2017.⁴² Codification of the Task Force to investigate and prosecute trafficking cases in Edo (total of 38 investigations and 22 pending prosecution in 2019- down from 56 investigation and 20 prosecution in 2018), following an allocation of N242 million by the state government, May 23, 2018 when Governor Obaseki signed into law the Edo State trafficking in Persons Prohibition Bill 2018 in Abuja.⁴³

The Act, which was approved by the Edo State House of Assembly in March 2018 which was shortly after the Oba of Benin's pronouncement on March 9th renouncing all curses which had been placed on victims of human trafficking in Edo State by juju priests, provides an effective and comprehensive legal and institutional framework for the prohibition, prevention, detection, prosecution and punishment of human trafficking and related offenses in Edo State according to Governor Obaseki.⁴⁴ It is noteworthy that since the Oba of Benin's March 2018 pronouncement, the introduction of the Edo State law, the efforts of local stakeholders, the ETAHT's effort, international donor efforts targeting the reduction of trafficking in Edo State and European Union's (EU) externalization policies of border control and accompanying legislative wall, traffickers began pushing the trade underground and or recruiting naïve victims from other states, including Abia, Delta, Ebonyi, Kogi, Ondo, Bayelsa and Calabar.⁴⁵

Edo State has over the years participated actively in the eradication of trafficking in the state. Even before the establishment of Edo State task force against Human Trafficking, the Edo State adopted federal government's guidelines on prosecution and sentencing of criminals who are found guilty of human trafficking for sexual exploitation.⁴⁶ In 2000, the then Governor Adam's Oshiomole of Edo State introduced a bill to address the movement of women and girls from the state. the penalties proposed in the bill appear to mirror those outlined in Nigeria current federal anti-trafficking law (Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administrative Act of 2015).⁴⁷ The governor also called on European governments to help in the fight against sex trafficking by identifying the sponsors abroad and ensure that they were prosecuted.⁴⁸

The State Attorney General/Commissioner for Justice and chairperson of the Edo State task force on sex trafficking, Yinka Omorogbe outlined plans of the government to work on strengthening sentencing law to ensure that traffickers and those who aid trafficking for sexual exploitation of Edo women have no option of fine.⁴⁹ Due to the recent efforts made by the Edo State government, the Edo State Task Force Against Human Trafficking (ETAHT), received commendations from the Deputy Belgian Head of Mission, Veronique Bernard and her team, during a courtesy visit to the Agency in Benin, to discuss strategies and possible areas of partnerships in order to consolidate on the efforts by the state government in addressing the ills of human trafficking and irregular migration in the state.⁵⁰

The Edo State government also work with the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in persons (NAPTIP). In recent reports NAPTIP convicted Felicia Osaigbovo a prominent socialite in Benin City, Edo State to 12 years in prison and fined N24 million for human trafficking,⁵¹ Edo State Task Force Against Human Trafficking is also empowered to punish child traffickers as stated in report made by the state Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, Prof. (Mrs.) Yinka OMorogbe who is also the head of Edo State Task Force Against Human Trafficking, warned that culprits found trafficking in children and abuse would be prosecuted and convicted henceforth if found guilty.⁵² The report also stated that anyone who engages children under 12 years as domestic workers in Edo State now risks seven years imprisonment. Also anyone convicted for recruiting or receiving any child or adult for forced labour or even permitting any place or premises for such act is liable to five years imprisonment and a fine of N5 million.⁵³

It is noteworthy that 2020 was the first in recent years that Edo State has not featured in the top five states for victims rescued by NAPTIP, even though the largest number of rescued victims in that year were rescued from procurement for foreign travel which promotes prostitution. This reality appears to have continued in 2021 up till 2023.⁵⁴

Non-Governmental Organizations and Child Trafficking

Some non-governmental organization and other organizations have been actively involved in fighting the scourge of human trafficking in the society. In Edo State, eight of

such NGO's were identified, as well as international organization for migration and the traditional council which was found to be greatly involved.⁵⁵ An NGO that has been at the forefront of the fight against human trafficking in the country was also included, this is the Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF), an NGO set up by the wife of the former vice president, Mrs. Amina Abubakar, located in Abuja.⁵⁶ Non-Governmental Organizations include awareness raising and community economic development activities as part of their efforts to prevent trafficking in persons.⁵⁷ NGOs also assist law enforcement agencies in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases by providing information and evidence on suspected trafficking activities in the communities in which they are working and they also provide legal assistance to victims of trafficking.⁵⁸

NGOs have over the years in Nigeria been actively involved with both international agencies and national agencies in the fight against human trafficking in Nigeria. In a report made in Guardian newspaper in May 2021 a non-governmental organization CLEEN four action formerly known as Centre for Law Enforcement Education partnered with the National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) as well as the United Nations Women to forge ways towards tackling forced migration and trafficking of women in the country.⁵⁹ In order to stem the tide of human trafficking and the trade, NGOs were formed in Nigeria and these NGOs also established offices in different cities in Nigeria which also include Edo State. some of the following NGOs working in Nigeria include, International Labour Organization (ILO), International

Organization for Migration (IOM), Women Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON), Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF),⁶⁰

These NGOs have over the years worked with the Nigerian policy force, Nigerian Immigration Service and NAP TIP to curb trafficking activities in Nigeria. In 2019, A – TIPSOM Action Against Trafficking in Person and smuggling of migrants in Nigeria signed four memorandums of understanding between Nigerian stakeholders such as the Nigerian Police, Immigration and NGOS to contribute to reducing trafficking in humans in Nigeria.⁶¹ The government has collaborated on awareness campaigns to help prevent trafficking, with the aid of NGOs such as the WOTCLEF, WOCON, Girls Power Initiative (GPI) and International Organization like the ILO. NGOs have also formed networks to collaborate on anti-trafficking initiatives such as the creation of the Network of Civil Society Organizations against child Trafficking, Abuse and Labour (NACTAL).⁶²

These NGOs work alongside with the government in creating awareness on child trafficking through campaigns in schools in Nigeria. The role of NGOs cannot be underestimated in combating human trafficking in Nigeria. In April 2019, NACTAL and the IOM signed an agreement to launch the project titled “Civil Society Actions to Combat Child Trafficking and Child Labour in Nigeria and Border Communities”, in Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Edo, Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and the border towns of Idiroko and Seme in Nigeria and the Republic of Benin.⁶³ The project carries out capacity building activities for NACTAL members on prevention and rescue of victims of human trafficking

and rehabilitation and reintegration of survivors. It also aims to enhance and promote collaboration between the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking In Persons (NAPTIP) and the public to maximize collaboration and reduce the effect of trafficking.⁶⁴

NGOs in Nigeria

- **Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF):**
The Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF) is a non-governmental organization that was established by Mrs. Amina Titi Atiku Abubakar, wife of the former vice president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar in the year 1999. This agency is a humanitarian organization that is well focused on the eradication of trafficking in persons, child labour and violent abuses of the rights of women and girls in the society. The NGO is one of the most recognized anti-human trafficking agencies in Nigeria and Africa at large ever known to have carried out one of the most powerful advocacy campaigns to strengthen the right against trafficking in persons and child labour in the country.⁶⁵
- **Coalition Against Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (CAHTSEC):** Coalition Against Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children in Nigeria is an anti-human trafficking organization working in Nigeria and the West African region that prevents and combats human trafficking in children and women, child slavery, and sexual violence since the year 1998. CAHTSEC works for prevention of human trafficking and their exploitation and discrimination within the

country and West African region. The non-governmental organization facilitates advocacy, creates awareness and social mobilization, provides technical support, initiates research and programme support activities at the grassroots, subnational, national and regional levels to resist human trafficking, child slavery and sexual exploitation of women and children.⁶⁶

- **Women’s Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON):** It was founded and registered by late Chief Olabisi Olateru-Olagbeji as an incorporated Trustee on August 25, 1995 and with headquarters in Lagos, Nigeria. WOCON is a non-governmental, not for profit making, non-partisan and non-religious organization committed to the enforcement of women and children’s rights and the attainment of equality, development and peace, WOCON’s activities over the years among other things have primarily focused on issues of gender based violence (GVV) especially campaigns against human trafficking of women and children. WOCON pioneered the campaign against human trafficking in Nigeria on March 8, 1997 and in its sustained focus on the elimination of human trafficking, WOCON has taken its awareness campaigns and mobilization of strategic stakeholders in source, transit and receiving communities to the rural areas particularly in endemic states of Edo, Ogun, Oyo, Ebonyi, Delta, Akwa-Ibom and Lagos where majority of the victims trafficked within and across borders are sourced, transited or received.⁶⁷
- **Devatop Centre for Africa Development (DCAD):** It is a leading youth-led anti-human trafficking and human rights organizations in Nigeria, with focus on combating

human trafficking, gender based violence, irregular migration and supporting survivors at risk youth. This agency is leading a sustainable movement of young people against human trafficking and irregular migration across Nigeria, and stimulating leaders, policy makers, private sectors to tackle human trafficking.⁶⁸

- Pathfinders Justice Initiative (PJI): Pathfinders Justice Initiative Inc is a leading international impact organization dedicated to the prevention of sex slavery or sexual violence and the liberation of enslaved women and girls through the direct eradication of root causes.⁶⁹

NGOs and Edo State

Non-Governmental Organizations in Edo State have been actively involved in the eradication of child and adult trafficking in the region.⁷⁰ The National Agency for the prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) seek collaborations with relevant stakeholders and NGOs in the fight against human trafficking and illegal migration.⁷¹ In 2017, the zonal commander of NAPTIP in Benin City, the Edo State Capital, Mr. Odit Ebenezer made it known of NAPTIP seeking collaboration, while meeting with members of a non-governmental organization, the initiative for Youth Awareness on Migration, Immigration, Development and Re-integration.⁷² This meeting between NAPTIP and the NGO focused on ways of intensifying public awareness on the dangers of human trafficking and its negative impact on the society.⁷³

In 2021, CLEEN Foundation called on traditional institutions, religious bodies and the state government to join on its quest to end human trafficking in Edo State. This call was made by the Executive Director of the CLEEN foundation, Benson Olugbuo at a town hall meeting titled “Community Awareness: Panacea to Ending Trafficking of Women and Girls” held in Benin City. He estimated that 85% of Nigerian sex workers in Europe originated from Edo State noting also that the international organization for migration (IOM) in 2018 puts the figure at over 60%. He further stated, Orhionmwon, Oredo and Ikpoba-Okha Local government Areas respectively constitute some of the main recruiting centres for traffickers while also being the main areas of departure of irregular migrants seeking to get to Europe. Olugbuo stated the crime of trafficking in persons is clandestine and complex just as he said is a modern day form of slavery and with negative longterm effects on the victims and the society at large, particularly its disproportionately effect on the women and young girls.⁷⁴

Another report made in 2021, also showed the involvement of NGOs in Edo State against the fight against trafficking in persons, Ruthchild Foundation, in collaboration with the initiative for Youth Awareness on Migration, Immigration Development and Reintegration (YAMIDR) intensified its campaign on irregular migration and human trafficking among Youth in Edo State. their campaign which also involved schools in Benin City to intensified the awareness on human trafficking and irregular migration.⁷⁵ The pathfinder Justice Initiative (PJI) had worked with stakeholders to create a coordinated care mechanism (CCM) for survivors of human trafficking in Edo State.⁷⁶

Ruth Benson Idahosa the Executive Director of PJI had stated that the CCM support for survivors of human trafficking would be well tailored, monitored efficiently and coordinated. And this coordinated support for trafficked survivors would tackle the challenge of discrimination against some survivors.⁷⁷ The Emmanuel Osemota Foundation (EOF) a non-governmental organization in 2023, sensitized women in rural communities in Edo State against human trafficking.⁷⁸ The goal of the NGO is to provide tangible, actionable support, while the foundation sees women's education as a pillar of its outreach. The NGO also carry out public awareness campaigns that teach young girls and women about their values and worth and the consequences of child and adult trafficking. One of such programmes is Girl Child Initiative: invest in a Girl, Power the future".⁷⁹ Over the years NGOs have been established in Edo State to curb the issue of trafficking in persons which also includes children and these NGOs have been working with the government and international organization to create awareness on human trafficking in Edo State.

Role of the School

Education continues to play a crucial role in the growth and development of Nations, including Nigeria. Around the world, countries especially developing nations, strive to enhance the quality of their educational systems. Nigeria is no exception and has undergone a significant shift towards achieving high-quality education for its population.⁸⁰ There have been scholarly views over the years on education as a mechanism cum tool towards curbing the menace of child trafficking in Nigeria. By educating children and

families about their rights and the dangers of human trafficking, they will be less likely to be manipulated or forced into the industry. Children will also be more likely to stay in school, enabling them to eventually get a good job that provides a fair wage⁸¹ while commenting on the possible roles of education in curbing child trafficking, the attention of school administrators and staff should be aware of cases of child trafficking being reported in communities throughout the nation. They also must get involved by educating themselves on the signs of trafficking that they can see and report⁸²

Nelson Mandela had stated education as the most powerful weapon that can be used to change the world, on this account, the attention of school personnel, administrators, teachers, bus drivers, maintenance personnel, food service staff, and other school community members should be on the advocacy of child trafficking.⁸³ In a report made on Guardian newspaper in 2019, former Minister of Education, Prof. Chinwe Obadi disclosed the introduction of trafficking in person (TIP) in the school curriculum which is a veritable tool for social reform to guide students from being trafficked.⁸⁴ The former Minister had stated that TIP was becoming one of the most lucrative but dangerous crimes globally, adding that teachers are critical compounds to educating students on the dangers of the menace.⁸⁵ The school plays a vital role in the eradication of child trafficking in the society with the introduction and educating of school children on the trafficking in persons.

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CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

The project dives into the study of child trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria. Human trafficking in Nigeria had started during the early 1980 as a result of the governmental structure of the country at that period. Human trafficking became a norm in Nigeria which now included the trafficking of children most especially young girls for forced labour and sexual exploitation. The study examines the evolution of child trafficking, causes and ways in which these children are trafficked out of Edo State and also within Edo State. Child trafficking in Edo is an ongoing trend that started with the trafficking of young girls to Italy for prostitution in the early 1990s which now has taken new turns due to globalization whereby children are now trafficked for different reasons and are involved in the trafficking of hard drugs as well. The study further carries out research on effect of trafficking on the families and the victims in Edo State as well as the nature of child trafficking in Edo State. Research was also carried out on the roles of government and international agencies in the fight against child trafficking which explains the measures the government have put into curbing child trafficking. Result showed the effort of the Edo State government in the establishment of the Edo State Task Force against trafficking in humans. Roles of Non-Governmental Organizations and the school was also researched in the project which showed the different NGOs that have been established in curbing child trafficking in Edo State.

There are several causes of child trafficking in Edo state and are outlined in chapter two of this project. The ways in which children and adults are trafficked are usually through land, sea and air in this recent times, report were taken from newspaper of children that were caught been trafficked through air, land and sea. Traffickers also traffic babies according to this research. The ways of trafficking are carried out by traffickers who formed these routes through land and sea. The process of trafficking through air mostly the victims are deceived with jobs abroad and are given documents to travel out, only to end up as domestic servitude or their organs are being harvested by these traffickers once they finally got to their destination. In this research work, it was understood that the nature of child trafficking in Edo State is based on the how the society, family and religion discourage and encourage trafficking not just in children but also in adults. The society at large play a role in the issue of child trafficking in Edo State. The family structure in Edo State also explains how it encourages and discourages trafficking in children. The family structure based on finance, unemployment, illiteracy, broken homes affect the rate of trafficking in children, parents who are not educated falls easily to traffickers, unemployment and lack of fiancé usually push parents to force their children in hard labour to earn money which could be seen in children hawking wears for their parents and also denied school because of the lack of finance to train them in school. These parents tend to give out their children to traffickers as most of them do not believe in harvesting of organs or other crude things that happen to children that are trafficked. Broken homes also play a role in child trafficking, as children from broken homes may

seek out traffickers themselves to escape poverty and sometimes when parents get separated, the children are the most affected because they are now exposed to child abuse by the new parents and these parents might force them into exploitative labour and sexually harassment as well or worse traffick the children for the purpose of getting money in return. Another factor is religion in Edo State, most especially the traditional religion of worshipping gods have played a huge role in the trafficking of children and adults as well. Traffickers make use of juju priest to bind their victims making them bond to their masters, as they cannot run away because of the fear that have been in them by these juju priest. Rituals are performed by these priests which involving taking of hairs from private parts of the victims and are used to perform some sacrifices. As a result of the rate of trafficked victims in Edo State, the Oba of Benin had denounced all curses made by juju priests to bind victims to their masters. This study also carried out research on the awareness of trafficking and the effect of trafficking on the victims and the families. The research showed that those in the rural areas are not fully aware of the risks of trafficking most especially in children, whereas there are also families that are aware and still choose to risk it by getting their children involved in trafficking for the purpose of exploitative labour and sexual purposes. The victims of trafficking usually pass through a lot of traumatic events which usually affect them mentally, physically and emotionally most especially the children that are trafficked.

The chapter three of this project carried out research on the role of government bodies and non-governmental organizations in the eradication or curbing of child

trafficking in Edo State. in this chapter, it explained the Edo State government and the establishment of the Edo State task force to fight against trafficking in humans. The government establishment of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking In Persons (NAPTIP) to eradicate human trafficking in Nigeria, have over the years established offices in different states in Nigeria and Edo State as well. The joint effort of different of NAPTIP and Edo State task force in the eradication of child trafficking is explained in this chapter. Report cases were found in newspaper of reported cases of trafficking by the Edo State task force and NAPTIP. The government has also played another role with the establishment of the Nigerian Police Force and immigration in the eradication of human trafficking in Nigeria and Edo State. This chapter also dives into the role of Non-Governmental Organization in Edo that have assisted in curbing child trafficking by carrying out awareness programmes and campaign on trafficking in persons and the risks of child trafficking. These NGOs also help in providing shelter for victims of trafficking. Some reported cases of NGOs reporting cases of child trafficking were also stated in this project. This chapter also explains how NGOs work with governmental bodies in the curbing of child and adult trafficking. Several NGOs were stated in Edo State that has stood against trafficking in person and report cases of trafficking to NAPTIP or the Edo State task force. This chapter ends with understanding what role the school also has to play in child trafficking. The school is where children are taught and educated and it is also the duty of the school to educate children on the risks of child trafficking. The school is a crucial part in the curbing of child trafficking in Edo State.

Conclusion

Child trafficking is not a recent trend as it has over time taken different forms. Child trafficking in Edo State had started with the trafficking of young girls (minors) for sexual exploitation. These young girls were deceived with the false promises of better life abroad working in farms, the parents of most of these trafficked children are also involved in pushing their children into the hands of traffickers. Over the years laws have been set up both at the international and national level against trafficking in children and adults. The Edo State government also established laws against trafficking in persons. The Nigerian government had established the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), an agency that have achieved so much in curbing trafficking in humans in Nigeria and in Edo State as well.

This research had explained the types of trafficking not just in children from Edo but adults as well, internal and external trafficking in children and adult in Edo State had different routes in trafficking human traffickers. The study explained how this internal and externally trafficking are being carried out in children and adults in children and adults in Edo States, most times children are trafficked within Edo State for the purpose of domestic servitude and exploitative labour such as working in bakeries close to hot ovens. External trafficking of children usually involved the crossing of borders through land, air and sea. Several reports were been found and used in this research work most especially newspapers of reported cases of victims of child trafficking in Edo State. the study also

explained the different causes of child trafficking in Edo State, outlined poverty, illiteracy as one of the causes whereby children are deceived by traffickers who are from poor homes and sometimes the parents also fall for these traffickers due to the lack of finances to cater for their children and send them to school to get education. Illiteracy also plays a big role in child trafficking, families in rural areas who are not educated easily fall prey for traffickers.

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