

**Human Trafficking and Poverty in South-south Nigeria**

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## **Declaration**

I wish to submit the thesis with above title in accordance with the University of Stirling research degree regulations. I declare that the thesis entails the results of my research and was carried out by me. Where it was necessary I referenced the extent of work done by other researchers that were used.

Osasere Greg Igbinomwanhia,

January, 2021

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to my late father Igbinomwanhia Ighomo who though died when I was just about seven years old, knew the importance of education and enrolled me early for primary education.

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## **Glossary**

**Nigeria** – One of the countries on the continent of Africa

**Edo state** - One of the 36 states in Nigeria

**Ikpoba-Okha**- One of the 18 local government areas in Edo state

**South-south** - One of the six geo-political regions in Nigeria

**Bini** - Dominant ethnic group in field area

**Ohen** - A priest of the African Traditional Religion in Edo state

**Sex Trafficking** – This means the trafficking of women and young girls for the purpose of sexual exploitation, especially in Europe and other Western societies. This does not mean boys and men are not trafficked for sexual exploitation. But the term is used in this thesis to mean the sexual exploitation of women and young girls in cross border destinations.

**Sexual Exploitation** - This means the exploitation of trafficked women and young girls sexually as commercial sex workers at destinations in Europe and other Western countries. This is interchangeably used with sex trafficking in this thesis.

It must also be noted here that sex trafficking and sexual trafficking does not only apply to women and girls alone, there are reports of men and boys also sexually exploited. But the focus of this work is on sex trafficking and sexual exploitation of women (as will be highlighted in the introduction chapter of the thesis)

**Madam** - A madam is a woman who organises the trafficking of female victims. They are often seen as the female trafficker. The madam is also known to be the financier or sponsor and exploiter of the trafficked victim at destination.

**Trolley**-A man who escorts female victims of trafficking on their way to Europe

## **Abbreviation of Words**

**ATMG** - Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group

**AU** - Africa Union

**CBN** - Central Bank of Nigeria

**CECAT** - Council of European Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

**EC** - European Community

**ECOWAS** - Economic Community of West Africa States

**ECPAT** - End Child Prostitution, Pornography and the Trafficking of children

**EU** - European Union

**EUROPOL**- European Police

**FBOs** - Faith Based Organisations

**GRETA**- Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

**ILO**- International Labour Organisation

**IPO** - International Police Organisation

**IOM**- International Office for Migration

**IMF** - International Monetary Fund

**LGA** - Local Government Area as it is used in Nigeria

**NAPTIP** - National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons of Nigeria

**NBS** - National Bureau of Statistics of Nigeria

**NPC** - National Population Commission of Nigeria

**TARA** - Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance of Glasgow

**UK**- The United Kingdom

**UNO** - The United Nations Organisation

**UN.GA** - The United Nations General Assembly

**UNODC** - The United Nations Office for Drug and Crime

**USA**- The United States of America

**US TIP** - The United States' Trafficking In Person project

**UNICEF** - The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

**UNCHR** - United Nations High Commission for Human Rights

**UNESCO** - United Nations Education and Scientific Council

**WOTCLEF** - Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation

## **Abstract**

*Sex trafficking is an aspect of human trafficking which has come to be seen as a serious global problem. Women and young girls are exposed to the danger of maternal mortality, unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases like HIV aids and other health and social consequences. Many victims suffer a wide variety of human rights abuses including confinement and effective captivity, physical and sexual assaults. More broadly, through human trafficking and sex trafficking, a nation's active population is threatened and exploited with young people unable to attain their full potential. This has significant implications for development challenges especially for developing source countries like Nigeria in Sub Sahara Africa where a large number of young girls and women are recruited for sex work in Europe annually. The activity of sex trafficking syndicates represents a flourishing area for organised crime which has proven resilient to law enforcement and other attempts at control. This research thesis uses qualitative research methods to explore the relationship between sex trafficking and social and economic conditions in the South-south region of Nigeria, with a particular focus on poverty. In doing so, it also examines the adequacy of official understandings and responses to, the problem and explores tensions between Western framings of the phenomena and the lived experience of populations exposed to human trafficking in the region.*

**Key words:** *Sex trafficking, labour and sexual exploitation, poverty, women and young girls, understanding, decision making, Ikpoba-okha, Edo state, South-south Nigeria*

## *Chapter One*

### **1.0. Introduction**

This chapter introduces the thesis which is on “human trafficking and poverty in South-south Nigeria”. It discusses the background to the study, and explores some of the conceptual and definitional issues related to the trafficking of human beings.

### **1.1. Background to Study**

Human trafficking is represented as a contemporary humanitarian concern associated with globalisation and increased migration (Agbu, 2003; Jones et al. 2007; Muroe, 2016; Musto, 2009). The phenomenon has strong historical antecedents, dating back to the Roman Empire era, where slaves were abundant and specific legal norms justified their use (Bertozzi, 2009). It has also been linked to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade that ended around the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (see, Bales 2004; Scarpa, 2008), though this assertion by Bales, Scarpa and others remains a subject of debate. With late modernity and globalisation, the phenomenon now often referred to as modern day slavery (Bales, 2004; Venkatraman, 2003), appears to have spread and attained greater political prominence.

It is important here to make an initial clarification regarding the concepts of slavery, trans-Atlantic slave trade and human trafficking (discussed more in the literature review, chapter two). This helps to clarify from the outset what authors maybe referring to when they substitute these terms for one another or use them interchangeably. Slavery generally refers to granting rights of ownership to one human being over another (Caldwell, 2010); or the social sanction of involuntary servitude imposed by one person or group upon another (Oshadare, 2004). The transatlantic slave trade is the classical term used to mean the slave trade transactions between Africa and Europe from 15<sup>th</sup> to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> centuries involving the buying and selling of human beings for the purpose of servitude in Europe and parts of the Americas (see, Bales, 2005; O’Connell Davidson, 2015; Webster 1990). Some early perspectives characterised slavery practised during the transatlantic slave trade as beyond robbing a man of his privileges but making him a beast of burden (Bourne, 1845), exemplified with the experience of those used for plantation cultivation of the period in owner-slave relationship. More recently, human trafficking has been defined variously by

state actors and academics as representing “a new form of authoritarianism in which individuals are subject to coercion and control outside of the state” (Shelly, 2010; p66), although state agencies have also been accused of promoting such coercion and abusive control (ibid; Kempadoo, 2016). The common consensus often views human trafficking as a contemporary form of forced migration and exploitation of individuals, transgressing the human rights of the victims whether within or outside of their country. While comparisons are often made between human trafficking and slavery (as exemplified by the UK’s Modern Slavery Act 2015), it is also argued that the type of experience of the slaves of the transatlantic slave trade era as reflected by Bourne (1845) cannot be equated with 21<sup>st</sup> century victims of human trafficking. Authors like O’Connell Davidson (2015) and Kempadoo (2016) have much more to argue regarding the variability and complexities of the phenomenon especially concerning conflation of human trafficking with slavery and the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

While specific definitions highlight the distinctions between the different concepts some state and non-state actors have grasped the convenience of identifying similarities between them at some points (see, O’Connell Davidson, 2015). The US Trafficking in Persons (TIP) project from the outset specifies that human trafficking is no doubt a modern slavery and as such should be tackled with the same zeal the trans-Atlantic slave trade was responded to by the early abolitionists (see, O’Connell Davidson, 2015; US TIP, 2004-2018). Specifically, because human trafficking is seen predominantly as a process that converts its victims to objects of trade or commodities to be bought, used and discarded (Bravo, 2011, FTS 2014), some state actors and some scholars particularly Bales (1999; 2005) equate it with the trans-Atlantic slave trade; and state that it is the ‘modern slave trade’ requiring tough policing in order to rescue identified slaves.

Exceptions are taken to this conceptualisation of modern slavery and human trafficking by scholars. The argument is that “there is no such thing as contemporary slave trade”, state agencies and activists only conceptualise trafficking as a set of claims about what is and what is not morally and politically obscene (O’Connell Davidson 2015;110). Although it is argued nonetheless that there may still be some ‘real’ slaves existing around some regions of

Africa despite the laws outlawing the practice (Pettersson, 2012); but the estimated number of people often considered as modern slaves by some state and non-state agencies like the US TIP and Walk Free are argued not to be socially or legally constructed as slaves (ibid). Critics of this supplanting of human trafficking with modern slavery, further argue that its proponents obviously apply the wrong definition of slavery, hence make the wrong assumptions and conclusion. Broadly, considering certain circumstances human trafficking has also been perceived as lying outside the migration-crime and modern slavery paradigm, instead “located on the continuum of (neo-liberal) mobility, labour and individual agency” (Sharapov, 2016;21).

Proponents of the modern slavery phenomenon are minded to hold on to their argument and based their argument on a set of assumptions about the historical experience of chattel slavery, as well as about the experience of those affected by the phenomenon they often see as modern slavery. However, the complexities surrounding equating human trafficking with modern slavery, likening it particularly to the trans-Atlantic slave trade render the study of human trafficking problematic and often open to interpretations. There is no doubt the tendency by many global and Western state actors and agencies to draw similarities between human trafficking, slavery and the trans-Atlantic slave trade has raised complex conceptual and theoretical issues and complicated academic discourse. These tensions often obscure the real issues of exploitation and personal experiences making effective conceptualisation and responses extremely challenging. (More of these tensions will be discussed in the literature review).

### ***Some Claims about the Extent and Scale of Human Trafficking***

However, state actors, researchers and commentators make claims about the extent and scale of the problem of human trafficking which has drawn criticism and the same time endorsement. One argument holds that more ‘slaves’ exist today in the world than in 1861 when the Trans-Atlantic slave trade was abolished (Bales 2012; Skinner 2009). Other reports indicate human trafficking is now the third most profitable sector of organised crime, after drug smuggling and illicit arms transfer (Klobucha, 2016; United Nations, 2006). Writers and authorities also claim it is one of the fastest growing activities of trans-national criminal

organisations (Charnysh et al 2015; United Nations Office for Drug and Crime (UNODC) (2015)). The International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2016) estimates 40.3 million people were victims of human trafficking globally in 2016. It added that almost 5 million of these were victims of forced sexual exploitation. It was also estimated that human trafficking generates \$150billion globally in illegal profits every year (ILO, 2014; US Trafficking in Persons (TIP), 2016).

Assertions as above could be faulted with researchers questioning the definitions employed and/or the methods used to arrive at such estimation (see Musto 2009; Panigabutra-Roberts 2012 and Weitzer, 2014). The critical need for analysts to carefully examine the quality of data sources and procedures used in arriving at figures when estimating the magnitude of any illicit vice is often proposed (Weitzer, 2013). Contentions are that estimates of human trafficking are difficult to ascertain for a number of reasons including the secrecy of the practice (Blackburn et al, 2010; Gozdziaik & Bump, 2008; Lackzko & Gozdziaik, 2005), hence the need for caution while relying on figures often given.

Meanwhile, trafficking in person is argued to have a life-long cost for its victim (Bocinski, 2017). Apart from promoting wage theft (Owens et al, 2014), trafficking is considered to assault dignity, violate fundamental human rights, erode conscience, and support corruption (Anti-Slavery International, 2002; Greek Government, 2015). Oyekanmi & Okunola (2017) specify rights violated through sex trafficking including, the rights to health and social services as provided for in Articles 22 and 25(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Article 12 and Article 13(2)(c) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Article 24 of the Convention of the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and Article 5(e)(iv) of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and 13(2)(c).

The negative impact of trafficking on the physical, mental, social and psychological wellbeing, especially of women and children has also been proposed (Costel et al 2001; Muntabhorn 2002). Broadly, with human trafficking, a nation's active population is seen as threatened and exploited with young people unable to attain their full potential (US TIP,

2015; Roby et al, 2008). Also, women and young girls are exposed to the danger of maternal mortality, unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (like HIV aids) and other health and social risks (Blackburn, et al, 2010; Olujuwon, 2008). This adds to development challenges for such nations, particularly source countries mostly in the majority world (Nwawene, 2011). However, emphasis on these inherent violations and consequences of sex trafficking has been criticised as overstated, misrepresented and conceptually wrapped up in complexities (see, O'Connell Davidson, 2017; Weitzer, 2012) as noted earlier.

### *Focus of the Thesis among Human Trafficking Types*

The focus of this thesis is **international sex trafficking of women and young girls from south-south Nigeria** (Roby et al, 2008; Hume & Sidun, 2016). International sex trafficking is the focus because most victims detected globally from Nigeria are trafficked for sexual exploitation especially in Europe, the Americas and others (UN, 2019). South-south Nigeria, the area of study for this research is in turn known to be the region within Nigeria most affected by cross border sex trafficking (NAPTIP, 2016). Also, international sex trafficking is focused on because it is often categorised as part of a broader labour exploitation phenomenon seen as core of the human trafficking concept. Women and girls are reported to be disproportionately affected by forced labour, accounting for about 99% of victims in the commercial sex industry (ILO, 2019). Also, this is examined because trafficking of women and girls for prostitution abroad has particularly serious implications, for both the image, the economic, psychological and health condition of any involved country (Nwanwene, 2011). It is recognised that sex trafficking does not only apply to women and girls, there are reports of men and boys also trafficked and sexually exploited. But the research focus of this work is on sex trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and girls. In addition to reasons advanced above international sex trafficking of women and girls is focused because it is the most common form of human trafficking in the region under study (Edo state south-south Nigeria) (NAPTIP, 20116), with more far reaching implications for the people and the region.

## 1.2. More Referenced Conceptual Clarifications

Clarification is also made here that the central phenomenon in this study is referred to as **‘sex trafficking’** or **‘human trafficking’**, throughout. In essence, human trafficking is used some times to also connote sex trafficking. Also sex trafficking is also used sometimes in place of **‘sexual exploitation’**. As used in this thesis, sex trafficking means the trafficking of women and young girls for the purpose of sexual exploitation, especially in Europe and other Western societies (typical authors’ definitions are given in the next paragraph and in the literature review). This does not mean boys are not trafficked for sexual exploitation. Further, the term sexual exploitation in the thesis refers to the exploitation of trafficked women and young girls sexually as commercial sex workers in Europe and other Western countries. Sexual exploitation is represented as an integral component of sex trafficking hence the interchangeability of the terms.

Further referenced conceptual clarification could be made here relating to the use of the terms **‘sex trafficking’** and **‘sexual exploitation’**. There is a trend among academics, state agencies and practitioners to include in their definitions and explanations of sex trafficking accounts of sexual exploitation (see, Berton 2000; Braimah 2013, US TVPA, 2013). In Berton (2000), specifically sex trafficking is defined as the illicit transportation of women into foreign countries for sexual exploitation and economic and other personal gains, for the trafficker. Braimah (2013) who also presents sex trafficking as an act of moving a person or a people from one location to another for the purpose of sexual exploitation sees sex trafficking as substantially involving sexual exploitation. The US Trafficking Victims Protection Re-authorisation Act (TVPA) (2013) stressed that sex trafficking is when sexual exploitation through force or fraud exists. With this, there could be the tendency to use both terms interchangeably in a related work as seen in this thesis. All the same, the complexities inherent in the use of the term sex trafficking and sexual exploitation remain an academic burden which scholars struggle to unbundle even till this moment (see, Malloch and Rigby, 2016). In fact, the myriad acts that underpin the forced movement, exploitation and enslavement of men, women and children across the world are hardly conveyed by the term human trafficking (ibid).

Regarding the complex nature of the use of the concepts of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation, scholars weigh the argument whether female migrants under some sort of debt bondage are actually sexually exploited as sex trafficking victims. Those who are seen as victims of sex trafficking trafficked from Nigeria in West Africa to Europe (Italy) (Kara 2009) for instance are reported not to see themselves as exploited sexually but working to fulfill their own side of the contract which was entered into before travelling with their sponsors (called madam) (O'Connell Davidson, 2015). Sometimes these female debtors become madams themselves (Carling, 2005; Cool and Booth, 2005). In fact, they do not see themselves as sexually exploited but privileged poor people who were offered the opportunity to become successful madams. The powers that the so call victims hand over to the madams to control them until they pay off their debt are often arguably given voluntarily. This may make it difficult to simply say sex trafficking involves sexual exploitation without also exploring the complexities involved.

Finally, in this thesis, the term, '**Western dominant argument/perspective**' will often be used. This means the popularly preferred conceptualisation, understanding and argument regarding the nature, dynamics and explanatory account of issues concerning human trafficking which is often championed by many Western States and some non-state actors (though by no means all, as will be discussed further in the literature review).

### **1.3. Research Problem**

The reported poor living conditions of a large majority of the population in south-south Nigeria (National Bureau of Statistics NBS, 2015) arguably offers some explanation for the wide spread practice of cross border sex trafficking. However, poverty in existing literatures is often viewed fairly superficially as an obvious, taken for granted push factor, but with the offence and the offender remaining at the fore front of any exploration and indeed of official responses (Kempadoo, 2016; Shilhav 2017).

Arguments however exist that many countries are poorer than Nigeria, yet these countries do not experience noticeable levels of cross border sex trafficking (Oyekanmi & Okunola, 2017). Within Nigeria, most states are in fact poorer than key affected states in the south-south-region (Global Income Distribution Database 2017); yet, no other region is said to be

much affected by the problem as the south-south region (Oyekanmi & Okunola, 2017; Pearson 2000 as cited in Akor 2011). This research therefore among other things, hopes to provide a more critical analysis of poverty and its role, alongside other push and pull factors, regarding the human and sex trafficking problem.

Okonofua et al (2004), Okojie, et al (2003) and Carling (2005) works on Benin City are some of the only pieces of research carried out on the phenomenon in the south-south region to date. No research has looked at Ikpoba-Okha, a known hotspot for most international sex trafficking victims in South-south Nigeria (NAPTIP, 2017). Specifically, no qualitative exploration to investigate individual or group action in trying to explain and understand the nature of the relationship between sex trafficking and poverty or other factors in the area has been carried out. Moreover, comprehensive responses to sex trafficking generally have been hindered especially by scarcity of empirical and systematic research (Brennan, 2005; Gozdzia, and Collett, 2005). This is a gap in understanding which this study hopes to help fill.

#### **1.4. Research Aims and Questions**

Using qualitative methods this research aims to explore the relationship between sex trafficking of women and girls to Europe, and poverty in South-south Nigeria; to examine other contributory factors; and finally, to consider the extent to which key explanatory factors are reflected in official understandings and responses to the problem. In turn, the following questions will form the basis for the field work.

Question 1 - What is it that leads to sex trafficking in South-south Nigeria? The aim of this question is to explore those endogenous and exogenous push and pull factors that may contribute to sex trafficking in the region.

Question 2 – What role does poverty play in sustaining sex trafficking in South-south Nigeria? This seeks to understand how poverty contributes to sex trafficking from South-south Nigeria to European countries as an often given contributing factor.

Question 3 - What role do socio-cultural practices play in facilitating sex trafficking in South-south Nigeria? This question will widen the scope of the research going beyond pre-

existing preoccupations with poverty, to identify further while exploring further explanations to the widespread nature of the practice,

Question 4 - What informs global and local official understanding and conception of the cause of sex trafficking in South- South Nigeria? This fourth research question seeks to understand the philosophy and foundation of responses of both local and international authorities in Nigeria and Western countries. This is mainly to find out if practice responses are based on an adequate understanding of the problem.

Question 5 - How does official understanding in turn shape practice responses? This is a follow up to question four to further understand how response patterns impact on stopping or reducing the practice.

### **1.5. Research Benefit and Significance**

The “absence of robust research and data continues to be one of the barriers in planning for, implementing and monitoring implementation of numerous anti-trafficking initiatives” (Sharapov, 2016; p18). The findings of this research are intended to contribute to informing responses to this identified challenge. Particularly, it will help in understanding key explanatory factors behind the trafficking of women and young girls abroad for sex work in south-south Nigeria. The study aims to assist policy makers and practitioners in responding to the challenges of human and sex trafficking in developing countries in particular through providing a more critically-informed account of the relationship between poverty and other social characteristics and practices, and trafficking itself. .

### **1.6. Structure of the Thesis**

The structure of this thesis follows the adapted qualitative research format recommended by Holliday (2007) (see, Lynch (2014). Chapter One of this thesis provides an introduction to the topic - human trafficking (sex trafficking) and poverty in South-south Nigeria. It also includes the purpose of the study, the statement of the research problem, research questions and the study significance. Chapters two, three, and four cover the literature review. Chapter five looks at some theoretical perspectives; Political economy of colonial labour system as the foundation of exploitation of Africans and the complexities of migrants’ labour and sexual exploitation. This chapter ends with a conceptual framework of the thesis.

Chapter six deals with the research design, methodology, participants and field site selection, access arrangement, field work, data analysis, data validation, and ethics of the thesis. Chapters seven, eight and nine present the results of the field study (textual field data). Chapter ten covers the general discussion of the research findings. Finally, chapter eleven contains final conclusions including, a review of key findings and contribution to knowledge, a review of the work; limitations of the project; strengths of the thesis methodology; prospects for further research; suggestions; and recommendations.

## **Chapter Two**

### **2.0. Literature Review**

This chapter positions the study within the ongoing literature on human trafficking. The overarching aim is to explore understandings and explanations and current responses to trafficking first in terms of the West and then in Nigeria. The literature review is in three chapters. The first chapter looks at competing Western definitions and explanations and the range of Western responses that these inform. The review then provides an overview of the context of Nigeria in terms of its' key geographic, cultural, socio-economic and political features, and then the final chapter looks at patterns, understandings and responses to the trafficking of persons in Nigeria.

While searching for literatures in this section, electronic data base were consulted, snowballing from existing literature and text. This helped as a major relevant source of information on the central phenomenon, for review. Some literatures were also sought in print book form. This was in the case of those that could not be sourced electronically. The basic search criteria for texts material in the literature review is stated in the next paragraph.

#### ***Search Criteria for the Literature Review***

The search criteria for the literature review in this thesis is basically based on identifying existing scholarly works with topics that reflect on the research questions and the core aim of the thesis which is – using qualitative method to explore the relationship between sex trafficking of women and girls to Europe, and poverty in South-south Nigeria; to examine other contributory factors; and finally, to consider the extent to which key explanatory factors are reflected in most official understandings and responses to the problem. Essentially, specific relevant disciplinary literatures reflecting significant contributions especially key texts which challenge dominant perspectives regarding human trafficking and sexual exploitation (or sex trafficking with its slightly different meaning and connotations) that are important in relations to the conceptual model and theoretical argument were focused. Also relevant government documents, policy statements (e.g. statements by US

TIP, EU CECAT) and positions of non state actors (e.g. anti-trafficking NGOs, activists etc) which represent dominant human trafficking narratives were looked at for review.

## **2.1. Global and Dominant Western Conceptualisations of Human Trafficking and the Inherent Complexities**

Starting with the dominant perspectives definitions, this section examines how human trafficking is defined, conceived, understood, and responded to globally particularly by most Western governments and non-governmental organisations, while also considering the inherent complexities and counter arguments made by scholars (note that there is no single Western understanding of the phenomenon of human trafficking, and this shall be kept in mind and reflected throughout this literature review section). The ‘West’ here refers to the United States of America, Western European countries, and other countries in the global north representing the minority world. Whilst it has to be acknowledged that there is not an exact uniformity of approach across these countries, there is certainly a discernible dominant narrative driven primarily by the lead taken by United States government. Examining this with regard to the focus of this thesis is important because victims of international sex trafficking from typical source regions of developing countries in West Africa, South Asia, South America and others are reported to be exploited at destination nations in the West. Also, this section of the world appears dominant in terms of setting the conceptual platform in many global issues including human trafficking (e.g. the dominant role of US’ TIP concerning issues of trafficking).

## ***2.2. Global Definitions of Human Trafficking and the Underlining Conceptual Challenges***

Definitional controversies and ambiguities exist regarding human trafficking (Schauer & Wheaton 2006; Weitzer, 2014). This leaves researchers with analytical and classification difficulties associated with existing migration theories, perspectives and conceptualisation (Salt, 2000; Kara, 2009). In essence, a consistent definition which has been missing is needed in order to determine what constitutes trafficking and the number of persons trafficked yearly (Kelly 2005). This currently appears far from being achieved as there is yet no agreement between researchers, policy makers, activists, practitioners and other stake holders on a number of salient issues (see, O’Connell Davidson, 2015, 2016, Kempadoo,

2016). The existing contention over precise and standard definitions of “trafficking”, and other “criminally” related migration concepts (Salt 2000) even grew worse following the emergence of the globally endorsed United Nations General Assembly Palermo Protocol of 2000<sup>1</sup> definition. The Protocol puts thus:

*The Palermo Protocol defines human trafficking as, “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of position of vulnerability or of giving or receiving of payment or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation”, (see Protocol for the Prohibition and Suppression of Human Trafficking UN. GA, 2000-1).*

The Palermo definition has three core elements (Aronowitz and Peruffo 2004). These include the acts required to commit it (recruitment, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of people); the means used to carry it out (threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse, of power or position of vulnerability, giving or receiving payments or benefits to achieve consent of a person having control over another); and the purpose (exploitation of the victim). Also, the Palermo definition emphasises three forms of human trafficking namely: sex, labour, and organ trafficking (Panigabutra-Roberts 2012). But sex and labour trafficking seem to dominate global focus, and this partly informed the need to undertake this study on sexual exploitation and not the other forms of trafficking.

The Palermo protocol definition highlighted that both its title and statement of purpose clarify that trafficked people are victims and that the primary victims of trafficking are women and children in forced prostitution (Buckland 2008). But scholarly arguments have

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<sup>1</sup>Article 3, Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, G.A. Res. 55/25, U.N. GAOR, 55<sup>th</sup> Sess., Annex 2, Supp. No.49, at 60, U.N. Doc. A/45/49 (2000-1)

reservations about this simple assertion and clarification (see, O'Connell Davidson 2006, 2015; and Kempadoo 2015, 2016). The above authors posit the need for caution while generalising the use of the terms "victim" and "force" in view of the variability of the phenomenon referred. Another criticism against the definition raised questions regarding the challenges of clarifying the nature and degree of force involved in coercion (see, O'Connell Davidson, 2006, 2015). The UN Convention definition as further argued, fails to specify this, and the definition is seen as loose not fitting the types of practices that policy makers and activists claim constitute trafficking in human beings.

Moreover, such global dominant definitions of human trafficking represented by the Palermo protocol, suites most Western country's interest as they help create the platform to see the phenomenon as crime urgently requiring drastic criminal laws, and maybe police action (O'Connell Davidson, 2015; Sanford et al, 2016). Another argument posits that such definitions have very little inputs from the victims themselves (Farrell and Fahy, 2009; Kempadoo, 2016; Sanford et al, 2016). The above criticisms however remain subject to further debate especially with some writers like Bales (2005) arguing with evidences to justify the claims and conceptual standpoint of most global state actors that inform their preferred definitions (e.g. the Palermo Protocol definition).

Though the UN protocol definition currently remains the globally recognised official standard for measurement of what the phenomenon of trafficking entails, from an academic perspective, authors theorised their own definitions. Kyle and Liang (1998) propose the practice is a consequence of the commodification of migration from which organisations are able to make profit from people's mobility. Arguably, the focus in this definition seems to be on desperate migration and profit making by intermediating people smugglers. The challenge that comes with this kind of definition is that it is less encompassing and better fits the concept of 'human smuggling' rather than what is often categorised as 'human trafficking'. Moreover this kind of definition refuses to acknowledge that many of those who migrate with a fee may be with their own consent (see, Kempadoo, 2016); and often are happy that certain persons helped them to their destination and that in return, they owe individuals debt obligations that need repayment (see, O'Connell Davidson, 2015; Kempadoo, 2016). This definition merely concludes that some people do exploitatively

make money off others while the ‘victims’ are migrating to a new destination without necessarily considering certain other possibilities.

Another definition by Bales (2000; 462) views trafficking as “the complete control of a person for economic exploitation by violence or the threat of violence”. Bales (2000) sees trafficking in human beings as a new form of slavery hence his emphasis on the concepts of ‘economic exploitation’, ‘control’ and use of violence. Bales’ background on the issue of human trafficking is from the perspective of seeing human trafficking as the issue of economic exploitation and neo-slavery. But Bales’ definition is criticised for its inability to establish distinct demarcation between old and new forms of slavery (see, Augustine, 2007), which remains critical for the purpose of conceptual clarification and understanding of human trafficking.. Bales’ emphasis on trafficking in human beings as modern slavery that entails brutal exploitation of victims has also been the subject of ongoing argument due to certain disputed conceptual reasons (see, O’Connell Davidson 2015; Kempadoo, 2015; 2016). The question asked is, at what point is an individual considered exploited (O’Connell Davidson 2015) (more on the complexities surrounding human trafficking and exploitation is discussed later in this chapter). Apart from the criticism regarding the issue of economic exploitation, the definition is disputed for emphasising violence (see, Augustine, 2007; Kempadoo, 2016). The argument is that violence cannot be defined. Moreover, many of those who do sex work on the street to pay the so call traffickers are seen as essentially using it to escape hardship (Kempadoo, 2016).

Human trafficking has also been defined as a multifaceted issue that includes fraud, force, coercion and exploitation for sexual purposes as well as for purposes of forced labour (Kane, 2012). Kane’s definition stresses that the core issues of human trafficking are sexual and labour exploitation through the use of force (ibid), reflecting in a way the thrust of the UN definition. However, this does not mean that the act of trafficking is generally limited to labour and sexual exploitations as proposed by the definition. It will appear more logical to also identify the important issue of profit making. This is so because some other forms of trafficking like trafficking for organ harvest for example are argued to be carried out strictly for the economic profit. This particular form does not connote labour or sexual exploitation.

In effect, the definition and meaning of the phenomenon termed human trafficking is considered as confusing (see, Kempadoo (2016)).

Broadly, to properly define and understand human trafficking, there is a need to deconstruct the trafficking phenomenon as a migratory concept. Attempts to aggregate human trafficking as simply a by-product of migratory processes as often by some Western policy makers and agencies like US Department of State (US TIP, 2017), is arguably misleading. This may disallow the opportunity to understand trends and variations in exploitations and migratory patterns. Distinguishing between but also understanding the dynamic relationships between, human trafficking, and related migratory concepts like human smuggling (Aronowitz, 2001), and migration to more prosperous countries is important.

The UN Palermo Convention defines migrant smuggling as ‘the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident...’ (*United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime and the Protocols, 2001*). Migration to a more prosperous country, on the other hand, means the movement of persons from less developed countries to more economically prosperous countries, for permanent settlement (see, Okolocha, 2019; Salt, 2000). Though these migratory concepts are in a way related (Aronowitz, 2001; Salt, 2000), distinctions between them exist (UNODC 2009; Aronowitz, 2001; Salt, 2000). These primarily include in the aspects of movement across border, consent, and the purpose of exploitation (UNODC, 2009). While migrant smuggling, entails the crossing of international borders human trafficking may involve the crossing of international borders or take place within the borders of a particular country as internal trafficking (Ikelegbe, 2019). Another basis for the distinction is the purpose of trafficking and the concept of exploitation (Salt 2000). Also, smuggling is concerned with the manner in which a person enters a country, but trafficking is a more complicated concept going beyond the manner of entry emphasising the working conditions (Graycar, 1999). While migrant smuggling only occurs with the consent of the person smuggled, human trafficking may involve the use of force and coercion by traffickers and also restraining victims from leaving at the destination (Gallagher and David, 2014; UNODC, 2009). Contrary to migrant smuggling, trafficked persons are used and exploited

over time and in many cases eligible for further recruitment for criminal purposes (Bajretarevic 2000).

The variation in terms of financial motives involved is also an area of distinction between human trafficking and migrant smuggling (see Aloyo and Cusumano, 2018). However, migration to more prosperous nations may not necessarily reflect any form of “exploitation”, “servitude” or “dehumanisation” or illegal crossing of borders or any kind of illegality in view of what authors above argued regarding the other migratory processes. The forgoing arguably indicates that the concepts of human trafficking and migration processes can be broken down into different variations with distinct categorisation. This means, not all migratory tendencies and processes are human trafficking. The contention is that migration and human trafficking are distinct (although there may be overlap), though most Western Governments are keen to criminalise illegal migrants and equate it with human trafficking. They ignore the fact that equating migration with trafficking complicates otherwise a nice simple moral division (bad illegal migrants, poor innocent human trafficking victim) (Hamilton-smith, 2020). This development could skew official understanding and limit policy and practice in response.

However the different migratory processes seem to meet at a point with one likely to precede the other (Aronowitz, 2001). Or as put by Salt (2000; p33), trafficking and these other “more voluntary forms of undocumented migration are best thought of as a continuum”. The desire to migrate to more prosperous countries sometimes lead to the enlisting of migrant smugglers resulting in migrant smuggling and in many cases leading to human trafficking (see, Ojomo, 1999). Although some trafficked are argued not to have been smuggled but entered destination countries illegally themselves, Ojomo insists many originally engage intermediaries to get them to destination (ibid). This links to what is rather classified as clandestine migrants often assisted by individuals or group on their way to destination country either on humanitarian grounds or for financial motives (see, Kempadoo, 2016).

### *2.3. Defining Sex Trafficking*

Sex trafficking is defined as the illicit transportation of women and girls (locally or) into foreign countries for sexual exploitation and economic and other personal gains, for the trafficker (Berton 2000). While this does not agree with certain assertions (see, Kempadoo 2017; and O'Connell Davidson 2016), it appears to capture the main thematic characteristics of the Palermo Protocol concept of sex trafficking. There is another definition that sees sex trafficking as an act of moving a person or a people from one location to another for the purpose of sexual exploitation (Brammah 2013). Manbe's (2016) definition, proposes it as a form of slavery which involves the movement of victims by the traffickers; these victims are however subject to deception, violence or coercion to other locations for the purpose of sexual forced labour and sexual exploitation.

The US Department of State contextualises sex trafficking as mostly involving trafficked female migrants from other countries who are taken to brothels, escort services, massage parlours, strip clubs, hotels, streets and other places for the purpose of commercial sex at destinations. The US Trafficking Victims Protection Re-authorisation Act (TVPA) (2013) stressed sex trafficking does not have to involve travelling, transportation or movement across border (US TIP, 2015). Sex trafficking is when sexual exploitation through force or fraud exists (ibid). This definition like the previous ones could be said to be open for contention following the free use of terms like exploitation, violence, coercion and deception which remain subject for academic debate and complex in understanding.

Meanwhile, recent evolvment which seems to have increased the scope of the trafficking business is the use of social media, dating sites and online advertisement (Jeffrey, 1999; Leung, 2003; Moses, 2011). The effective use of technology in many types of illegal actions including human trafficking, by syndicates in order to be discrete and enhance their practice is often argued (see, Hamilton-Smith 2019). They do not necessarily have to conduct their business through risky on-street operations or through running open brothels that are easily within the reach of law enforcement any longer (Moses, 2011). Generally, the number of those trafficked in the last few years especially from West Africa into the expanding sex

industry in Europe, out-numbers those trafficked for purposes like labour and domestic servitude and others (UNODC, 2017). This partially is the reason this research work is focused on international sex trafficking (and not other forms of trafficking) from south-south Nigeria (West Africa) to Europe as earlier indicated.

Apart from sex trafficking, bonded labour trafficking, forced labour trafficking, child labour trafficking, trafficking for organ sale, trafficking for domestic servitude, and trafficking for street begging are other forms of human trafficking (US TIP, 2016; International Criminal Police Organisation (Interpol) 2019). Bonded labour trafficking for instance, involves male or female victims trafficked for the purpose of exploitation while working for their employers following a debt bond (US TIP, 2016). Some people trafficked for sex work could also be victims of bonded labour as they are blackmailed into sex work by their traffickers with the initial debt which they innocently agree to before leaving source countries (Oyekanmi and Okunola, 2017; Okojie, et al 2003). Often, when victims are trafficked to destination countries their identification is confiscated and asked to repay a magnified debt for travel expenses thereby initiating their debt bondage (Bales, 1999). Another given instance is when a worker begins with an initial debt which builds up until the victim is irredeemably tied down to the exploiter by the orchestrated debt (Derks et al, 2006; US TIP 2016). Many victims of trafficking from West Africa and Nigeria, especially those for sex trafficking and servitude are known to be victims of bonded debt (Carling, 2005). But it may be unwise to accept that all migrants are subject to debt bondage that they themselves see as unjust or imposed as proposed by Bales (1999) and Dersk et al (2006) above. This is due to complexities inherent in the process involved especially as many of the so called trafficked migrants doing sex work in Europe for example may see this as normal and see themselves merely fulfilling their own part of the contract (Kempadoo 2016; O'Connell Davidson 2015).

One underpinning idea from the preceding review is that sex trafficking and trafficking for other purposes can often overlap. Victims may be trafficked for sex and along the line their children may be exploited. As argued, many of those trafficked for sex work could also be victims of bonded labour at the same time may be for domestic servitude.

#### *2.4. Framings of Push and Pull Factors of Sex Trafficking Globally*

Addressing factors that create vulnerability when focusing on understanding and prevention of human trafficking, is crucial (Weatherburn et al., 2015). These contributing factors could be categorised as push and pull factors. The idea of push and pull factors was made popular by Raveinstein (1889) while analysing migration in England using the 1881 census of England and Wales data. Everett Lee's (1966, 1975) review of Reveinstein's ideas on push and pull factors contended essentially that push factors are more critical than pull factors in explaining migration or movement of people from one place to another for permanent settlement (see, Okolocha, 2019). In this respect, push factors constitute those endogenous situations engendering vulnerability that push victims from source country into being trafficked at destination nations (see, Ikelegbe, 2019). But pull factors are simply those favourable conditions mostly exogenous that pull victims of sex trafficking from source country into being exploited at destination countries.

##### *Push Factors for Sex Trafficking*

Many who migrate into international sex trafficking may be responding to push factors like the lack of economic opportunities in their home countries or the desperation to provide for their family members (Weitzer, 2011). This argument presupposes that this is the case rather than orchestrated by the factor of nefarious traffickers as often thought by those considered as oppression theorists. But, this hypothesis as captured by Weitzer (ibid) is discountenanced notably by some powerful Western policy makers and activists who usually point to criminality (see, Anderson and O'Connell Davison 2003). Against the claim of dominant Western perspectives other arguments particularly emphasised poverty and poor employment opportunities as contributory factors for human and sex trafficking (see, Edward, 2012; Klinchenko et al 1999). While contextualising the case in Eastern Europe, a particular report argued poor economic condition is a critical factor that contributes to trafficking of women in the region for commercial sex abroad (See, Klinchenko et al. 1999). This was also suggested by Blackburn et al in their (2010) work in South-East Asia. Various other arguments canvassed the economic factor perspective, that out-migration by

economically vulnerable groups is an often used survival options (see, Bennet, 1999; Hadley, 2001; Mikhail, 2002).

Apart from the position of some Western political authorities some academic arguments counter the poverty factor as many smuggled migrants who become trafficking victims are argued to be well off (Salt, 2000 and Pearson 2000, as cited in Akor, 2011). The argument dismisses claims of poverty as core push factor. These opposing views notwithstanding cases of human trafficking are usually widespread in areas where the poverty rate is high like in Central America (see Warden, 2013), and other seriously affected regions in developing countries. However, rather than the individual poverty factor, socio-economic inequality within many source countries in the developing world is debated more likely to pose as a key push factor (Barner et al 2014). The controversy surrounding the economic factor as a viable contributor to sex trafficking appears inconclusive for now. This is partly fundamental to this study which aims to understand the relationship between human trafficking and poverty in south-south Nigeria.

Various other push factors are argued. The human rights abuses and social dislocation which occur during civil wars are considered to also account for some cases of sex trafficking (see, Beyrer, 2001). This, in the light of the above argument makes women vulnerable to trafficking syndicates (ibid). This however also remains in the realm of further argument as many women in some countries that have experienced a sequence of civil crises are not known to consider sex trafficking as survival strategy. Meanwhile, others tend to blame destabilised governments and militarisation of regions as push factors (Murray 2003), which is most likely with most developing countries known to have experienced much of this. Some other contended hypotheses point to patriarchy in many developing societies connecting such to what they termed 'feminised poverty' (Weatherburn, et al 2015). As argued, in societies where women are culturally deprived of access to socio-economic opportunities and means of production owing to the prevailing practices of male dominance, they are disadvantaged and under pressure to create their own wealth for survival (Castle et al, 2014; Warden, 2013). This leads to what some scholars termed feminised migration which they argue expose many to sex traffickers (Agustin 2003). However, whether migration is feminised or not, migrants without legal statuses are often

reported to be vulnerable and can be exposed to exploitation including trafficking. In essence a migrant does not have to be a female or not to be trafficked. Another debate is that many are pushed into becoming victims because they are running away from what one author called *small-town prejudices* (see, Augustin 2007), though this is also subject to academic disputation as there are no available adequate evidences to support this.

### *Pull Factors*

The availability of facilitators assisting those seeking illegal entrance into destination countries, is argued as a contributing pull factor to sex trafficking (Shelly, 2014). Similarly the proliferation of poorly regulated recruitment agents could make trafficking from poor countries to rich Western nations much easier (see, Edward, 2012). A further argument is that this is usually encouraged by cheaper and easier travel, and the existence of large Diaspora communities in most developed countries, helping to eliminate some barriers to cross border migration and trafficking (ibid). Though the Diaspora community factor has also been corroborated in other writings (see, Carling, 2005), it does not make the argument entirely valid and applicable to all cases with countries not known for trafficking also having even much larger Diaspora communities in destination developed countries.

Expansion of social media and the internet into remote communities, spreading the perception that better education or employment opportunities abound in certain countries of the West are argued to also constitute pull factors aiding trafficking (Edward, 2012). “The financial benefit for employers in hiring undocumented or trafficked workers in some western countries; and the desire for foreign women in the commercial sex industry” (Edward, 2012; 62) are also considered as factors. Abolitionist feminist activists agree with Edward believing trafficking thrives in areas where prostitution is legalised and regulated (Musto, 2009). Such anti-prostitution activists hold the only way to check sex trafficking is to abolish prostitution (Weitzer, 2013). On one of the above listed pull factors, Savona et al (1996) align with Edward that trafficking may be for the purpose of satisfying demands for illegal employment. This argument could be premised on the fact that many trafficked into Europe especially for servitude (cheap farm labor, house help, baby sitters) and for commercial sex work are basically met to fill jobs that are not guaranteed by the legal

national employment system and are facilitated by criminal syndicates. This does not mean for example that many European countries (e.g. Italy) operate a work policy that legalises sex work.

The nature of most Western government immigration laws is also seen as a pull factor for human trafficking (see, Chuang, 2006; Kempadoo, 2017). Excessive border control and strict immigration laws are proposed to be forcing migrants to use illegal channels (Salt's 2000, also see O'Connell Davidson, 2015). This however contradicts the argument by Salt (2000) that relaxed immigration policies can likewise encourage increased illegal migrant inflow and migration related challenges including trafficking. This adds to the complications inherent in understanding trafficking in persons generally and specifying contributors to the challenge which many authors have posited. Meanwhile other pull factors often debated is the odd side of globalisation (Enloe, 1990; Munro 2016; Scheper-Hughes, 2004; Sessen, 2002), blaming globalisation. Changes in global labour market arising from globalisation leading to a high rate of exploitation and surplus extraction was particularly identified (See Munro, 2016).

Another major pull (or push) factor considered is the profit that comes with the sex trafficking business. This could be linked to the business model theory (Campana 2015; Louise 2010). The argument insists that the supply and demand created a booming business for the traffickers especially as it is cost effective (Louise 2010). Also, because the young female victims are not easily repatriated when identified by immigration officers as illegal migrants, this seems to promote sex trafficking generally (Campana, 2015). Importantly, there is a broader argument underscoring the foundation of the problem with the phenomenon of human trafficking for sexual exploitation seen as representing a fundamental contemporary consequence of inequalities between and within nations (Barner et al, 2014; Weitzer, 2013). The issue of global inequality and uneven wealth distribution and its impact on international human and sex trafficking is considered seriously and broadly focused in the theoretical viewpoint chapter of this thesis.

The preceding basically reflects what could be considered as constituting the dominant discourse around human trafficking (O'Connell Davidson 2015; Kempadoo 2016) especially

regarding contributing factors. The referred authors hold a variant viewpoint regarding what appears to be, and what is not human trafficking as well as what could be contributing to its spread if at all.

### ***2.5. Western Dominant Approach to Naming the Act of Human Trafficking and Its Implications***

Labeling of human trafficking has been in line with a dominant Western conceptualisation and understanding. Meanwhile, agreeing on a particular name for the act has emitted contentious and divergent discourse in conceptual framing among Western state actors, institutions and academics. It is popularly called “human trafficking” (Panigabutra-Roberts 2012; Palermo protocol 2000) which has arguably become the global official tag for the phenomenon. Apart from that, it has also come to be known variously as “modern day slavery” (Bales, 2005; Venkatraman, 2003; Zamrembka, 2002). Scholarly works suggested a few other terms (Salt 2000): “human commodity trafficking” (Williams, 1999); “human trade”, “trafficking in human beings” and “trafficking in persons” (Meese et al., 1998). Others referred to it as “corrupted migration” (Anderson & O’Connell Davidson, 2003), or “female sexual slavery” (Barry, 1979; Bindel & Kelly, 2003; Hughes, 2000) or “sex trade”, “trafficking for commercial sex” (see, Weitzer, 2014). There are also often used names like, “trade of human beings” “illegal immigrant smuggling”, “migrant smuggling” and others. This indicates ambiguity and inconsistency especially among most Western politicians, academics and commentators in the bid to conceptualise and understand the trafficking challenge. This also strengthened the argument by some authors (Kempadoo, 2016; Weitzer, 2014) that it is difficult to be exact on issues of human trafficking thereby making it difficult to specify total number of existing cases as well as geographical spread.

Moreover, “human trafficking” as often used by some Western legislations, is seen as “just an analytic catchphrase and dominant cognitive map for making sense of related and overlapping phenomena such as migration, commercial sex, and modern day slavery” (Musto, 2009; 281). This opinion appears to further cast aspersion on the confidence by most Western authorities to conveniently ascribe a somewhat discrediting tag to the phenomenon as a case for public attention. Essentially, a debate proposes that most Western countries’ pattern of naming smuggled migrants who often become trafficking victims had

the effect of ignoring the economic reasons for which many choose to leave their homes (Buckland, 2008; Weitzer, 2013). Ignoring source country conditions by authorities could also indicate the betrayal of Western government biased socio-political emotions regarding understandings of human trafficking practice (see, O'Connell Davidson 2015; Kempadoo, 2016). O'Connell Davidson and Kempadoo often highlight the complexities inherent in the dominant discourse around human trafficking suggesting that discountenancing local structural factors while naming trafficking could be deliberate by authorities. The underlining contention is that the disregard for home country structural issues while determining how human trafficking should be understood and labeled is critical and worth reviewing. This is especially because of the overarching implication it has for understanding underlining factors and ensuring appropriate policy and practice response.

### ***2.6. Conflating Sex Trafficking with Prostitution by Western Dominant Perspective***

Most Western government institutions and prohibitionist feminist groups conflate sex trafficking with prostitution (see Kempadoo, 2016; Sanford et al 2016; Sutherland, 2004; Weitzer 2011). The media and a few scholars are also arguably guilty of this (Sanford et al 2016). Opposing arguments are rife against this dominant proclivity especially when ambiguities exist regarding drawing a demarcation between what is sex trafficking and what is not (Hume and Sidun, 2016). In other words, because “it may not be readily apparent whether a given case of commercial sex or labour exploitation is trafficking” (Hume and Sidun, 2016; p3), it could be morally unfair to be exact in equating both phenomena as one.

Meanwhile, certain arguments appear inclined towards what most pro-abolitionists (campaigning for the abolition of commercial sex work and all forms of slavery mostly in Western societies) often conclude that getting involved in prostitution is relatively an easier way to make good money especially by those migrants denied right to work by their immigration status (Brace, 200). Prostitution is also seen as an often quick option for those escaping from family rejection, and other female gender unfriendly tendencies in their countries (ibid). Therefore, it is convenient for politicians and abolitionists to see trafficking especially of women and prostitution as the same. But, is this enough to say that a case of sex trafficking is a case of prostitution? The contention in Kempadoo (2018) indicates that

prostitution and sex trafficking are two different phenomena, proposing that equating them only helps some global and Western governments and their allies to justify their action against trafficking. Valadier (2018) also present an argument which indicates that it is wrong to equate both, considering it as a conceptual error. Portraying sex trafficking and sex migration or sex work as equivalent contributes to reinforcing the stigmatisation and marginalisation of the subjects involved (ibid).

Again, emphasis on abuse and prostitution common to the dominant discourse of human trafficking as championed by most Western policy makers is seen as too selective and narrow a lens for understanding the phenomenon (O'Connell Davidson 2015; Kempadoo 2016). Government led opinion and campaigns in this respect are regarded as shaped by their immediate goal of ensuring national security and cohesion, and/or informed by a determination to abolish prostitution.

The argument against representing sex trafficking as prostitution may not be supported by some researchers (see, Salt 2000) who will agree with the dominant position of most Western governments and abolitionists that they both could go side by side. This forgoing contention remains significant in the subsisting debate surrounding the complex nature of the subject matter of human trafficking. Scholars have the difficult task of resolving the disagreement regarding drawing the line between human trafficking and prostitution. This will help in establishing the facts at least to make the job easier for policy makers and practitioners when planning effective responses. Understanding where the demarcation lies (which is still unclear for now), in order to properly grasp the issues involved (especially regarding dynamics of, and, contributors to, the practice) is partly the concern of this study.

### ***2.7. Dominant Perspective on Universality of Human Trafficking***

Despite acknowledged limitations in estimating its prevalence (see, Hughes, 2006; Roby et al 2008; Segrave et al, 2009; O'Connell Davidson, 2015), most Western governments (especially the United States of America) believe human trafficking is wide spread and affects all regions and segment of the world (Adams, 2015; Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2017). The US TIP reports on how women and children are trafficked mostly from countries in Africa, Asia South America and Eastern Europe to the West partly

suggests this. The European Union and its anti-human trafficking agencies like EUROPOL also alluded to this specific context.

Some academics seem to also agree with this dominant Western government and NGO's' claim on the wide spread and universal impact of the practice. Thipanyan (2015), who appears to concur with this view (especially concerning Africa), argued thousands of women from West Africa are trafficked to Western Europe for forced commercial sex work annually. Poundel and Shrestha (1999) who also acknowledged the universality of human trafficking linked earlier cases of it with women from Eastern European countries trafficked to Western European countries for comparative economic reasons. Bennet (1999) similarly talks about the global spread of the phenomenon mentioning high rates of sex trafficking in countries such as India, Bangladesh, Philippines, Cambodia and Thailand have been reported.

Some other researchers present arguments suggesting that migrant trafficking is a global problem impacting negatively every aspect of origin, transit and destination countries, (see, Bertone 2000; Salt, 2000). Similar arguments posit that human trafficking is a wide spread phenomenon arising from the ongoing globalisation in the sex industries (see, Hoque, 2008; Muroe, 2016). The core argument in this is that human and sex trafficking is often recognised from a dominant global perspective as a world-wide prevalent phenomenon with overarching implications for global security, safe borders, order and societal cohesion. This remains contested especially with the argued complexities inherent in the understanding of the phenomenon and its impact. The contention whether the above assertions about global prevalence is right or not represents an enduring topic for debate.

Claims by many Western governments concerning universal spread and impact of the problem are doubted (see, Castle et al 2014; Farrell and Farhy 2009). Increased reports about human trafficking are seen as a moral panic - a call for action by individuals and group scared that trafficking of persons – threatens the social order (Weitzer, 2007; also see O'Connell Davidson 2015; 2017; Kempadoo 2016). The use of 'moral panic' above may buttress the extent most Western government demoralise and demonise human trafficking, to win the war against it. Other arguments propose the over exaggeration of the matter, that

reported numbers do not represent realities on ground (Farrell and Farhy 2009; O'Connell Davidson, 2015); and that fewer victims of trafficking in persons have been identified in the US for instance, than estimates of the problem would predict (Banks & Kyckelhaha, 2011; Kessler, 2015). A lack of reliable data and a dependence on inadequate evidence could also be argued to result in an unsubstantiated estimation of the problem (Farrell, et al, 2013; McGough, 2013). Particularly contentions underscore realities that the large majority of cases often classified as trafficking in human beings by government and NGOs merely involve individuals who voluntarily actively wanted to move or sought job opportunities in another region or country (see, O'Connell Davidson's, 2015). Additional argument is that though isolated cases of individuals forced into exploitation could be acknowledged this may not be said to be enough to generalise the practice as a universal and widespread phenomenon that is total in impact.

O'Connell Davidson (2017) further states:

*It is true that in the contemporary world, some cases have been documented in which people have been snatched from home or street, forcibly moved across borders or to other regions of their home country, then brutally exploited. But if the term human trafficking was applied only to such cases, it would be a numerically small phenomenon, far removed from the estimates of hundreds of thousands or even millions that are routinely touted by state and non-state actors involved in anti-trafficking work (O'Connell Davidson, 2017;2).*

While the argument above did not deny recent documentation of a few cases of individuals forcibly taken out of their home abroad for exploitation; it draws attention to the fact that if the term human trafficking was applied to only those few cases it becomes very difficult to conclude that the practice is wide spread. This leaves more room for conceptual crisis and complexities while conceptualising the phenomenon as global. This also draws attention to the tendency for some authorities to arbitrarily report high figures regarding prevalent cases; which hardly represents realities. Could it then be argued that it is conceptually wrong to assume universality and totality of the problem as often maintained by some Western state

and non-state actors, or could they be right? This debate is however unending as we are faced with daily claims supporting the widespread prevalence of the phenomenon. This debate is pertinent to this study as it is partly its focus to understand the real issues regarding contributors, what counts as trafficking and by implication the true extent of spread and impact especially in (south-south Nigeria) West Africa.

### ***2.8. Human Trafficking, Exploitation, Conscriptio, Coercion and Violence: Contentions***

Most Western governments' claims on exploitation, conscription, luring, use of violence, and coercion of trafficking victims reflect the dominant perspective in conceptualisation and understanding of human trafficking. Though certain arguments put that such claims are only common with a few Western politicians, others reflect that many Western policy makers hold that those trafficked are lured, coerced and/or sometimes abducted from their countries taken across borders, exploited and abused (see, Roby 2005; Shelley 2010; US TIP, 2014). The US TIP (2014) document's claim of cases of "23 defendants who lured victims to the United States on false promises and used violence, threats and control over victims to compel them to engage in commercial sex act in United States" captures Western stereotypes. Other scholarly arguments too seem to be in agreement that trafficking involves victims being subjected to extreme violence and abuse, psychological manipulation, coercion and control over extended periods (see, Doherty and Morley 2016). This suggests that even some academics are not left out in the propagation of such dominant claims.

But the exploitation, coercion and violence claims appear contentious, unclear and unreal especially among some critical researchers (see Buckland, 2008; Kempadoo, 2017; O'Connell Davidson, 2016). The dominant Western views are indicated to have ignored the fact that such claims on luring, coercion conscription and exploitation leave rooms for further interpretations; and may have been too simplistic not taking into considerations the complexities involved while doing this. For example, many victims, as argued, do not usually see themselves as undergoing force and exploitation as often reported by some state actors and agencies. Many of them see themselves as beneficiaries of the benevolence of their so called traffickers (see, Kempadoo, 2017) as noted earlier. This indicates that it is difficult to simply conclude that such individuals are victims of coercion and exploitation; as

one argument puts it, “desperate people will resort to desperate measures” (Buckland 2008, p42). This could mean that many of those classified as victims of sex trafficking especially in Western countries, are ‘desperate’ migrants who may initially agree at home to go into prostitution. But what Buckland (2008) and Roby et al (2005) and others may have not considered, which may arguably be the case in many instances is that, many victims (or economic migrants) may only realise what actually awaits them at destination when they are forced into sex work for example. In line with this, irrespective of the process preceding human trafficking, many Western policy makers seem to place stress on the evils of the deception, right abuse, brutality, and exploitative conditions victims are believed to be subject to, whether the victims have the pre-knowledge of it or not.

A follow up argument however emphasised the need to understand that women and girls could exercise the agency to be involved in sex work even as illegal migrants (see, O’Connell Davidson, 2015 and Kempadoo, 2017). This corroborates argued reports regarding growing cases of voluntary migration for international prostitution (see, Roby, et al, 2009) especially from developing countries (e.g. in West Africa) to rich countries (e.g. in Europe). In this respect, arguments suggest that some structural forces (as hinted earlier) likely contributing to the agency often exercised by the so call victims that are supposed to be considered are often overlooked by authorities. These alluded structural conditions which are very compelling at source countries according to the argument are what should be focused on, rather than the issues of individualised criminal intentions, exploitation, and coercion linked to traffickers and illegal migrants. Particularly, contentions in O’Connell Davidson’s (2015) work are that the campaigns about exploitation, violence and victimisation of clandestine migrants by those who may have assisted them to destination are often not factual, but misconstrued, and shrouded in complexities and variability (also see, Kempadoo 2016).

Another canvassed viewpoint challenging the claim to the application of force and violence is that force and violence are particularly complex concepts themselves (O’Connell Davidson, 2015; Kempadoo, 2016); which could be contentious when applied to certain social experiences. The projection of the argument is that violence and the use of force is not strange and abnormal in societies as portrayed by the dominant perspective champions

regarding trafficking in persons. Reference is made to the existing legally authorised violent and physical beatings of labourers, members of the armed forces, wives and others (see, O’Connell Davidson, 2015). Many people in the world are argued to experience exploitation, domination and suffering only that the abolitionist and dominant Western government tendencies is to adopt a “highly selective lens” (ibid; p3) of viewing restraints on human freedom when it comes to human trafficking. What would make champions of the dominant perspective to identify some, but not other forms of injustices, violence and exploitation as slavery (see, O’Connell Davidson 2015), as some researchers would ask. It raises suspicion when only human trafficking is singled out for attention. Scholars may then be right to conclude that “human trafficking” only emerged as a focus of political and media concern following a change to an established global economic and political order (ibid).

#### *Human Trafficking and Economic Exploitation*

Victims of trafficking are regarded by most Western politicians to be subjected to severe ‘economic exploitation’ (see, Creig et al, 2007; O’Connell Davidson, 2015). Researchers with contrary views to the dominant discourse around “economic exploitation (sexual exploitation) of trafficked victims present a rather contending and complex frame of the issue. Scholars take state actors and abolitionist agencies to task on the complex concept of ‘economic exploitation’ (see, Creig et al, 2007; Kempadoo, 2016; O’Connell Davidson, 2015; 2003). O’Connell Davidson’s (2015) contention which particularly draws attention to these complexities, cannot reconcile the rationale behind seeing the practice as involving “severe economic exploitation” (and forced labour) with realities in the broader sense of it; this is especially with the problem inherent in clarifying what constitutes or does not constitute ‘economic exploitation’. With the absence of a global and political agreement on minimum employment rights, cross-national and cross sector laws regarding employment relations, it could be difficult to adopt a fair universal standard for measuring ‘economic exploitation’ (ibid).

The need to weigh what is socially constructed as acceptable employment practice in different countries and sectors is also canvassed (see, O’Connell Davidson 2016). The problem associated with determining where appropriate exploitation ends and inappropriate

exploitation begins on a continuum and in different context has also been identified. This debate perhaps aligns with the thinking that the popular definition common with the dominant discourse championed by politicians could not be classified as the type of definition that would be accepted by Marxist theorists for example, who will only see 'economic exploitation' as the gap between the price that attaches to a fair day's pay, and the value that is extracted from the workers labour-power (see, Reiman, 1987). Severe 'economic exploitation' should rather be seen as the complete absence of the payment of wages in a form that either covers only the most basic necessities for daily survival (O'Connell Davidson, 2015). The fact that wages are paid or not, does not really establish absence or presence of freedom, especially as slaves in earlier periods of history were sometimes paid wages (ibid).

Propositions are that instead of pointing to 'economic exploitation' in human trafficking, authorities should consider "the absence of an effective system of welfare protecting those whose access to labour markets (or credit market) has been curtailed by various legal and social barriers, which is capable of exposing vulnerable individuals to "the misery of being exploited by capitalists" (Robinson, 2006; 45). This indicates that a mass population of workers globally is exposed and vulnerable to exploitation and not just those migrants who (may) become victims of trafficking. In other words apart from clandestine migrants who are smuggled into destinations on a fee and arguably become subject to 'debt bondage', many other vulnerable population abound who are exposed to exploitative conditions by capitalists forces. This, as argued above, is the case especially when the existing social system does not look out for citizens' interest (ibid). Further argument is that 'economic exploitation' is not necessarily just a human trafficking issue (if at all) but an indication of an enduring global situation supported by most Western government, corporate, neo-liberal interests through which the free exploitation and abuse of working peoples' lives and labour subsists (Kempadoo 2017). Generally, policy makers and the abolitionist movements' campaign about economic exploitation therefore is seen as not more than a strategy to advance their concealed course and parochial agenda.

## ***2.9. Debt Bondage, Economic Exploitation and Human Trafficking***

On the issue of debt bondage and economic exploitation claimed by some Western politicians as common with human trafficking there are arguments to the contrary. Debt relations as argued can be valued especially by women and young girls either because they offer a kind of freedom from unwanted dependency on relatives, or because they allow the individuals to fulfill their social obligations to family members (O'Connell Davidson 2015). This sort of argument appears to justify that some cases of debt bondage may not entirely represent a case of 'man's inhumanity to man'. This could mean that those seen as "victims of trafficking" could see themselves as debtors working to repay their debt as noted earlier, but not as economically exploited people or under any form of bondage. Evidence to this has been referenced. This is in the case of women and young girls from West Africa, argued to have been involved in cross border sex work not just to escape economic challenges and structural dislocations, but an argument "by which to challenge and reconfigure existing gendered norms of 'femininity' and womanhood in the face of community pressure" (Pemunta 2011;p167). Such women and girls are argued to be happy with their condition while working for their sponsors or debtors in Europe. Particularly Nigerian Women and girls in sex work in Italy see this debt condition as a route to a cherished goal, wherein the madam/sponsor is considered "as potential benefactor rather than criminal, as hero rather than villain by the aspiring immigrants" (Cole and Booth, 2007; p73). In fact, Nigerian sex workers in Italy, do not see themselves as enslaved, or consider the debt they own as different from the one ordinary people incurred (see, Testai, 2008 interview). The question is that, how can the dominant perspective view the immigrants as victims of enslavement and debt bondage when those involved are fine with their experience or view it differently?

Even if it is granted that migrants (trafficked migrants) are economically exploited, submissions are that, the immigration laws in many Western countries that require "sponsorship" for a visa applicant predisposes migrants to exploitation (Anderson 2003). This situation makes migrants dependent on the sponsor for his/her freedom thereby exposing him/her to possible exploitation in any form. This is so as leaving the sponsor or employer as the case may be would have serious implication for his/her immigration status (ibid). Following this, it may be difficult for some Western state and non-state actors to hold

the issue of human trafficking, debt bondage and economic exploitation as purely due to the activity of some vicious traffickers or human smugglers while exonerating the role they play.

### ***2.10. Viewing Human Trafficking as Modern Slavery: Conceptual Complexities***

Most Western governments and institutions (apart from a few like Scotland's (Rigby, 2020)) conceptualise human trafficking as modern day slavery (see, Bales 2005; Child 2004; Miers 2003; Kempadoo, 2016; Sharapov, 2016; Smith 2007). The United Kingdom referred to human trafficking as one of the many guises of slavery around the world while commemorating the bi-centenary of the 1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade Act (Blair, 2006). Former Prime Minister Theresa May posited that the slave trade was not really abolished, but just changed its form arguing people are still been bought and sold in Coffee bars in airports, to work in farms and nail bars. She had announced her intention to introduce a modern slavery bill (see, O'Connell Davidson, 2015). The above assertion was not unclear regarding the fact that politicians unjustifiably perhaps consistently compare trafficking in persons to the abolished Trans-Atlantic slave trade (ibid). Further evidence to this was the determination by the British government to eventually introduce the Modern Slavery Bill to the legal books operating in most regions of the country. Also, the US Department of state considers trafficking in persons as modern day slavery that exists in virtually every country (McGough, 2013). To mention a few other instances, Western dominated organisations like the UNODC, European Police (EUROPOL), the United Nations High Commission for Human Right (UNHCHR), European Union (EU), and others construe the phenomenon as (modern) slavery, and a case of dehumanisation and right abuse. Specifically, UNODC (2019) claimed human trafficking is a grave violation against humanity emitting slavery.

In an alignment with the popular Western views, Kevin Bales (whose definition was considered earlier) estimated the number of modern day slaves around the world in 1999 and he is cited as a major personality who helped to launch the modern slavery campaign into the dominant discourse (Kempadoo, 2016). Similarly, McGough (2013; p1) captures a contextual argument stressing "150 years after the 13th Amendment abolished slavery and involuntary servitude, there are still men, women and children enslaved into labour and commercial sexual exploitation in the US". This connects assertions in Venkatrama (2003)

which reflects that slavery and trafficking in human beings are indistinguishable since they both grossly deny the dignity of victims. This draws attention to the propensity by stakeholders to equate human trafficking with ‘modern day slavery’ and sexual slavery because of the ‘exploitative condition of trafficked victims’ (ibid). It appears the argument indicates that it is justified for most Western government to see the act considered as human trafficking as a form of slavery for the reason of the exploitative conditions they face. But this may not be quite admissible especially with the disagreement among some academics regarding what could be classified as exploitation (slavery) (as discussed earlier above), and the credibility of the source of the information about the identified cases of exploitation (slavery) which government and their collaborators in this respect often rely on.

Generally, the justification of politicians and personalities like Bales to sustain the issue as modern slavery is challenged. The argument is that human trafficking cannot be equated with chattel slavery as it is premised on the ownership for life of one person by another (see, Kempadoo, 2016). Human trafficking is rather seen to be about the force or violence exerted by one individual or company towards another, through which the victims loses control of her or his life (ibid) and as such could not be likened to modern day slavery. Again, most cases of human trafficking (as hinted earlier) do not fit properly into the idea of slave as they are more fitting as situations of debt relations, with an individual working to repay a debt own another person (see, Kempadoo 2015). Moreover it could be contextualised that human trafficking is far less comparable to the type of slavery Africans experienced in the early centuries (Bahadur 2014), which is usually the standard for comparison by state and non-state actors.

Further incisive critical academic review of the classification of human trafficking as a modern slavery is also in the public space (See O’Connell Davidson 2015, 2016, 2017). The question is asked, “in the world where chattel slavery has already been outlawed everywhere, so that nobody anywhere is legally ascribed the status of ‘slaves’, what exactly do new abolitionist campaigners and their political supporters mean by the term modern slavery, and how are slaves and slave holders to be identified?” (O’Connell Davidson, 2016; p2). In the 2015 work titled, “The Margins of Freedom, Modern Slavery”, O’Connell Davidson’s arguments appear to disagree with equating human trafficking with modern

slavery for conceptual reasons. Looking at the author's standpoint, human trafficking does not deserve the emphasis it is often given let alone be equated with a new form of slavery. This however does not detract from the fact that some other researchers, like most policy makers, will continue to contend that the overarching impact of human trafficking as a sort of new form of slavery cannot be overlooked (Agbu 2003; Mancuso 2013; Musto 2009).

Also, while making the case against dominant discourse stronger, a perspective argues the need to understand the nature of labour exploitation that is inherent in the "old and modern forms of slavery" (O'Connell Davidson, 2015), which are seen as distinct. Proponents of this perspective rather would argue that slavery and wage labour in modern era can instead be said to be broadly equivalent, and not slavery and what is termed human trafficking. Here, slavery as it were, could even be said to be a more bearable form of exploitation than "wage slavery" that is operational in today's society (ibid); though most Western government and abolitionist groups will disagree with this position. The argument advanced indicates that both slavery and wage labour could be seen in terms of a "taken-for-granted and highly unequal power relation" (O'Connell Davidson, 2015; p186). In what appears an attempt to clarify the argument against equating human trafficking with modern slavery, categorical comparisons between "chattel and wage slavery" is further made:

*In the case of the former, slaves are acknowledged as dependents, and private slave-holders graciously provide for them as much as from cradle to grave, in exchange for which slaves can be expected to offer labour, obedience, and loyalty. In terms of wage slavery in contrast, that dependence is refused and wage slaves are left to fend for themselves in an extremely hostile environment. If they are too sick or too old to work, the only alternative to starvation is humiliation of public charity (O'Connell Davidson, 2015).*

The author's idea above tends to capture the distinction between a slave (trafficking victim or trans-Atlantic slave as the case may be) and a wage labour worker ("free workers" of contemporary times). In a way the author demonstrates that even the free wage earners are not free, and that it is conceptually wrong classifying recent practices that involve forced labour or sex as slavery. In the process, the author may have succeeded in highlighting the

fruitlessness of comparing human trafficking with slavery. The overarching contention is that the dividing line between slavery and freedom is unclear (O'Connell Davidson 2015, 2006) even in the contemporary world. The argument highlights the difficulty in establishing that distinction in contemporary times given that many people today experience force and coercion in legal work situations, and moreover, the difference between forced labour and poor working conditions is hard to determine (O'Connell Davidson, 2006).

From the forgoing it could be proposed that some Western politicians and the new abolitionist's interest in human trafficking matter is subjective and biased; and that the concept is often narrowly viewed especially by some state actors (Kempadoo, 2006: 2007). The argument is that politicians' sincerity could be doubted when they project that it is their desire to return their nation to order and sound convention while campaigning against "modern slavery". Also, other arguments disagree with the over-emphasis on the general impact of human trafficking without taking a holistic view of the issue (see, Kempadoo 2016; Weitzer 2013). The obfuscation of structural conditions and revitalization of imperialism in new forms in the dominant discourse around human trafficking as modern day slavery (Kempadoo, 2016) (partly noted earlier) is one issue that may need critical review.

Taking the debate further, though a few scholars like Chuang (2015) may agree with the realities of human trafficking but they disagree with equating it with 'modern slavery' on the grounds that the slavery makeover can limit how modern-day exploitation for profit is understood and responded to. This implies that, policy and practice may suffer in identifying true cases of human trafficking and applying appropriate response measure when it is simply equated with modern slavery. Another argument is that conflating trafficking (and forced labour) with slavery risks elevating the threshold for what human trafficking entails. Also, the slavery frame is argued to have only helped galvanise political support for modern anti-slavery campaigns with politicians and lobbyists pushing for the passage of anti-trafficking legislation creating the alarming nature of the problem (see, Chuang, 2015; Markon, 2007; O'Connell Davidson, 2015). It is seen as attempt to justify the existing policies on national security and the identification, apprehension, and criminal prosecution of trafficking perpetration (Farrell and Farhy 2009). This narrative arguably implies that

some Western governments' conceptions of human trafficking as a modern slavery-like practice could be informed by their national interest and political exigencies rather than objectivity and public morality.

Apart from the preceding contentions, there is the more fundamental and overarching debate which challenges the tendency by some Western forces to transfer the contemporary problem of slavery (modern slavery) to developing countries as the villains, thereby absolving dominant Western politicians from the complicity in sustaining contemporary conditions of exploitation, force and violence in global labour system (see, Kempadoo, 2017). Some Western state actors are also accused of ignoring entrenched global interdependence to conceptualise modern slavery as an issue rooted in the global south exonerating the dominant forces in the global north of their role in extreme exploitation of the poor countries (in Africa, South Asia, South America etc) and perpetuation of global socio-economic inequality (Mcgrath 2014).

The argument underlining the above assertions is that most Western elites' position regarding trafficking in person also demonstrates their tradition of representing the global south as the never-do-well region; who may have brought woes on themselves with the West appearing as their rescuer; even when it is evidenced that these Western political elites may have partly been responsible for that predicament of these developing countries. A critical submission is that most Western politicians tend to claim ignorance of the glaring affirmation of white masculinity and moral superiority (Kempadoo, 2016), which remains crucial in understanding and solving global challenges including human trafficking. This could further be debated as also indicating the complexities in understanding and explaining the real issues inherent in the conceptualisation of the phenomenon of human trafficking. This may also go to affect responses negatively. This also reflects the core of the conceptual frame work of this research which highlights the tension regarding the dominant Western construct of the phenomenon of human trafficking as embedded within the arena of criminality and the opposition construct which situates it in the realities of the existing local source country structural conditions that may be aftermath of global socio-economic inequality.

Overall, the major criticism against the dominant Western position is that many Western politicians and their allies appear inclined to present an account of human and sex trafficking that is over-individualised and tend to overlook source country structural issues which are paramount (O’Connell Davidson 2015; Weitzer, 2013). Many Western governments and institutions appear reactive, failing to consider issues, like post conflict economies, common to many source countries (CATRis, 2019). Also, there is the tendency by most Western politicians to view human trafficking as a partial consequence of illegal migrant flows and problems of border control (see, O’Connell and Davidson, 2003; Salt, 2000). Emanating from this therefore is a tendency towards excessive border security which scholars hold as further creating some level of vulnerability for migrants (see, Malloch and Rigby 2016; O’Connell Davidson 2015). This concurs with the argument that arguably excessive border controls, within the context of gross global inequalities (Barner, et al 2014; Hamilton-Smith, 2019) may precisely be what fuels illegal immigration and trafficking and not the way many Western governments understand the issue.

### **2.11. Dominant Global and Western Government Responses to Human Trafficking and Attendant Challenges**

Part of the global determination to respond to human trafficking was when more than 150 countries across the world signed the Palermo Protocol (UN, 2001). Article 3 of the protocol defines and identifies what human trafficking entails, (*see, article 3, UN, 2001*). Article 5 criminalises it (*see, article 5, UN, 2001*), setting the platform for statutory responses to the problem as a criminal conduct. These provisions may have reinforced local criminal codes across countries in dealing with human trafficking cases. The emergence of the trafficking in person protocol also sets in motion numerous international partnership efforts to combat the trafficking phenomenon. Most of these however, appear to offer limited anti-trafficking measures, with some aggravating the problem (see, Kempadoo, 2015 Malloch and Rigby, 2016; O’Connell Davidson, 2017).

Arguably, the United States of America and Europe with the United Kingdom lead the international response to human trafficking and the perceived challenges therein. The US Trafficking in Person project (US TIP) majorly combats the problem using multifaceted

instruments (*see*, Roby et al 2009; Weitzer 2006). The US passed the Trafficking Victims and Protection Act (TVPA) in 2010 (Stiles 2012). Further legislation aimed at increasing prosecutions and convictions of human traffickers, including two presidential directives providing for task forces and victim protection agencies have also been enacted (*see* Roby et al, 2009). The overall number of cases filed, defendants charged, and prosecuted, was reported to have risen rapidly within a decade after the first Act (*ibid*), and the US seems to have received some accolades for this (*see*, Hughes, 2006). On a global level, the United States' project does information gathering and surveillance of countries across the world (*see*, US TIP, 2018), monitoring their commitment to the fight. For example, the TIP (2015) monitoring and assessment report reprimands Nigeria, as a major source country of cross border trafficking (Onoiribholo, 2008; US Department of State, 2018), for not "doing enough" in the fight. The US Government also uses the TIP project to target technical support, resources on prevention, protection and prosecution programmes (TIP 2015). Recently, the US Department of State is seeing the need to emphasise the engagement of local communities in the fight against human trafficking (Johnstone, 2018).

But the US's approach appears defective because their attention focuses primarily on rescue and rehabilitation rather than effective prevention and well planned public awareness (Stiles, 2012). Most US anti-trafficking campaigns, only takes the form of professional training directly targeted at those who would most likely encounter trafficked individuals, mostly police officers with the sole duty of arrest (*ibid*). Years after passing the TVPA in 2000, the U.S. is still struggling to balance punishing traffickers and protecting victims (Roby, et al. 2008). Though rehabilitation is considered by scholars and practitioners as critical for an effective response strategy (*see*, Malloch and Rigby, 2016), only a fraction of the estimated victims are being reached and assisted for the purpose of rehabilitation by the US.

For Europe, the focused fight against trafficking was noticed in their Dublin meeting producing a comprehensive action plan with recommendations including realisable timelines for the work (Bertozzi 2009). The high-level group report on organised crime from the meeting, first examined by the Justice and Home Affairs Council in April 1997, identifies six main courses of action. These include:

*(1) Effectively implementing instruments already adopted; (2) cultivating practical cooperation and, where necessary, approximating or harmonising legislation; (3) improving judicial cooperation by bringing it to a level comparable to that of police cooperation; (4) enhancing the role of Europol; (5) securing closer cooperation with third countries and international organisations; and (6) further developing instruments of prevention (Bertozi, 2009;p8).*

With this, European leaders project to deter activities of cartels including human traffickers, limit and possibly eliminate opportunities to convert the proceeds of their illicit activities into licit financial spheres (ibid). How well Europe has succeeded with the above causes of action remains in the realm of debate. However, Global bodies like UNODC, EUROPOL UNHCR, EU, ILO, IOM and others are often backed by Western nations, mostly in Europe, to fight trafficking. Poor countries are funded to enable them join in the war (see, NAPTIP, 2014). Also, the EU tends to make as part of her common agenda the reduction of push factors for irregular migration (EU 2015) which authors however largely criticised as poorly implemented (see, CATRis, 2019; Malloch and Rigby, 2016).

Most European countries are signatories to the various international and regional legal frameworks including protocols and conventions. The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (CECAT) which sets out measures aimed at preventing trafficking in human beings and prosecuting offenders, is one. Europe's appeals to states via CECAT Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims; and the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012–2016 are some other important frameworks. Although Member States' implementation of the CECAT Directive so far has reflected shortcomings, the directive entails "adoption of a comprehensive integrated approach that focuses on human rights and on the victims, and gender-specific. It is expected to have considerable impact, once fully transposed by the Member States by 6 April 2013" (EU, 2012). It does not only focus on law enforcement "but also aims to prevent crime and ensure that victims of trafficking are given an opportunity to recover and to reintegrate into society (ibid)". On the face value this appears good and commendable, but in terms of practice implementation,

this and many other measures tends to face limitations (see, Edward 2012; Jahic and Finkenauer 2005; Malloch and Rigby, 2015).

Some arguments however posit CECAT provides genuine protection to victims of trafficking and ensures their human rights are safeguarded (Rigby et al, 2012). Also, the 2012 European Union (EU) Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings was seen as helping to give the region's response a boost. This updated the 2005 EU Action Plan on best practices, standards and procedures for combating and preventing trafficking in human beings. It is also seen to have fared well (European Commission Home Affairs 2015 report). The commission's new Directive on trafficking in human beings mandates EU States to set up a 'National Rapporteur' responsible for monitoring the implementation of anti-trafficking policy at national level (ibid). Many EU Member States including the UK, are argued to have complied with the EU/CECAT Directive since 2011 (Malloch and Rigby, 2016).

Meanwhile the UK launched their national official response plan, called 'The UK Action Plan on Tackling Human Trafficking', in 2007 calling the practice "an abhorrent crime" (Reid and Jamieson, 2007). Scotland, in the UK, has consolidated the bulk of their anti-trafficking acts into a single act called Human Trafficking & Exploitation Scotland Act 2015 (Scottish Government, 2016), for effectiveness. What difference the launch of the UK Action plan and the consolidation of the Scotland's anti-trafficking acts have made since they took effect remains within the sphere of contestation.

However, the UK's action plan and the seeming attached seriousness to the fight may have facilitated the emergence of quasi-governmental groups and activities within the country helping to tackle the problem. Among these is the formation of the Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group (ATMG) in 2009 (see, ATMG 2012). This involves a coalition of nine UK base groups including Child Pornography and the Trafficking of Children for Sexual purposes (ECPAT); Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance of Glasgow Community and Safety Services (TARA); and others (ibid). Researchers' argument clears that this is an indication of a coordinated collective national effort to respond to human trafficking in the country. Previous approaches and models may have appeared uncoordinated (Laird, 2016).

The ATMG monitors UK's compliance with the EU convention's expectations (*see* ATMG 2012). The effectiveness of ATMG's monitoring role could also be a subject for debate especially as it appears nothing has really changed according to some critics of Western perspective like O'Connell Davidson, Weitzer, Kempadoo, and others as will be seen in the following sections.

Despite the above noted responses, the UK and some other Western government seem not to have done enough in responding to trafficking (*see*, Edwards 2012). Arguments indicate most of the UK's measures focus on short term consequences (Jahic and Finkenauer 2005). There is also the problem with the UK like many other Western authorities concentrating more on prosecution than protection and prevention of victims, which limits effective long term responses to the problem (Edwards 2012). The UK's efforts towards adopting a human rights approach for vulnerable migrants are overtaken by law enforcement and border control preferences (Malloch & Rigby 2016). Against the current situation, the UK is presented with the option of committing to the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA)'s recommendation on the need to establish a comprehensive framework for dealing with the problem (Laird 2016).

Generally, most global and Western government responses' impact on reducing the problem is doubted. Most global and Western government responses demonstrate unclear understanding of factors contributing to and facilitating the trade (Gozdziak 2008; Omelaniuk 2005; Rafferty 2007). Owing to shortcomings in responses very little is said to be known about the prevalence of trafficking (Clawson et al 2009; O'Connell Davidson, 2015; Weitzer, 2014). The unreliable methods and standards for measuring the prevalence of trafficking in persons as well as accounting for cases by the Western government and some scholars remains subject of debate (Kempadoo, 2016; O'Connell Davidson, 2015). Bales, for instance, whose pioneer presentation on the total number of modern slaves around the world has become controversial has come under serious criticism on this account. The philosophy behind the identified issue of unreliable and unverifiable method of determining human trafficking cases is that this could seriously affect the foundation of effective response.

As reviewed earlier, a major global effort in the direction of legislative enactment to check trafficking is glaring. But despite these policy developments, responses to acclaimed victims and perpetrators have been limited and ineffective (Malloch & Rigby 2016) in view of their inherent conceptual shortcomings. Also, Western government, especially US anti-trafficking policy thrust is argued to be overly focused on using victims as law enforcement tools rather than assisting them based on their victim status, deterring victims from reporting cases (Roby et al 2008). This could be debated to have the inherent capacity to limit access to genuine victims there by affecting target oriented effective and comprehensive response.

Though most regional conventions and agreements like the CECAT specify salient measures against re-trafficking in their books, but adherence to it appears modest (Roby et al 2008). This is another critical aspect in effective response as conditions enabling re-trafficking can potentially aggravate the problem. Beyond that, the implementation of EU policy is seen as narrowly projected as a result make limited impact (Cholewinski, 2001). The EU governments are criticised on the way they treat trafficked victims. Researchers particularly question the right violations associated with the anti-trafficking and anti-immigration policies of most Western governments (see, O'Connell Davidson, 2015). Though most EU states agreed on need for compassionate rescue action (needed to safeguard economic migrants from being trafficked), many also appear reluctant to accommodate incoming migrants (Malloch and Rigby 2016), and do not commit to safe guiding their human rights. This is demonstrated by opting instead, for increased border surveillance and control which are in most cases very brutal (see, O'Connell Davidson, 2015; Kempadoo, 2016). (More on right violations and abuse involved in most Western government response options is reviewed in later sections).

However, the claimed clandestine nature of activities of syndicates and the difficulty in identifying victims are thought to hinder government responses (Cwikel and Hoban 2005; Pennington, et al., 2008). This may have further goes to evident that the claim about the wide spread of trafficking in person may be debatable. This also shows that handling the issue of trafficking in person by most Western governments is on a negative and confused note as argued by scholars (see, O'Connell Davidson, 2003, 2015, 2016; Kempadoo, 2006, 2016; Weitzer, 2007).

## ***2.12. Dominant Global and Western Government Responses and Criminalisation***

Beyond seeing human trafficking as slavery, global and mostly Western policy makers see it more as a crime (Anderson & O'Connell Davidson 2003). For example, as mentioned earlier in the introduction chapter, UNODC (2019) insists human trafficking is a serious crime. Western government reports therefore position trafficking within a framework of crime control and prevention (Anderson & O'Connell Davidson, 2003; Chuang, 2006). Most global and Western governments naturally opt for criminalisation as a preferred way of responding or better still tackling the problem perhaps for political, moral and other reasons. The Palermo protocol sets the platform for compelling governments to legislate trafficking acts into their criminal code. Article 5 of the protocol according to UNODC (2019) "requires that the conduct sets out in article 3 be criminalised in domestic legislation".

Law enforcement in the United States sees all irregular migrants smuggled or trafficked as criminals until proven to be a victim of exploitation (Musto, 2009). Victims of sex trafficking are also sometimes criminalised because commercial sex is illegal in many countries of the West (Barnard, 2014), and they may be subject to prosecution without their victim status being identified or recognised. Recently, the US Department of State insists source countries' governments like that of (Nigeria), Cambodia and Thailand need to intensify the application of criminal laws in fighting the challenge (Blackburn et al, 2010). Such countries face sanctions failure to adhere to this US directive.

Global and Western positions on the criminalisation of human trafficking are susceptible to criticism (Kidane, 2011; McRedmond and Wylie 2010; O'Connell Davidson 2015). The intensification of criminal laws, border controls and the interception of illegal migrants without offering a genuine solution to the problem of trafficking in persons by most Western government, seems to have created further challenges (Buckland, 2008). This criminalisation processes are believed to even worsen the situations those branded as victims eventually find themselves. Defining the problem as crimes anti-populist perspectives argue, diverts attention from social conditions such as inequality, poverty, or racism that appear more difficult to solve. A similar argument holds that framing social problems as crimes

only help in securing public support and prompting swift governmental responses without addressing the honest issues (Jenness & Grattet, 2004; Hollinger & Lanza-Kaduce, 1988; Chambliss, 1994; Potter & Kappeler, 1998; Rafter, 1990). Further debate particularly puts that “connecting trafficking in persons to broader criminal justice and national security threats in US”, for example “only serve the excuse to ensure urgency with which officials respond to cases” (Farrell and Fahy, 2009, p617). Considering it as an “organised crime” has also been questioned especially when those involved are often individuals and in minority cases a few detached group (Weitzer, 2014). Notwithstanding the above criticisms, trafficking legislation is now in place in the criminal codes of most developed and developing countries globally (O’Brien 2015).

The paradox and complexities inherent in most Western governments’ response approach emphasising criminalisation are put in clearer perspective. For instance, most liberal democratic Western states committed to combating modern day slaves in the form of human trafficking, are equally engaged in depriving migrants of their freedom (O’Connell Davidson, 2016) which could also be seen as criminal and right abuse. In essence, while trying to stop human trafficking, government restricts human freedom enacting sanctions on other forms of legitimate movement which invariably produces the same result as the criminalised trafficking practice. With this, it appears government action is only to “preserve and extend state powers and not to acknowledge and protect all humans as persons of equal moral worth” (O’Connell Davidson, 2016; 59). More on this is reviewed in the following section.

#### *Issues with Criminalising and Immoralising Human Trafficking in Responses*

As seen earlier, one of the main features in the dominant discourse of human trafficking is the criminalising and immoralising of the practice by state actors and abolitionist groups (see, Kempadoo, 2016; O’Connell Davidson 2015). Attempts to prevent unauthorised migration often involve the indiscriminate criminalisation and immoralisation of migrants and those who assist them (O’Connell Davidson, 2016). Though this may be inevitable in view of state’s right to regulate migrant flow into their territory, but it will be viewed as misplaced when considering human rights (O’Connell Davidson, 2015). An ensuing

argument is that commitment to criminalisation or immoralisation resulting in tight border restrictions side by side reductions of the opportunity for legal and safe migration can only create conditions for lucrative exploitation (ibid).

Moreover, certain clarifications reflect that not all those who promise help to clandestine migrants are vicious gangsters or immoral criminal elements and that not all collect money to assist the migrants (see, Grants 2014). References are to altruistic organisations like the “las Patronas” who help migrants crossing from Mexico to the United States with food and water; the “No More Death” organisation who also support clandestine migrants moving across the desert to the United States with food, water and information as they are seen as miserable people (Grant 2014; also see, Albahari, 2006). These groups, as argued help migrants on humanitarian and charitable purposes. Cases have also been cited of some individuals (smugglers) who of course often charge fee to help clandestine migrants to cross to their destination but are not tricky or abusive (see, Albahari 2006; O’Connell Davidson 2015). Other argument against the dominant claims regarding criminal or sinister tendencies, is that some that assist migrants into other countries with a fee are themselves facing the same challenge the migrants they help are going through, as they themselves are poor (see, Keo, 2013; O’Connell Davidson, 2015); and may not fit for the identity of a criminal or abusive personality (either as a smuggler or trafficker).

However, though some arguments as presented in Kempadoo (2017), O’Connell Davidson (2015), Grants (2014) may have problem with the dominant perspective responding to human trafficking as modern slavery emanating from immoral criminal inclination, the fact remains that the phenomenon is often largely regarded globally to be criminal. But the issue is that, the fact that the phenomenon of human trafficking is considered condemnable does not mean that some state actors may have not adopted the wrong response approach in handling the problem. More on authors’ views regarding most Western governments’ response style to trafficking in person particularly concerning the issues of right abuses will be reviewed below.

### ***2.13. Dominant Western Government Responses, Human Right Abuses and Counter Roles***

Though most Western governments and their allies fight human trafficking especially because of the human right abuse that is perceived associated with it, authors argue they are also guilty of right abuse of migrants, as hinted earlier. Many Western and global governments' responses to human trafficking involve institutional gross abuse of human right of most migrants (see, O'Connell Davidson, 2016). Arguments posit that migrants in many Western countries are usually disallowed freedom of movement with many facing brutal police and immigration officers' anti-migrants action in the name of checking human (sex) trafficking. Many genuine migrants face immigration detention, denial of basic rights, forceful deportation and repatriation, with state actors "sustaining a flourishing industry in the prevention and control of human mobility (ibid;59).

Often times migrants authorised into territories of some Western countries by state agencies are "denied fully socially recognized personhood" except when they are ready to let go their right, privileges and freedom (Davidson, 2016; 13). Apart from been a clear case of violation of human rights and denial of freedom of movement this singular act could further make migrants vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation by syndicates. In fact the economic value extracted from immigration detainees, the state-authorized restraints on irregular migrants' rights and freedoms and the violence against them in the name of response to human trafficking by some Western states amount to slavery and not only what they claim victims of trafficking go through (ibid). This situation could negate most Western governments' claim of commitment to effective response and fight against right abuse which they say human trafficking victims suffer.

The above situation depicts that the state and the police of most Western countries are not allies and saviours (as often claimed by the dominant Western perspectives) but rather enemies of migrants who are potential victims of exploitation (Bernstein 2007). Most Western responses in this respect appear to transfer responsibility for slavery from structural factors and dominant institutions to individual deviant men (ibid) there by finding excuses to restrict the movement of suspected migrants at borders, subject them to various criminal checks and abuse their rights in the process (see, O'Connell Davidson, 2016). However, the

issue remains a complex one especially with conflicting ideas by most Western state actors, non-state actors, the media and critical academics. One could also say there is a confusion of existing ideas regarding understanding of the phenomenon and responses. This, couple with the situation on ground especially at local source country like south-south Nigeria is part of the grounds for investigation in this study.

#### **2.14. Summary**

Under this chapter, the question of definitional disagreement, ambiguity and acceptability which are considered as potential challenges to conceptualisation and understanding for the purpose of effective response to the problem were raised. Having presented some documented push and pull factors of the problem; it was clear that there appears to be some degree of agreement in academic discourse regarding what constitutes push and pull factors of sex trafficking but the challenge is whether practice responses are informed by the same knowledge and how well these have been applied in official response. From the chapter there appears to be a gap between the academic evidence which seems to be fairly consistent on contributing factors, and the official construction and response to the problem. Regarding the dominant global and Western conceptualisation and response, the conclusion in the section is that the dominant Western framings leave much to be desired and raise questions of political biases and sentiments which potentially affect effective response. It was made clear that criminalisation and an emphasis on border control for instance, may detract from understanding broader structural issues constraining migrants who may become victims or offenders. In view of critics' positions, the section also concluded that there appears to be misrepresentation and over-emphasis of the issue of human trafficking especially with available records of actual reported cases of victims and prosecution of offenders. The section also highlights the issue of right abuse of potential traffickers and victims even by most liberal Western governments in the process of responding to human trafficking. Finally the section argued the complexities and confusion of ideas regarding the whole issue of conceptualisation, understanding of the problem and response to human (sex) trafficking which leaves much to be desired.

## Chapter Three

### 3.0. Political and Socio-economic Issues in Nigeria

This chapter takes a look at issues that are not necessarily directly connected with sex trafficking, but concern political and socio-economic characteristics of Nigeria. These issues are also generally relevant in this research as they capture the background to the existing situation on the ground in Nigeria, where sex trafficking victims (women and girls) live pre trafficking to Europe and upon return.

#### 3.1. Brief Socio-political Profile of Nigeria

Nigeria today is Africa's most populous nation operating a federal structure with 36 states, over 250 ethno-linguistic groups that speak approximately 400 languages (Okonofua, 2013; Perkins and Stembridge, 1979; Sagay, 2008). Nigeria became a single political entity in 1914 (Ezeji-okoye, 2009; Okonofua, 2013) after the landmark amalgamation of the northern and southern parts of the country by the British colonial government. It is contended that the colonialists originally brought both sections together for commercial purposes, but some say it was for administrative convenience (Ezeji-Okoye, 2009). Nigeria attained independence on October 1, 1960 (see, Temitope, 2013) and had its first representative government in 1963. There are some thoughts that the colonialists should have stayed rather than allowing the Africans the right to self-determination because of the post-independence multifaceted challenges which the country faced. The terrible start of the Nigerian state immediately after independence has been a cause for regret for many commentators (see Achebe 2012).

*“Nigeria was a cesspool of corruption and misrule. Public servants helped themselves freely to the nation’s wealth. Elections were blatantly rigged. The subsequent national census was outrageously staged-managed; judges and magistrates were manipulated by the politicians in power. The politicians themselves were pawns of foreign business interests” (Achebe 2012; 51).*

As early as the first six years after independence challenges of political corruption, ethnic consciousness, and an emerging monopoly on power associated with certain

ethnic/political/tribal elite-powers were already visible. Following independence, doubts about the union became fierce especially with the persistent tension arising from ethnic and religious rivalry (Okonofua, 2013). The British are accused of bequeathing the country with a fragile geo-political foundation as they forged together inconsistent elements without creating clear normative standards capable of enabling enduring bonds (Ijomah, 1988; Okonofua, 2013). The British are also attacked for first, sowing the seed of ethnic/sectional discord in the country by imposing the Hausa-Fulani leadership hegemony on the rest of the country and secondly for balkanizing the southern part of the country for administrative economic exploitation purposes while the northern region was left untouched (Crowder 1978; Omoruyi 1999). This precedence seems to be the bedrock of the myriad of problems affecting the country till this moment (Ezeji-okoye, 2009; Okonofua, 2013).

While struggling for independence, the leaders appeared collectively nationalistic, exuding a sort of right-wing socio-political attitude and united in goal. Regional socio-political interest became order of the day post-independence (Achebe, 2012; Aghedo and Osuma, 2013; and Okonofua, 2013). National party politics became fractionalised along regional and sectional lines. This seems to have laid the foundation for the enduring socio-political instability in the country. The formation of parties around the three major ethnic groups in the country (Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba), during the country's first republic reflects the ethnic and sectional divide the new nation was already engrossed in then. These ethnic and sectional cleavages, which caused institutional political infractions in politics (Okonofua, 2013), were seen as the prelude to the national crisis as witnessed in the 1963 general elections; the first national census; the first coup in January 1966; the pogrom; and the 1976 civil war which almost disintegrated the country.

The Nigerian state presently seems to be more embroiled in the challenge of national integration and development with the political and ruling class argued to have deepened disharmony among the people (Adebooye, 2019; Okpaga, 2011). In addition to the existing mutual suspicion among ethnics and regions, there is a seriously tense ethno-religious and sectional division along the Muslim north and the Christian south (Okonofua, 2013). The Boko Haram insurgency in the north-east which has claimed thousands of lives and made many destitute; the militancy in the Niger Delta which seems to have simmered but is still

potentially brewing; the Fulani herdsmen/Meddle belt land owners constant clashes which have left many dead and displaced; the persisting agitation for Biafra Republic which started about 43 years ago; the constant voting pattern along sectional and ethnic lines; posture of antagonism by the various ethnic groups against decisions of leaders who are not of their ethnic extractions; all have traces of ethnic and religious biases. The most recently and current is the contending issues of restructuring the nation and the need for a new national constitutional conference to renegotiate the country's union which has also arguably further divided the people along sectional and religious lines (see, Abbas and Wakali, 2017; Udumbana, 2017).

### **3.2. Poverty in Nigeria**

Poverty is defined as pronounced deprivation to wellbeing (Giddens and Sutton 2013). This corroborates the United Nations' construction of the concept of poverty which could be summarised to mean, denial of choices and opportunity; a violation of human dignity; lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society; not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having access to credit and needs (Ucha 2010). In October, 2015 the World Bank updated the international poverty line to \$1.90 from the former \$1.25 a day (Labada, 2015). Countries across the world are often delineated using economic conditions as defined by the World Bank as measurement with those in Africa, including Nigeria belonging to the poor underdeveloped categories.

#### *Dimensions of Poverty in Nigeria*

According to World Economic Forum, Nigeria is the headquarters of the world's extreme poor (Omokri, 2018). About 87 million Nigerians are extremely poor (World Economic Forum, 2018) out of the country's 195 million people (National Population Commission (NPC) of 2009 updated figures). This is based on the World Bank's \$1.90 per day poverty line benchmark. This argument may however be subject to debate especially as the method for measuring this may not be reliable. In Nigeria, widespread and severe poverty is a reality that depicts a lack of food, clothes, education and other basic amenities (Uchia 2010). The situation progressively grew worse since 1990 (Ugoh and Ukpere 2009). Only 15 per cent of Nigerians were poor by independence in 1960 (NBS 2002-2012). Poverty rates in

Nigeria increased from 27.2 per cent in 1980 to 42.7 per cent in 2004 and furthered to 65.6 per cent in 2010. While the 27.2 per cent in 1980 equals 17.7million persons, in 2010, 112.5million persons were found to be poor (Ogbeide and Agu 2009; UNDP, 2009). This was when the World Bank's \$1.25 per day poverty line benchmark was used. The current situation is worse with the country's poverty rate now 60% (NBS, 2018), in view of what this equals in terms of population and in respect of a global comparison.

Unemployment rate, a critical marker of poverty, was also presented by NBS in Nigeria, to have increased from 2.3 per cent in 1980, to 18.1 per cent in 2000, dropped to 11.8 per cent in 2004 but rose to 21.1 per cent in 2010 and about 25 per cent in 2012. A recent 2015 second quarter (Q2) report shows total number of jobs created in the economy was 141,368, a 70 percent decline from 469,070 jobs created in the first quarter 2015 and also 45.5 percent decline against the position in corresponding quarter of 2014 (Anaeto, 2015). This indicates that the country is among the least developed nations in the world with millions of unemployed young people potentially exposed to exploitative situations.

Nigeria's problem is not necessarily outright national poverty as portrayed above, but inequality and uneven distribution of wealth (Adebajoko and Uguoke. 2014). Income inequality remains on the increase in the country (Ajisafe, 2016). The gap between the extreme rich and the extreme poor is very wide (Adebajoko and Uguoke. 2014). The recent inequality rate was 157 over 157 (NBS, 2018), ranked among other countries of the world. This means the country is about the least equal nation globally. Nigeria, from available indices, is rich in people, agricultural resources, land resources, and natural gas (NBS, 2016), as can be see regarding the oil wealth mentioned. Over 250 billion dollars has been earned since the 1970s from the exploration of oil resources (Ugiagbe and Osunde, 2015), yet no difference can be spotted with regards to better living standard of the masses and overall development of the nation (ibid), while a few get richer (Adebajoko and Uguoke. 2014).

Poverty in Nigeria could be viewed from a broader contextual perspective. Nigeria with her huge population (NBS, 2018) has a quite complex society. The country's diversification in terms of region, climate, and ethic leanings, reinforced by distinct historical and socio-

economic legacies (Ugiabe & Osunde, 2015) is believed to be a clog. The country's tumultuous political evolution, often with sudden changes in government leading to cases of economic and social policies abandonment, is capable of negatively further impacting income distribution and the economic conditions of the people (ibid). The exploitation of the country's oil resources and the handling of the great oil windfall of the 1980s and 1990s arguably dominated the progress and decline of the nation's economy in the last few decades. This appears to have also critically impacted the evolution and perception of poverty in the country aside other structural issues of a corrupt political environment and others. The country's economy is majorly dominated by a large rural and mostly agricultural based traditional sector involving about two-thirds of the poor population, a smaller urban, capital-intensive sector which has benefited mostly from the exploitation of the country's resources in connivance with key actors of successive governments (see, Obadan, 1997).

#### *General Contributors to Poverty in Nigeria*

A set of internal factors has been suggested as contributors to poverty in Nigeria. This includes unemployment (especially among young graduates), corruption (particularly among politicians), non-diversification of the economy, income inequality, laziness and poor education system (see, Uchia, 2010). Unemployment, in Ucha's views is most critical as a cause of poverty. A critical point in Ucha (2010) observation is the fact that the rich oil industry does not employ a sizable number of unskilled workers, thereby contributes little to the reduction of poverty. Another important suggestion as to drivers of poverty in the country is the refusal to diversify the economy from oil and gas, and to invest in improvements in health and education (Garcia et al 2006), whilst rural areas and remote regions fail to benefit from any economic stimulus (Canagarajah and Thomas 2001).

Another argument is that poverty, especially in the oil rich Niger Delta (south-south), could be a function of the sharp contrast between the rich and the poor (Ford 2007). The argument suggests the strong presence and effect of inequality and uneven distribution of wealth in the country and the South-south region (also see, Ajisafe, 2016). A corollary to this is that external factors like the impacts of globalisation are considered as critical in explaining poor

conditions in the country (see Nnadi 2008). For instance, the effects of the impact of globalisation in the country are seen in inequality, low development, the entrenchment of a social underclass and decline of foreign direct investment (Ucha 2010).

Also, external factors like challenges of debt-burden (Ugoh and Ukpere, 2009) are often canvassed. The country still struggles with external debt burden even as it heads towards another round of debt trap after the 2005 Paris club exemption (Central Bank of Nigeria (NBS, 2019; CBN, 2019). The country's debt has risen from 11.28 billion dollars in June 2015 to 21.6 billion dollars in September 2018 (CBN, 2019). The current 109% rise in debt profile is certainly inimical to progress in the country and can worsen poverty condition for the people (ibid). Fundamentally, poverty here could also be seen as the manifestation of the existing global economic inequalities (Gunder Frank 1967; Matunhu, 2011).

### **3.3. Corruption and Poverty in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, Corruption is the norm and a cultural phenomenon (Agbu, 2003; Olaleye-Oruene, 1998; Onuoha, 2011). The global perception of Nigeria as home of corruption has been put into historical context, with scholars seeing it as the vestige of a colonial legacy (Olaleye-Oruene 1998). Presently corruption is argued to saturate the political space, civil service and private transactions. Corruption is blamed for the country's poverty because both are organically related (Chigbo, 2011; Ngwube, and Okoli, 2013). The contention is that corruption causes poverty through constraining economic growth (Chetwynd 2003). Political corruption leads to the ineffective use, and 'diversion' of state budgets, while money is increasingly laundered from the country abroad (Chigbo 2011; Olaleye – Oruene 1998; Ajisafe, 2016).

Corruption in Nigeria is posited as a function of inadequate empowerment of citizens to participate in the political and economic process which makes them unable to hold political and public actors accountable for their actions (Onuoha 2004). The danger is victims of corruption themselves soon become corrupt (Frisch 1994). Apart from poverty, corruption appears to have promoted so many social ills in Nigeria (Ajisafe, 2016). This includes human trafficking which comes with many other corrupt practices like passport falsification,

visa racketeering, immigration violations and kidnappings (Carling, 2005; Okojie, *et al*, 2003; Temitope, 2013).

### **3.4. Mismanagement of Oil Resources and Poverty in (Niger-Delta) South-south Nigeria**

Oil has been the main stay of the Nigerian economy since the late 60s (Akilo, 2012; Igbinovia, 2014; Ogri, 2001; Tobor, 2016). The country by 2012 as argued had about 37.2 billion barrels in reserves (2.13% of global production, and 3.1% of global reserves), and was among the top 10 oil producers in the world (Akilo, 2012). Oil output production and product contribution has steadily progressed over the decades (*ibid*). From 1.9 million barrels in 1958, the daily average production alone in 2018 was put at about 2.019 million barrels (Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), 2018). Till date, crude oil export value accounts for about 80% of Nigeria's total earnings (NBS, 2016; Anele and Omoro, 2012; Igbinovia, 2014), with the Niger-Delta (south-south) region the sole area where exploration is carried out. About 11 multinational oil corporations operate in about 159 oil fields and in 1,481 oil wells in Niger-Delta (Agbonifo, 2009). This natural endowment which supports prosperity in other climes causes misfortune for Nigeria and her people with wide spread poverty and underdevelopment in the country (see, Abraham, and Olure-Bank, 2018; Amadi and Abdullah, 2012; Dokpesi and Igbinomwanhia, 2010).

The NNPC, the country's organisation overseeing the management of the crude, is argued to be corrupt (Olufemi, 2015). Generally, the argument is that the accumulative tendencies of the Nigerian state actors opened the region to foreign exploitation, with limited efforts to ensure effective regulation between multinational companies and the region (Ikelegbe, 2001). Due to exploitative activities of the multi-nationals, the people of the region face environmental degradation, poverty, oppression and abuses (Adejumobi, 2000). In what seems the first Niger-Delta oil-related civil protestation Adaka Boro's Niger-Delta Volunteers (NDVS) reacted to this perceived marginalisation and exploitation of the people in 1966 (Oluniyi, 2017). This occasioned the declaration of Niger-Delta republic in February 1966 which the national government squashed. This was followed by the Ken Saro-Wiwa led Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) which was also crushed by the country's military government in 1992 (also see, Oluniyi, 2017). The sustained absence

of feasible institutional and financial mechanisms to tackle the ugly situation may have provided the basis for more recent militancy by agitators in the region (Ondukun, 2001). The fiscal centralisation made possible by the country's federal system is also argued to have contributed to excluding the owners of the land bearing the oil wealth from enjoying the gains.

According to UNDP (2006), the people suffer grave infrastructural deficit with only 20 to 24 percent of rural communities in the region having access to drinkable water; about 80 percent of the communities without electricity; lacking in access to health care facilities; and lacking good primary and secondary schools for their children to attend (Dokpesi and Igbinomwanhia 2010). The survey by Dokpesi and Igbinomwanhia (2010) (which includes this researcher (Igbinomwanhia) as co-author) indicates scanty efforts by government, through successive interventionist bodies, to provide infrastructures and amenities in the area often fail with many abandoned projects across the region (ibid). The latest agency - the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), charged with attaining the development of the region is yet to make a significant impact (ibid). Many in the region are therefore starkly poor in the midst of plenty (Bniyat et al, 2008; Dokpesi and Igbinomwanhia, 2010) exposing them to exploitative practices as they migrate to more prosperous Western countries responding to better economic opportunities (Hughes 2006).

### **3.5. Patriarchy, Social Exclusion of Women and Poverty in Nigeria**

Patriarchy and social exclusion of women emphasise gender inequality which means widely shared expectations and norms within a society about appropriateness in male and female behavior, characteristics and roles (Grupta 2000). This is encapsulated in the social and cultural construct that sets women apart from men which defines modes of interaction between men and women. Gender inequality also depicts the apparent commonality in the relations between male and female in terms of roles in power sharing, decision making, division of labour and remuneration on labour both at home and in the work place (Idyorough 2008).

The marginalisation of women in South-south Nigeria especially among the Bini people contributes to people living in poverty due to inherent limitations and obstacles (Ugiagbe et

al 2011). This reinforces the potential to narrow the choices and options accessible by women of the area in diverse aspects of life and constrains their ability to partake in or benefit from socio-economic development (Aina, et al., 2008; Anyaji and Akporaro, 2000). Society in the region, especially among the Bini, thrives on male dominance (Ugiagbe et al., 2011). The succession of the traditional ruling system and inheritance pattern are through the male line (patrilineal and primogeniture - known as the male line, agnatic kinship) (Itua, 2011), and this institutionally favours the male against the females (Osezua, 2016). As suggested this enduring patriarchy, especially among the Bini of the area, encourages exploitation of the women (home and abroad) (ibid).

Generally, gender inequality and social exclusion of women appear embedded in the Nigeria cultural system and sustained by the hegemonic patriarchal national society (Makama, 2013). Formal government in the country seems to have also directly or indirectly supported the exclusion of women from the allocation of resources and economic opportunities. Patriarchy justifies the marginalization of women in education, economy, labour market, politics, business, family, domestic matters and other spheres in the country (Salaam, 2003). Recent rejection of bills seeking for constitutional provision on gender equality in all sections by Nigerian parliament (Oshi, 2016), is indicative of serious patriarchal tendencies. Women formed only very minute fraction of elected officers and political appointees in the country (Makama, 2013). The previous administration appeared near to giving women a chance in public offices with the administration committing modestly to the country's 2006 National Gender Policy (NGP) (see, Akogun 2010; Obuh, 2014). It supported a woman to be the Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives, for the first time. It is argued that the power relations preventing women from political leadership participation and causing their marginalisation in decision-making, operate in many levels of the national society.

The longstanding disparity between the number of employed males and females and dominance of men in all forms of work opportunity in Nigeria has been a source of concern to researchers (see, Omoruyi, et al, 2011). Female Marginalisation Thesis has often been used as a framework for the study of women's employment in developing countries (like Nigeria) (Chant, 1989). The thesis has four dimensions. The first is "exclusion from

production" (especially employment in the manufacturing sector); the second is "concentration of women on the margins of the labour market;" the third is "segregation and feminisation" and the fourth is "economic inequality" (especially wages and working conditions) (ibid; 167).

### **3.6. Summary**

This preceding chapter looked at the various political, socio-economic and cultural situations in Nigeria. As noted in the chapter, Nigeria post-independent to present day has grappled with the challenge of national disintegration which has been aggravated by political, ethnic and religious biases. The section also highlighted that there is an enduring situation of poverty and inequality which has been made worse by a generation of corrupt political and economic elites. The section also reflected that costly mismanagement of the wealth from the country's abundant crude oil has failed to improve the lives of the vast majority of the poor masses especially in the Niger-Delta (south-south) region that bears the mineral resources. In the process, the negative role of Western political and economic elites in collaboration with the local elites to perpetuate poverty and inequality in the country was noted. The section found it difficult to separate these existing socio-political and economic circumstances from the domestic problems the people face that constraint many to migrate into exploitation in Western nations. Most vital is the internal challenges in the country which reflect governance crises translating to poverty, inequality, corruption, national mutual distrust, disunity, and insecurity (see, Aremu, 2020). An emerging question is, how well does this structural conditions relate with other potentials to create a veritable platform for the harvest of trafficking victims annually from the country (especially from south -south region)?

## Chapter Four

### 4.0. Sex Trafficking in Nigeria

This chapter of the literature review deals with relevant issues in the thesis as they directly concern sex trafficking practices and responses in Nigeria, specifically the studied south-south region.

Several thousand people are trafficked from West Africa and Nigeria into European countries yearly (European Commission Home Affairs, 2015; Aronowitz 2001; and Attoh & Okeke 2012; Otoide, 2000). Nigeria, according to UNODC, is among the eight countries with the highest incidence of human trafficking in the world (Onoiribholo, 2008). Nigeria is a source, transit and destination country for women and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking (US TIP, 2018). Nigerian and Italian authorities estimated that about 10,000 Nigerian prostitutes work in Italy and that many of them are victims of trafficking (Fitzgibbon, 2003; Olujuwon, 2008). As noted earlier, estimations like this are often debatable due to the unreliability of the methods of arriving at them (Musto, 2009; Weitzer, 2014; Kessler, 2015). Nigeria was in denial of the existence of trafficking in human beings until the late 1990s when it became more apparent due to awareness campaign by some non-governmental organisations (Egede, 2013). The early 1990's first major repatriation of Nigerian sex workers from the streets of Italy, it was argued, evidence the presence of human trafficking from Nigeria to Europe.

While trying to review the inception of sex trafficking in Nigeria researchers have often undertaken a retrospection of landmark socio-economic development in the country. Nigeria's economic dilapidation of the 70s following the fall in oil price which depleted the previous fortunes of the oil boom resulted in a sequence of national challenges (Akor, 2011). This was worsened by the economic mismanagement by the dictatorship government that characterised the period (ibid). Following the downturn, the worst hit populations in rural areas commenced mass movement to the urban areas swelling the city population; parents gave their children to relatives in exchange for money and the girls worked on the streets with many trafficked abroad for prostitution (Achebe, 2004; Akor, 2011; Mohammed 2004).

Specifically, the historical profiling of sex trafficking from Nigeria to Europe connected the practice with the early arrivals of poor agricultural migrants from West Africa to Italy and other Mediterranean European nations in the 1980s (Carling 2005). These early migrants were seen to be originally pushed out by unemployment and poverty associated with the economic crises of the 1970s searching for jobs abroad (ibid). Bringing Nigerian nationals over to Europe for the purpose of sex work is seen as more economically viable and replaced agricultural jobs (ibid), though many (especially males) are reported to still work in farms in rural Italy where they are exploited (see, Oddone 2018). In the light of this, other researchers argued that focus appears to have, overtime, been on demand and supply with poverty as the primary push factor resulting in the vulnerability of victims (Bales, 1999; Far, 2005). With more Nigerians getting poorer partly due to lack of coherent and comprehensive economic reforms (IMF, March, 2018) and government failure to invest in human capital development (The Gates Foundation Annual Report 2018) as well as create jobs, vulnerability seems sustained.

Figure 1. Nigeria Political map showing the states of the country



Map Reproduced from Google site [www.mapsofworld.com](http://www.mapsofworld.com) (2014), Assessed (31/07/2018)

Above is the political Map of Nigeria showing the 36 states of the country including Abuja the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Within it is the South-south region which is bounded to the south by the Bight of Benin and the Gulf of Guinean in the coast of the Atlantic Ocean.

#### 4.1. Sex Trafficking in South-South Nigeria

The South-south region of Nigeria is known for cross-border sex trafficking in the country (World Bank, 2005), with Edo state accounting for the majority of young women and minors trafficked to European countries for commercial sex (Carling, 2005; UNESCO 2006). Meanwhile, older women are also mentioned to be frequently trafficked from the area (Okojie, et al, 2003). Reports suggest people in Benin City (including Ikpoba-okha, the main field area) were proud of trafficked women and their material achievements (Smith, 2001). There are also reports of high rates of trafficking in other states in the region like

Delta and Akwa-Ibom. But this is often seen as lesser when compared to the situation in Edo (Okonofua et al, 2004). Italy is recorded as the most popular destination for those trafficked for prostitution from the state (Carling 2005; Okojie, et al, 2003). Trafficking to other parts of Europe like Spain, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom has also been reported (see, Okonofua, et al, 2004; UK National Referral Mechanism, 2018).

Many researchers focused their work on Benin City as the area in Edo state where sex trafficking is most prevalent (see, Oyekanmi & Okunola, 2017; Carling, 2005; Okojie, et al, 2003; Okonofua et al, 2004). But Ikpoba-okha is the area in the state that is the core of sex trafficking activity (NAPTIP, 2017 report). For the purpose of clarity, Ikpoba-okha is an adjoining area to Benin City but a different local geopolitical area. It is important to highlight this because community life in both areas is different, though both are dominated by the same ethnic group. This is not to say there is not a high level of trafficking in Benin City and some other parts of the state and the region.

#### ***4.2. The Prevalence of Sex Trafficking as the Main form of Exploitation in South-south Nigeria***

Although some scholars argue that diverse forms of trafficking are experienced in the region, the general consensus is that sex trafficking is the main form of exploitation (see, Annie and Lorenzo, 2016; Fitzgibbon, 2003; Okojie et al, 2004; Otoide, 2000). Authors believe trafficking of women for commercial sex is common here because traffickers who specialise in the trafficking of women into Europe for commercial sex dominate the business in the area (Nnadi 2013). Also, sex trafficking from the region to Europe occurs because traffickers in the region have contacts and influence dealing with the local kingpins controlling the prostitution business in those destination countries for the regular supply of women (Carling, 2005). Added to this is the liberalisation of the sex work industry in the European destination countries where traffickers operating in the region are connected (Oluwa-Baye 2012).

Another argued reason for the pattern of trafficking is that many of the leading West African and Nigerian women sex traffickers are indigenes from Edo state in the region (Carling, 2005). Additionally, the first set of successful people in the trade were from Edo state who returned home to bring their friends and relatives making the activity gain

momentum in the area until now (Oyekanmi & Okunola 2017). There is also the argument that a sizeable Nigerian (mostly from South-south region) Diaspora of almost 200,000 legal residents are in Europe, facilitating trafficking from their origin country (Carling, 2005), and supporting the activity of syndicates. Okojie et al, (2003) argue too, the fact that local prostitution is a common practice among the Benin people of the area may be another reason why sex trafficking is preferred, though this has been challenged. Aghatise (2002) disagrees with this assertion arguing prostitution is culturally and traditionally unpopular among the Benin people of this area. Attor and Okeke (2012) further counter Aghatise's defense. They questioned; how do you explain the fact that sending women and young girls abroad for the purpose of prostitution has become a family decision if the people culturally abhor the practice?

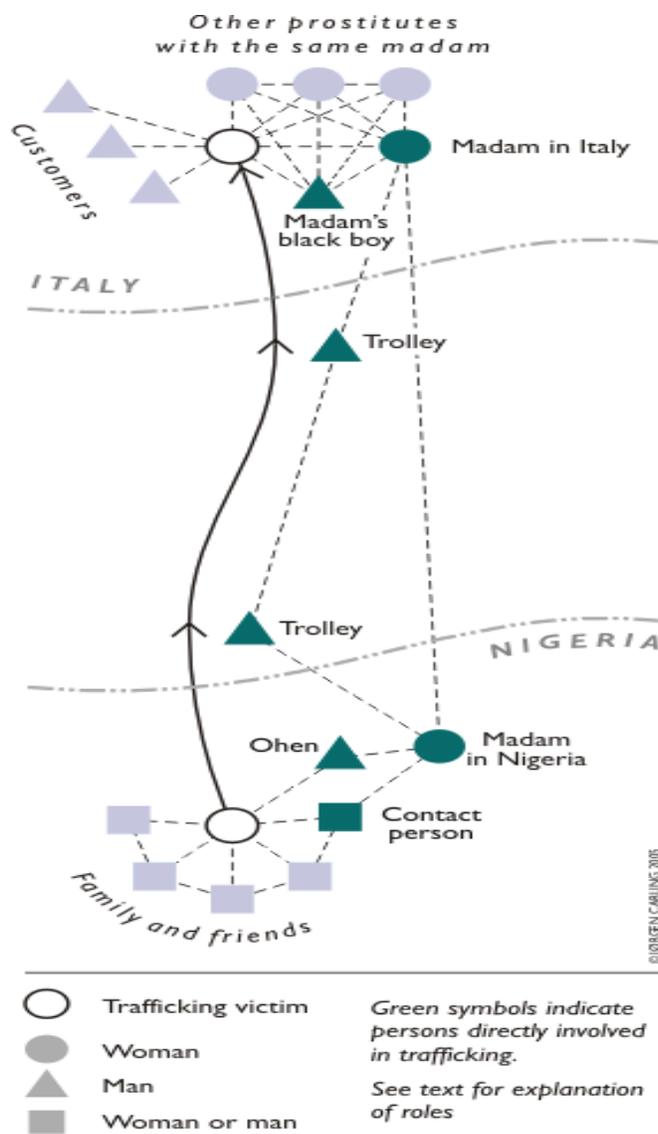
The factor of remittances that come generally from female indigenes of the area in the Diaspora is also considered as likely reason the area is known for the practice (Akor, 2011; Oyekanmi & Okunola, 2017). There is also the issue of a highly available population of young girls not attending school (United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), 2018), combined with a high demand for young girls in European sex markets (Ahatise, 2002; Oluwa-Baye 2012).

#### ***4.3. Operations of Trafficking Syndicates in Nigeria***

Among others, Carling (2005) reports on the operations of sex trafficking syndicates in the region. A victim's initial contact with smugglers is often through a relative, friend, or other familiar persons (ibid). Following the initial contact, the victim is put in contact with a 'madam', the network's most important person in Nigeria. Carling noted that, in many cases, the 'madam' also has the role of sponsor, the person who finances the journey. Typical costs range from US\$500 to US\$2,000 for documents and US\$8,000 to US\$12,000 for the travel. The debt incurred by the victim is much higher, however. Typical amounts are between US\$40,000 and US\$100,000. When the victim and her sponsor make a "pact" this obliges repayment in exchange for safe passage to Europe (Carling 2005). The pact, according to the narrative, is usually religiously sealed by an "Ohen" who traditionally functions as a magistrate or registrar (Carling, 2005; Okojie et al, 2003). The victim and her

family, Carling revealed, also sign a contract with the sponsor, using the family’s house (if they have one) or other assets as collateral. As part of the ceremony, the “Ohen”, according to the researcher, usually assembles a parcel with magic significance (also see, Eghafona, 2017).

Figure 2. A graphical representation of a typical sex trafficking operational line between Edo state south-south Nigeria and Europe



*Map reproduced from Migration Information source (Migration Policy Institute)*  
*<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/migration-information-source/all>. Assessed*  
*(21/01/2019)*

The above figure is a graphical representation of a typical sex trafficking operational line between Edo state south-south Nigeria and Europe as presented by Carling (2005, Migration Information Source of Migration Policy Institute).

Apart from Carling's model above, O'Toole (2018) presents another pattern detailing how the women and girls depart from the source country and become exploited sexually at destination. O'Toole explains that often the women and girls seek out a migrant smuggler who charges for travel. The payment is for the smuggler to take the girls and women first to Libya and then across the Mediterranean to Europe, where they plan to work as prostitutes (ibid). In most cases this could be to support poor families back home in Nigeria. Once the girls get to Libya, they are exposed to kidnap or adoption, raped and then sold to another trafficker according to the report. The trafficker will tell her, it will take five years of sex work to earn her freedom (O'Toole, 2018).

Though perspectives vary on patterns and routes there is usually agreements on the role of a 'madam' that oversees the exercise; an escort that pilots the victims through their journey and exploitation at destination. Critical areas of contention seem to be in the level of involvement by relatives of the victims and the consent of the victim. Okonofua *et al* (2004) argue to clarify that although some of the young women are deceptively led out of the country by well-organised syndicates with promises of gainful employment in Europe, the girls themselves are sometimes aware from the onset they would be engaged in prostitution abroad and pay huge sums of money to smugglers.

Otoide (2000) and Agbu (2003) disagree with Okonofua *et al*. on the issue of consent to be trafficked; suggesting those behind the trade trick the young women into traveling outside the country with promises of lucrative jobs in Europe but later forced into prostitution. In the ensuing contention, Salt (2000) aligns there is evidence too that, migrants are at least partially, aware of the condition in which they are placing themselves. Irrespective of the

awareness or not of awaiting circumstance at destinations the girls are argued to often end up sexually exploited which none of the authors above have denied.

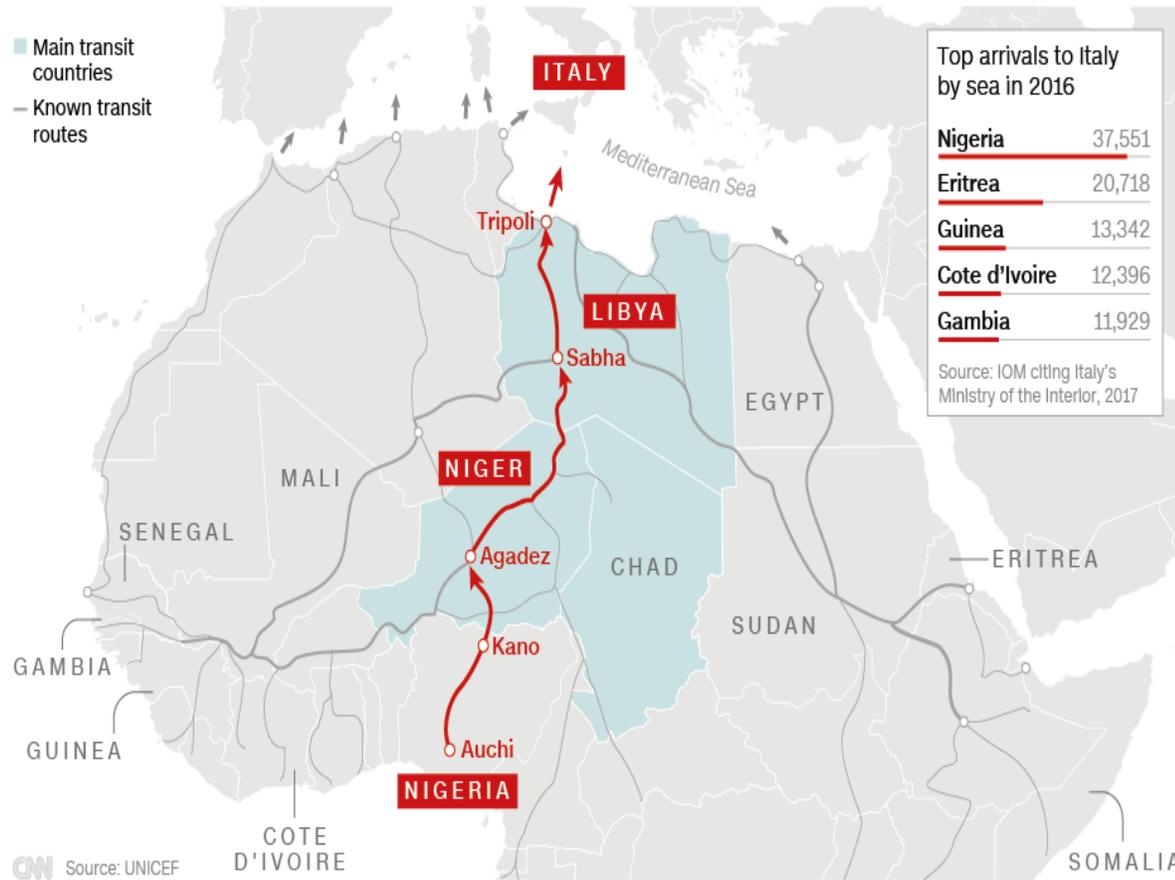
#### ***4.4. Patterns and Routes of Trafficking from Nigeria to Europe***

The trafficking business from Nigeria to Europe is known to involve different channels and routes. There are routes by land from Nigeria through the neighboring countries of the Republic of Benin and Togo to Ghana or Mali where victims' identities are changed and orientations given to them before travelling by air (Hodges, 2001). Other routes involve trafficked women and girls journeying to Europe over land through the Sahara; going by air they transit through other West African and/or Eastern Europe countries (Carling 2005). During journeys through land, the men who are the agents of the main traffickers - known as "trolleys" in the trafficking network - escort women individually or in small groups via Libya to Europe where another "madam", a counterpart of the "madam" in Nigeria, waits to receive them (Carling, 2005). Below is the map showing the trafficking route by land from Nigeria through Northern Africa notably, via Libya to Europe, as published on Google web site.

Figure 3. Map of trafficking route from South-south Nigeria to Europe

# From Nigeria to Europe

The central Mediterranean migrant route is one with many tributaries. This is the journey CNN was offered.



Map reproduced from Google web site, <https://www.google.co.uk/>. Source UNICEF <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/trafficking-gb2ed-2005.pdf>. Assessed 21/01/2019

As the map illustrates, those trafficked from the south-south region normally depart from Auchi, a town in northern part of Edo state, via Kano, a major city in northern Nigeria, before hitting their first stop outside Nigeria called Agadez in the Niger republic from where they are moved deep into the desert.

## 4.5. Death of Africans on the Way to Europe

Deaths, mainly by starvation, bandits attack in the Sahara Desert and drowning in the Mediterranean, are common stories as many West Africans, including Nigerians, are taken through land to be trafficked to European countries. Arguments propose that West Africans

form a large percentage of those who die on the way (UNODC 2017). In 2014, 3,419 migrants died in the Mediterranean (Malloch and Rigby 2016). Recent arguments indicate that West African migrants heading to Europe are dying in far greater numbers in the Sahara than in the Mediterranean and attempts to dissuade them may result in use of new routes (Miles and Nebehey, 2017). Further claims are that by October 2017 2,569 migrant deaths were recorded in the central Mediterranean. Abandonment of migrants by people smugglers, who are usually scared of the authorities, appears partly the reason the number of those dying in the desert has surged (ibid).

The QUARTZ (2015) report on 'Refugees on Italian Coast', claiming over 1,700 died crossing the Strait of Sicily (link in Italy) in 2015 indicts European and Italian authorities for the deaths. The argument is that the number of deaths in the Mediterranean has grown, not just due to an increased volume of migrants, but a decreased effort to save lives. The controversy surrounding who takes the blame regarding the increasing number of deaths of Africans and other migrants in the Mediterranean appears to connect to recent diplomatic and political tension within the European Union (Henley, 2018).

EU countries along the coastal line like Italy and Spain accused other member states of abdicating what they consider the overwhelming burden of coping with the growing number of migrants entering the region on a daily basis (Henley, 2018; Rankin and Wintour, 2018). This, they claim, is despite the fact that the decision to take in migrants in the first place was collective. This seems to have partially influenced the recent adoption of an anti-migrant posture by the far-right government in Italy (see Stille, 2018). Italy is also being accused for criminalising what was termed "solidarity" for drowning migrants in the Mediterranean with independent rescue teams facing threat of jail terms for offering aid (Boffey and Tondo, 2019). The potential implication of this is a further increase in the number of migrants who die at sea as rescue is now more often denied.

A recent European Commission (EC) commitment of about two billion dollars to an EU-African Trust Fund to reduce the flow of people making dangerous Mediterranean crossing from Africa to Italy (Rankin, 2017) appears to hold no hope (Shilhave, 2017). Since Africa represents a continent in conflicts with many living in poverty (World Bank, 2016; Brown

and Stewart, 2015), the fund was to help with development and peace building. But the fund seems to have suffered a lack of clarity on the part of EC/EU. Some argue that the fund may end up focusing on stronger border control with more border force on the ground detracting from issues of poverty reduction and local priorities in Africa (Shilhav, 2017). Also, the challenge with these sort of grants by Western nations to developing countries is that, it may only serve the purpose of a palliative response rather than helping to tackle basic challenges permanently. Another issue is the fund may end up being mismanaged by the local political class. This does not often solve the question of socio-economic inequality seen as critical among the people, rather this may even further escalate by the actions of the politicians.

#### ***4.6. Typical Exploitation Patterns of Victims from the Region at Destination***

Reports vary on the typical sexual exploitation pattern of victims of sex trafficking from South-south Nigeria at the destination. A NAPTIP (2011) publication, narrated that young girls trafficked from the area are treated like objects and commodities. At destination, victims of sex trafficking from Nigeria are made to take positions in numbered seats and have no opportunity of picking their customers (ibid). The report further narrated:

*“a visiting male customer surveys the girls and identifies his fancy and the number attached to the seat and/or choice {...}. The manager informs the customer, the amount to be paid, corresponding to the choice. He pays the manger and he is allocated a chalet and the victim is called in by the manager ... (NAPTIP, 2011; p32).*

“In this matter”, according to the report, “the victim has no choice. She faces the risk of being beaten, arrested, maimed, confined, deported, seizure of travel document, serial rape etc” (NAPTIP 2011; p32). Aside this version given by NAPTIP above, there are other accounts often presented by writers which, though may vary slightly, also emphasise the condition of cruel sexual exploitation and dehumanisation of many trafficked victims from the region as described by the agency.

#### **4.7. Sexual Exploitation of Africans: from South-south Nigeria to Europe - Views of a Collection of Authors**

Certain notions often held by authors regarding contexts, characteristics and contributors to sex trafficking from south-south Nigeria to Europe significant for consideration are examined in the following sections.

##### *The Spread of Human Trafficking in South-south Nigeria*

Researching the causes and implications of sex trafficking from Nigeria to Europe, Oyekanmi & Okunola (2017) argue that human trafficking is a form of organised crime in Nigeria, and Edo state the hub of recruitment in the country. After claiming that about 80 percent of women trafficked out of Nigeria for sex work abroad are from Edo state (ibid), they referenced one out of every 10 families in Benin City has at least one person involved in trafficking for prostitution abroad, though this may be subject to debate. The work however, noted it does not mean that many of the families in the area are not into credible business enterprise. In the same vein Okonofua et al (2004) like Okojie et al (2004) and Azage et al (2014) claimed sex trafficking is a common practice in the region, particularly Edo. Aghatise (2002), Carling (2005), Anna and Lorenzo (2011) also concluded variously the widespread sex trafficking practices in the region especially in Edo state (also see Danish Immigration Service 2008). Anna and Lorenzo (2011) argued the situation has reached a crises level.

On the extent of the spread of the practice in the region, researchers noted aside the often-mentioned Edo and Delta, states like Akwa-Ibom and Cross Rivers are also known for the practice (Okojie et al 2003; Okonofua et al 2004). But Edo is said to remain at the forefront (UNESCO, 2006). Because Edo state has often recorded the highest number among sex trafficking victim deportees from Europe, there appears to be an attestation that the practice is most common in the state in the region (Carling, 2005; Okonofua et al, 2004). Several young women interviewed in a survey by Okonofua et al. (2004) in Edo state reported they had heard of international sex trafficking in the area. The majority according to the research had female relatives who lived abroad, with many mentioning the women lived in countries like Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands. A substantial number of these women is argued by

the researchers to have been trafficked. Many of the young females interviewed in the study desire to travel abroad if given the opportunity.

Women who are most likely to support the continuation of sex trafficking in the region, Okonofua et al. (2004) argue, include women with primary or no education, divorced women, women from the Bini ethnic group, those who have previously travelled or intend to travel out of the country and women who practice traditional religion. The work suggested unemployed and uneducated parents are likely to also support their children and wards to follow traffickers to Europe (see, Okonofua, et al 2004). The study also proposed socially deprived women in the area are more likely to attach significance to the perceived economic benefits of sex trafficking, and to see themselves as potential recipients of such benefits. These assertions somehow was corroborated by Okojie et al (2003) and Oyekanmi & Okunola (2017) who agreed patriarchy with gender discrimination is a cultural practice in the region affecting the socio-economic condition and confidence of the women. The Okonofua et al. survey also identified those mostly targeted as victims are women of poorer socio-economic status and out-of-school young girls.

#### *Likely Contributing Factors in the Region*

International trafficking from Edo state in the region to Europe is argued to have helped many families to escape extreme poverty (Prina 2003; Carling 2005), suggesting poverty can be a reinforcing push factor. Okonofua et al. (2004) also suggest that poverty, the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society, unemployment and fragmented social values contribute to the rise of the practice in the region. In Okonofua et al.'s survey, the perception that sex trafficking leads to wealth creation and economic gains for women was the main reason given by those who support the practice in the area. The explanation is that increased economic difficulties, comes with increasing unemployment and extreme poverty with migration to more prosperous countries becoming a likely survival measure. These were also part of arguments by Oyekanmi & Okunola (2017) and Okojie et al. (2003) regarding issues of poverty as push factors, though in Oyekanmi & Okunola's article, a direct causal relationship between poverty and trafficking was not distinct. The work highlighted poverty

as a hypothesised push factor with definite attention given more to factors like inadequate legislation and other social structural issues.

Arguing from a slightly similar perspective Akor (2011) noted that the increase of the practice in the region could be linked to the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) recommended by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This was likewise posited by others to have made many African countries, including Nigeria, become overwhelmed by more economic crises (see, Attoh and Okeke, 2012; Babawale 2006; Taran & Damaret 2006). Reviewing the issues of the consequences of internationally initiated economic recovery policy for the country, Attor and Okeke (2012) insist such policies adopted by Nigeria did not only adversely affect public services but weakened the purchasing power of workers' wages and affected economic conditions for the majority of the population thereby causing vulnerability.

The issue of patriarchy noted by Okonofua et al. above was also highlighted by Oyekanmi & Okunola (2017) and Okojie et al. (2003), as a critical push factor. Their underlining argument proposed existing social exclusion with patriarchal practices are indications that the practice could be aftermath of gender poverty often argued to be connected to the increased out-migration of third world women globally (see, Castle, et al 2014). For the authors, the inaccessibility of means of production by the women as a discriminated gender was helping to predispose them to becoming victims of sex trafficking. Some other arguments did not only assert the dominance of men in the trafficking business but emphasised sex trafficking as a consequence of the masculine and feminine cultural concept of patriarchy. Another vital factor suggested is, population expansion (Okonofua et al. 2004). An argument against this may be that there are countries with larger population globally not renowned as sex trafficking sources the way that Nigeria is. Countries like the United States and China are examples of non-typical-source countries with huge populations bigger than Nigeria's. The viability of this factor may be undeniable when it exists side by side with poverty.

The issue of corruption in the country is seen as a factor aiding the rise of the practice in the region with apparent collusion between traffickers and government officials; meaning the

effect of corrupt and bad governance on the socio-economic wellbeing of the people is a serious issue for consideration in this respect (Agbu 2003). Another argument corroborates that corruption among both public officials and the larger society contributes to the practice in the country and the region (Temitope 2013). Though it could also be argued that corruption exists in other countries yet they are not experiencing cases of trafficking as in south-south Nigeria. The argument for corruption as a viable factor could however be strong when it exists along with poverty as seen in the case of south-south Nigeria.

#### *The Issue of Lack of Awareness of Victims and Parents*

Lack of awareness and poor education of victims and parents are seen as one of the main reasons why victims from the region do not ask informed questions of the offers made to them by traffickers (Oyekanmi & Okunola, 2017). Many victims as argued do not normally know - the terms and conditions of the business, before embarking on the journey to Europe. The argument sometimes is that the victims often see themselves rather lucky to be helped by the traffickers because they feel it is costly to be taken to their destination. It is also believed that many are not aware of sexual exploitation at the destination (ibid). The authors noted that, despite the campaigns about the trade in the country, some of the victims do not know what is meant by human trafficking. This could also be linked to the level of education and awareness of the targeted group in the area.

#### *Family and Victim Knowledge of Process and Purpose: and Victim Blaming*

Oyekanmi & Okunola (2017) argue that some relatives and trafficked victims in the region are aware of the exploitation at the destination. Plambec (2014) corroborated this assertion that some trafficked girls often know they are going for prostitution and repay their traffickers the cost of bringing them over within three years then start working for themselves. This connotes what Roby, et al. (2009) referred to as cases of going for voluntary international sex work. This however contrasts claims of victim's lack of knowledge of the purpose of travelling by writers like Skilbrei & Tveit (2007), and Otoide, (2000). Plambec (2014) categorically disputed claims especially among Western authorities that victims were often forced or lured away directly from their home for the purpose of prostitution abroad.

This argument, asserting that women and girls in the area sometimes have the knowledge of the real intention why they are taken abroad before departing, may neutralise the culpability of traffickers as entirely responsible for engineering the trafficking and exploitation of the victims. This conclusion however could be a form of victim blaming which many scholars and practitioners may sometimes be guilty of. It could be noted however that even when victims consent to following traffickers abroad, they do not usually envisage or agree with the traffickers to be exploited at the destination (Osakue, 2005, as cited in Oyekanmi and Okunola, 2017). According to Osakue even if many of them know they are going for sex work they do not fully comprehend the degree and nature of exploitation they will be subjected to. Overall, the argument that there are often cases where victims of sexual exploitation have a pre-existing knowledge of what awaits them at the destination challenging the usual claim of ignorance by parents and victims (Okonofua et al 2004; Plambec, 2014), is contentious.

#### **4.8. Official Responses in Nigeria**

To fight human and sex trafficking in Nigeria, various international treaties and protocols have been signed (Oyekanmi & Okunola 2017; Yahaya, 2015). Nigeria has entered into numerous bilateral agreements with different countries. It has signed to ratify the UN Palermo protocol, along with Italy and other European nations which are major receiver nations of trafficked Nigerian women (see, UN.GA, 2001). Perhaps responding to the ratified Palermo protocol, the Nigerian government passed legislative bills empowering law enforcement institutions to arrest and prosecute anyone found involved in human trafficking. The establishment of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Human Trafficking and other related offences (NAPTIP) in 2003 by the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement Administration Act 2003 is also a follow up to this (*See Egede 2014*).

Apart from this, other legislative instruments like, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended; the Nigeria Immigration Act Caps 189 LFN 1990; the criminal Penal laws of the various states in Nigeria: and others have been activated as part of the fight (Egede 2014). Also, in the south-south region, Edo state has passed series of laws

making sex trafficking a punishable offence since 2001 (Okonofua et al 2004; Olujuwon 2008). In addition to existing government institutions responding to the problem in Nigeria and the region there are other response groups operating privately to tackle the challenge (Okonofua et al, 2004). But arguments are that domestic legislation and legal practices concerning trafficking remain generally erratic, signifying ineffective response instrument (see, Carling, 2005).

Also, another challenge seen in responding to sex trafficking in the region is the limitations associated with anti-trafficking legislations in the country and shortcomings in implementation (Oyekanmi and Okunola 2017). The 2017 work further argued that anti-trafficking legislations in Nigeria is seen as paper work for the international community to take note that some sort of effort was being made whereas in the real sense there is nothing tangible on the ground. The country's national anti-trafficking legislation is criticised for lacking modification to fit into the country's society (Weitzer 2012). Absence of information and communication between the government and the public which Sharapov (2016) considers as relevant in responses is believed to have also affected promulgated laws in Nigeria. Aside from the absence of adequate publicity for enacted laws, culprits are not properly prosecuted and sanctioned in line with the laws (Oyekanmi and Okunola, 2017). Similarly despite the enactments, national laws have failed and are often inadequate in addressing human trafficking as these have not reduced the incidences of new victims being recruited (Agwu, 2014; Oyekanmi and Okunola, 2017; Okonofua et al, 2004). However, there is often the argument that local laws within the states are more effective than the ones enacted at the national level (Agbaegbu 2008; Onuoha, 2011). Their contention is that Edo state legislation for instance was a more forward-looking approach in terms of understanding the human trafficking crime and the extent it is punishable. But the issue here is that national laws take precedence in the effective prosecution of an offender which makes the fact that the state laws are of more forward-looking approach, in a way, of little significance.

Meanwhile, NAP TIP (2014) reports various prosecutions of human trafficking cases as part of achievements in combating the challenge. For instance, it reported that 30 (23.1%) out of

the 130 cases prosecuted in 2014 were external trafficking for sexual exploitation. Child labour cases constituted 32 (24.6%), while child abuse accounted for 22 cases (16.9%). Also, it stated 271 convictions have been secured overall; these include cases of - external trafficking, child labour, child abuse and internal trafficking (NAPTIP, 2015). In an EU funded survey of the agency Dashe (2010) identified over 1000 cases investigated since inception. A total of 57 convictions were recorded while 75 cases are pending in various High Courts in Nigeria. The report also indicates that a total of 3,451 victims were rescued between 2003 and 2010. An objective assessment of these figures reflects a modest achievement in view of the substantial prevalence of human trafficking activities often reported in the country. Though debatable, Oyekanmi and Okunnola (2017) claim that since 2007 only 20 cases have been tried in court while only five convictions have been secured against the above claims by NAPTIP. Many of the arrested traffickers are often released on bail and later declared wanted (ibid). Another issue is the further victimisation of the victims of sex trafficking by some of the country's legislations (Osakue, 2005), which do not reflect the provisions of the Palermo protocol and most global conventions on effective response.

NAPTIP reports in its 2014 publication that it is seeking and receiving support from various external agencies and governments to cope with the problem. Partnership between Nigeria and countries within the sub region through memorandum of understanding and treaties, has also assisted in the fight against trafficking (see Egede 2014). Egede had also reported, existing agreements like ECOWAS/ECCAS deal, the "Cotonou Accord", "Ouagadougou Accord", as well as international partnership with specialised agencies (UNODC, UNICEF, IOM, BKA, Anti-Italia Mafia Bureau) and governments has been entered - this includes specific bilateral agreements with other countries for repatriation and rehabilitation of trafficked Nigerians (Olujuwon, 2008). Despite these efforts by NAPTIP, West Africa including Nigeria responses is seen as inadequate (Danso, 2013) with its attendant conceptual and implementation challenges. Meanwhile NAPTIP faces various logistics challenges (Dashe 2010). This Dashe says includes, inaccurate data, traffickers' evolving strategies, lack of modern facilities to track down traffickers, unavailability of vehicles for effective surveillance, monitoring and intelligence gathering challenges and others.'

#### **4.9. Summary**

This chapter looked at issues pertaining to sex trafficking activities in Nigeria, south-south Nigeria, and Edo state. It generally establishes that the area is seriously affected by sex trafficking. Certain issues were also raised regarding the complexities of trafficking patterns as well as specific drivers of the practice in the region. Key assertions regarding nature and characteristic were also argued. For example, there was the argument on whether parents and victims often have prior knowledge of the level of exploitation and risk which awaits the victims at destination or not. Flaws in response pattern by the local authorities including government agencies were also identified, with existing laws seen as inadequate according to critics who also argued not much is being done to check the problem.

## **Chapter Five**

### **5.0. Theoretical Perspectives and a Conceptual Framework**

This chapter mainly examines some of the key theoretical explanations to the foundations of migrant labour exploitation and human trafficking in contemporary era. This has broadly helped to inform this research. This also was utilised to develop a conceptual framework for this work.

The first of the theoretical viewpoints considered is that of the dependency theory by Andre Gunder Frank (1967) (see, Kay, 1975; Thompson, 2015; Webster, 1990). The theory captures the issues of under-development and the exploitation of the weak nations in global socio-economic relations. The second is the ‘feminisation of migration’, a theoretical insight developed by Castle and Miller (1998) which emphasises the contemporary realities of increased female migration. Both theoretical perspectives are used because they adequately capture the thesis’ dominant themes of economic exploitation, poverty, migrant labour exploitation, female sexual exploitation, vulnerability, trafficking and migration.

#### **5.1. Dependency Theory and Migrant (Female Sexual) Exploitation**

Dependency theory suggests that resources flow from a “periphery” of poor and underdeveloped states to a core of wealthy states of the globe (Gunder Frank 1967) (see, Kay, 1975; Thompson, 2015; Webster, 1990). Gunder Frank (1967) argues existing global socio-economic relations entails a global system of capitalism in which core nations and continents like the USA, the United Kingdom, and Europe exploit what he calls the peripheral nations in Africa, South Asia, Latin America and others (see, Bergesen 2015). Regarding this theory Leys (1996) stressed global market domination and division of labour favouring the developed north against the interest of developing nations. This sustains the dependency status of poor nations in the global economic relations (Bergesen, 2015).

In Dos Santos’s (1970) review attempt, the dependency concept was presented as reflecting a situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected. That, the relation of

inter-dependency between two or more economies, and between these and world trade, assumes the form of dependency when some countries (the dominant ones) can expand and can be self-sustaining, while other countries (the dependent ones) can do this only as a reflection of that expansion. Contemporary perspectives of dependency reveal the post-colonial forms of dominance among the states (Namkoong, 1999). In the author's thoughts, those who apply dependency in the analysis of underdevelopment of Third World countries emphasise foreign and political influences which affect local development and reinforce ruling elites at the expense of marginal classes.

The ideological thrust of the theory aligned to by some neo-Marxian and radical theoretical tradition scholars like Rodney (1972), rejects views that developing countries are responsible for their own underdevelopment, insisting that the developed north perpetuates the underdevelopment of the poor south (see, Webster, 1990). The West is able to exploit the poor nations for cheap labour, cheap raw material and demands unrestrained access to their markets for finished goods (Gunder Frank, 1967).

The theory draws further on historical antecedents via the exploitation of the weak nations starting with the Trans-Atlantic slave trade in the 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, colonialism at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the continuous dominance of international trading by Western nations and interests (see, Slater, 1993). These were periods referred to as the distinct stages of third world exploitation associated with the growth of industrial capitalism in the West (Webster 1990). One of the most profitable forms of merchant capitalism was the slave trade – which Webster (1990) cited as the 'commercial hunting of black skins' as Marx called it. Essentially, Gunder Frank is often represented regarding this ideological postulate as standing against coercion and imperialism and rejecting capitalism seeing these as a driving role of global oppression, rigid status hierarchies, state intimidation and official cruelty (Bergesen, 2015).

The exploitation process of the poor countries is segmented into three stages in Gunder Frank's development theory. First is in the area of trade benefits tilted to Western interest at the expense of poor countries (See Namkoong. 1999). Here colonies remain dependent on former colonial masters for export earnings from agricultural products and sometimes other

raw materials like crude oil which are of little value until they are processed by these Western countries who sell back to the poor countries with a dictated high value. The second stage involves the dominance of the transnational corporations of Western nations (like Shell, Chevron, Nestle etc) helping in the exploitation of the labour and resources of poor countries (see, Matunhu, 2011). These multinationals are at an advantage using their global network and technology to subdue local companies who are unable to compete with them thereby further sustaining under- development in these poor countries. The third category is when Western nations use aids and grants given to poor countries as bait for unfettered access to take over their local economy and market.

Local government officials and elites are seen as collaborators in the entrenchment of a dependency status in poor countries (see, Namkoong, 1999). The theory asserts that in accessing the local economy of these countries, native elites are the first to be recruited as can be seen in the case of Western oil exploration companies in Nigeria conniving with local elites to exploit the crude oil in the country's Niger Delta (Dokpesi and Igbinomwanhia, 2011). When grants and aids are given to poor countries it is these elites that divert them into their private accounts.

Some critique Dependency theory on the grounds that colonialism had positive benefits, providing colonies with basic, modern infrastructure in terms of transport (introduction of railways), communications, mining technology and others (Heldring & Robinson, 2013). Countries like the USA and Japan did not have colonies but are today doing fine as developed nations, even better than those with colonies (see, Revised Sociology, 2015). This argument is of the view that it is wrong to conclude that most developed countries of the west became prosperous based on the wealth they exploited from poor countries (through colonialism) as partly claimed by the dependency theory.

Modernisation theory directly counters a dependency perspective, and contends that the problem with underdeveloped nations is internal, as they suffer from a lack of modern attitudes, competitive industrialism and entrepreneurial ethic which drives development (see, Matunhu, 2011; Webster, 1990). Modernisation theorists as supported by Brandt (1979) argue against the view that isolation and communist revolutions (which dependency

theorists advocate) are better options for poor countries to break free from dependent status, citing failures of communist states like USSR and others (see, Matunhu, 2011). Examples were also given of countries which have adopted capitalist models of development since World War Two, who have experienced accelerated development compared to those who adopted communism. Corruption, economic mismanagement, political crises, and most importantly absence of the right social values and behaviour needed for development are responsible for third world underdevelopment, critics of the theory further argued (see, Banuri, 1987),

The criticisms notwithstanding, the ideological exposition by dependency theory captures the situation in many underdeveloped countries particularly in Africa and specifically Nigeria. The perspective describes contemporary dynamics pertaining to socio-economic realities and the political economy in Nigeria. This explains certain underlying reasons for growing poverty, inequality and general underdevelopment, which many authors (see, Agu, 2003; Akor, 2011; Oyekanmi and Okunola 2017; Dokpesi 2015) argue are often responsible for sustained out migration occasioning trafficking from the region.

The theory has overarching implications for this research thesis. Firstly, the introduction of economic recovery options, giving of aids and grants by Western dominated global financial regulatory institutions, to underdeveloped countries (including Nigeria), are seen as part of strategies furthering systematic under-development of the global south and sustaining it in its dependency status. As often argued such recovery options themselves represent the foundation to some fiscal and economic challenges that African (Nigeria) countries face (Akor, 2011) driving substantial out migration leading to labour and sexual exploitation mostly in the developed West.

Secondly, the exploitative relationship between the more powerful Western nations and Africa, Asia and Latin America dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century World capitalist system, as argued by Kay (1975), sets the stage for the world's socio-economic environment and migratory trends today. This allows countries like Nigeria, Bangladesh, Columbia and others to remain poor promoting patterns that involves the continuous flow of wealth and attraction of labour migrants (labour resources) to Western countries like UK, Europe, USA

and others. This encourages labour exploitation of migrants from poor countries including sexually exploited female migrants in destination.

Thirdly, this theory presents a neo-colonialism model of exploitation applicable particularly to the activities of Western oil exploration companies in the Niger-Delta (south-south) Nigeria, who in collusion with the country's political elites, exploit the people and ultimately impoverish them (Dokpesi and Igbinomwanhia, 2010). The model drawing from the dependency theory is multi-layered in nature with various stages of exploitation primarily triggered by the activity of the multinationals which support huge capital flight from the region to the West (ibid). Also, when the Western multinationals destroy the economic environment of the people during exploration they create conditions that push young adults to migrate in droves to the richer Western world in search of better living conditions. Such migrants become exploited as illegal migrants in restaurants, factories, farms and sex work joints in those same Western countries under labour laws that tacitly support exploitation (Hamilton-Smith, 2018). Buttressing the relevance of the theory to the thesis, Fanon (1961) also argued the root causes of today's overall exploitation of Africans relate to the continent's contact with Europe and the Western world.

## ***5.2. Political Economy of Colonial Labour System: Foundation of Exploitation of Africans (Nigerians)***

The global tradition of exploitation of the weaker nations could be seen to be embedded in the relationship between European colonial government and their colonies during the colonial era of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Amin 1976; Webster, 1990). In the case of Nigeria the country was among the numerous colonies ruled by the British colonial power between 1914 and 1960 (Okonofua, 2014). The official policy of the colonialists itself can be characterised as part of a predetermined plan to maximally exploit the local economy in terms of human and material resources for the economic benefit of the crown colonies' home government in Britain. Labour at that time was locally sourced at a very minimal price for the large-scale exploration, and exploitation in the extractive activities and agro-related production processes of the colonialists (Webster, 1990).

At the wake of colonialism, the need arose to maximise the productive capacity of the local people of the colony for sufficient income to sustain the European administrative and military control of the area (Bernstein, et al. 1990). This self-financing strategy was to be able to repatriate enough resources back to the economies of their home government, Britain in the case of most colonised Anglophone countries including Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and others in West Africa. This process led to the situation where colonies had to be incorporated into an international economy (Heldring & Robinson, 2013), with many of them subsequently becoming more economically exploited with the rise of global capital development (Bernstein, et al. 1990).

The creation and growth of the colonial economies within the international division of labour was made possible with the production of commodities for exportation from the respective colonial areas (Allen and Thomas ed., 1990). The emerging production activities both in the mining industries and at agricultural activities were carried out by the cheap labour from the local people. The local people often work in organised plantations owned by the various European companies or directly for the individual colonial settlers who acquired large agricultural lands (Kay, 1975). Pre-existing economic and social relations in Nigeria gave way to the colonial exploitation of local labour, establishing a pattern of exploitative relationships that arguably paved the way for contemporary patterns of exploitation both of Nigerians at home and abroad. This could be said to have laid the precedence for the now popular migratory pattern within which human trafficking with sexual exploitation of many migrants is found.

#### *Understanding Complexities of Migrants Labour and Sexual Exploitation in the Age Migration*

Understanding migrant exploitation in this age of migration (Castle 2014), is complex. Exploited migrants are often emigrants mostly from poorer countries who have found themselves in more prosperous nations working under dehumanising and exploitative labour conditions often because of their illegal immigration status (Oddone, 2018). Others have also argued that migrants who are desperate to reach richer countries, cross international borders with the help of people smugglers thereby potentially exposing themselves to exploitation. These are individuals who are attracted by generous welfare

supports and perceived economic advantage in their destination (Shelley, 2014), but often meet exploitation. Migrant exploitation is critical as a sore spot of the migratory process with millions of migrants often exploited in various shades. The case of agricultural migrant employees who work in Italy rural farm areas under some form of illegal employment system with labourers exploited for very little pay (see, Oddone, 2018), is of note. Workers gets fixed-term contracts of up to three months, but not all working hours are declared (ibid); labourers who reject the employers' conditions are denied their contract therefore losing their residency permits (also see, Weitzer, 2014). This makes the contract issue a form of blackmailing and promoting a systematic exploitation of the migrants which Weitzer believed could be quite dehumanising (ibid). The exploitation of migrants from West Africa, particularly Nigeria, in sex work in the destination European countries, especially in Italy, could also be considered as located within these wider tacit, exploitative labour conditions (Hamilton-Smith, 2018), many of them face in the destination. As already noted, many female migrants smuggled into Europe are normally exploited sexually (UNODC, 2016; Wietzer 2012). In this case, the labour of the victims that is exploited is the sale of sex.

As noted earlier, the growing rate of African migrants to Europe cannot be separated from colonialism and early European settlement in Africa which led to the establishment of migrant labour systems (Castle, et al 2014; Fanon 1961). However, Munro (2016) views the emergence of human trafficking generally in relation to new forms of exploitation and consumption. The researcher also puts in perspective Ruggiero's (1997) assertions regarding the place of human trafficking within capitalism. He argued that the type of exploitation that is involved in Karl Max capitalism theory is minimal compared to the one involved in human trafficking. The researcher explained that, Karl Max's capitalist concept emphasised that it is not the worker that is the commodity but the worker's power, while in slavery, as in the case of trafficked female sex slaves the victim is the commodity that is to be bought and sold.

### 5.3. Feminisation of Migration

Another theoretical viewpoint important for understanding of the issues discussed is the “feminisation of migration”. This will particularly be seen from the perspective of Castle & Miller (1998) and Donato & Gabaccia (2016).

Feminisation is considered as a key dimension of contemporary international migration according to Castle and Miller (1998) and Donato and Gabaccia (2016). The researchers argued that there has been a dramatic increase at which women now migrate in the last few decades making them to arrive in a perspective which they contrived as the “feminisation of migration” within the paradigm of the new age of migration. However, women are believed to have been part of migration as women were also among those who were taken as slaves from Africa to America and European countries during the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the early centuries of European empire-building. But Donato and Gabaccia (2016) argued that between 1960 and 2015 the number of female migrants across the world doubled compared to the previous decades. Reasons advanced by them for this boost in the rate of female migration include the increasing propensity of national laws particularly in Western countries restricting male dominated migration (ibid). Another possible dimension to this is that in contemporary times most liberal societies of the west are known to operate a legal/social policy system that pampers female gender more than their male counterpart. There could be other factors which may vary from country to country. About half of all international migrants today are said to be women (UNDP, 2009). This justifies the claim by Castle and Miller (1998) and Donato and Gabaccia (2016) that this could be contributory to the propensity for women to be exploited as migrants especially as many are illegal, clandestine and undocumented migrants at destinations. A criticism however puts that the greater visibility of female migrants in research over the last decades is only due to the feminisation of the ‘migratory discourse’ which contributes to the perception of an increasing feminisation of migration (Oso and Garson, 2005).

The feminisation of migration however helps frame the migratory trends and exploitation experienced by young women and girls from South-south Nigeria. This is especially relevant for women who are socio-economically displaced by the inherent patriarchal practices in the

region perpetuating a global trend of feminised migratory patterns. Various reports on sex trafficking activities, especially from Africa to Europe by government, media and NGOs have also indicated that in recent years many of the migrants arriving Europe via North-Africa countries like Libya are women and young girls. And that a greater number of them are forced into sex work, and a few others end up in other forms of labour exploitations.

Additional theories can also illustrate trafficking and migration related issues. Todaro's 1996 economic model of migration (see, Dokpesi, 2015) argues that spatial movement of labour overtime between rural (developing country) and urban (developed countries) sectors is mainly a function of the prevailing differences in expected income between labour within the two sectors. This theory has been applied in similar work on the central phenomenon in part of the region under study (see, Dokpesi, 2015). While relevant as a broad concept, it does not sufficiently explain the main focus and concerns of this work. While it covers issues of economic conditions and migration from a source country to a destination country which precedes trafficking, for this work, it does not adequately capture the important issue of culture of exploitation of the weak, and the highly gendered experience of migration and exploitation.

#### **5.4. Conceptual Framework**

Conceptual framework is the researcher's explanation of how the research problem will be explored (Adom et al. 2018). It is also an integrated way of seeing the problem (human trafficking and poverty) under investigation (Liehhr and Smith, 1999).

Generally, global understanding and conceptions of human trafficking have been subject to considerable contest. This partially poses a challenge in developing agreed responses and finding effective solutions to the problem. Most Western legislatures often link it to criminal tendencies and inclination towards anti-social behaviour (Anderson & O'Connell Davidson, 2003; Chuang, 2006), as a result, most Western governments overwhelmingly positioned trafficking within a framework of crime control and prevention. Many researchers and commentators, mostly in source countries, (e.g in West Africa) (see Okonofua et al. 2004; Akor 2011) have argued that broader social economic factors need to be considered. Also

pro-liberal anti-human trafficking Western researchers like Bennet (1999) and Musto (2009) partially agree with the source country researchers, prioritising socio-economic factors. The dominant Western perspective has also been in conflict with the local source country commentators and other researchers regarding the conditions under which victims are moved to destination countries from their homes before they are exploited sexually. There is also disagreement as to whether victims are usually aware of the condition they are placing themselves or not before leaving source country.

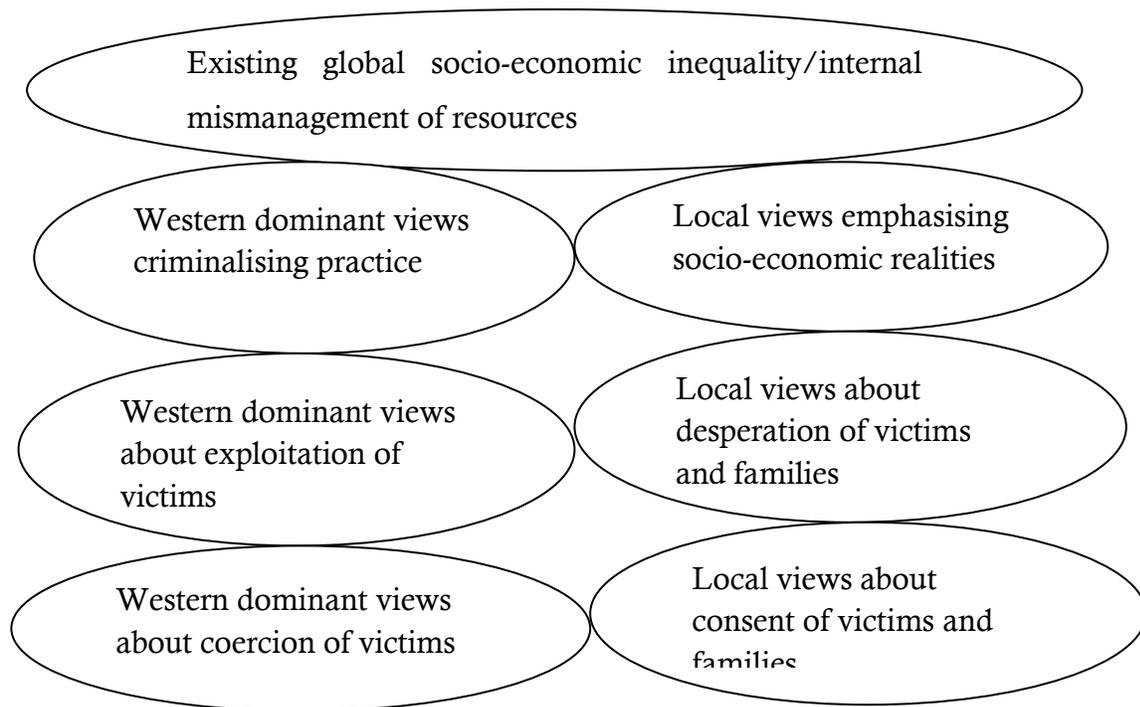
The uneven capitalist relationship between the rich Western countries and developing countries which creates a state of dependency and economic disadvantages unfavourable to developing countries is seen as important in explaining the underlying causes of the practice (Fanon 1961; Kay 1975; Webster 1990). But the argument is that the economic underdevelopment of poor source countries (e.g. Nigeria) is basically due to problematic internal values, and to socio-political and economic mismanagement. Other contentions between destination (mostly Western nations) and source countries (mostly developing countries) also exist regarding their framings of the growing global phenomenon of human trafficking. The thesis is consequently structured along a conceptual pattern highlighting the following tensions in perspectives.

- 1- Context of dominant Western conceptions of human and sex trafficking which favours criminalisation (Anderson & Davidson, 2003; Chuang, 2006; Farley, 2004; UNODC, 2019) versus local understanding which emphasises socio-economic realities and social structures (Soderlund, 2005; Okonofua, 2004)
- 2- Context of Exploitation by syndicates (Buckland, 2008; Venkatraman, 2003) versus Desperation of victims and families (Akor, 2011)
- 3- Context of Coercion by Syndicates (UN.GA 2001; also see, Ioannou, and Oostinga, 2015) versus Consent by victims and families (Okojie et al 2003 and Okonofua et al, 2004)
- 4- Context of the realities of existing global socio-economic inequality between developed and underdeveloped countries (Africa) that is linked to colonialism and neo-colonialism (Fanon 1961; Frank, 1967; Kay 1975; Webster 1990)

(underdevelopment theory); as against internal socio-political and economic mismanagement at source country (Modernisation theory)

The conceptual frame work of the thesis can better be viewed by looking at a graphical representation of it as put below.

**Figure 4. Thesis conceptual framework in diagram**



In line with the frame work, the research is structured in the direction of problematising the conflicts between the understanding of the causes and nature of sex trafficking in the studied region by both the destination (dominant) Western country perspectives and source African country local authorities and commentators. In all of these however, emphasis is placed on understanding the key contributing factors and circumstances surrounding practice response as made clear in the research aim.

Generally, the line of thought, assumption and argument of the thesis is that against popular belief, sex trafficking is a serious problem in South-south Nigeria (Onoriobholo 2008;

UNESCO, 2006), particularly in Edo state; as a departure from the dominant Western and global popular conceptions, traffickers are not solely responsible; victims and families in many cases seek known traffickers to take them abroad for sex work; victims and family in many cases know the circumstance trafficked girls are put into when they get to the destination; victims and families themselves are helpless with structural issues in the source country including poverty related conditions which act as formidable constraining factors pushing them to take risky decisions like going abroad for sex work; the structural factors especially unfavourable socio-economic conditions are linked to the existing global socio-economic inequality; this prevailing global socio-economic inequality is traceable to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism (Fanon 1961; Frank 1967).

## **5.5. Summary**

The preceding chapter considered the theoretical insights into the focus of this thesis. Andre Gunder Frank's (1967) dependency perspective established the role of dependency economic relationship between the poor south and rich north plays in orchestrating a labour migration trend which is seen as one of the foundations of the contemporary international labour exploitation pattern and human trafficking. Also, the section succinctly argued that the spread of sex trafficking of women and girls from developing countries in Europe is connected with the "feminisation of migration" theoretical viewpoint developed by Castle & Miller (1998) and Donato and Gabaccia (2016). The section also captured the complexities of labour migrant exploitation and concluded many of those exploited in the West are vulnerable and desperate migrants. The conceptual framework of the thesis, which was also presented under this section, dwells on the inherent contentions regarding the conception of the trafficking phenomenon between most Western policy makers, local commentators at source country and some dominant Western perspective critics. It was concluded that examining these conceptual contentions is crucial in order to properly understand the issue of human trafficking and respond to it effectively.

Basically, the argued pointers to socio-economic issues as contributors to sex trafficking in the country and the south-south region as seen in the preceding reviews inform the key aim and research questions of this thesis. This also forms the basis for the research design targeting

primarily to understand key explanatory factors and nature of response to the phenomenon of sex trafficking in South-south Nigeria.

## Chapter Six

### 6.0. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this study investigating the following research questions.

Question 1 - What is it that leads to sex trafficking in South-south Nigeria?

This question was operationalised through field questions such as: (i) What do you think can lead one to become a trafficking victim in this area? (ii) Do you think that the prevalence of human trafficking in the area is caused by any particular situation or condition? The aim of this question was to explore the area of study to identify those endogenous and exogenous push and pull factors that may contribute to sex trafficking in the region. This was followed by two sub research questions as can be seen in research question 2 & 3.

Question 2 – What role does poverty play in sustaining sex trafficking in South-south Nigeria?

This question was operationalised through field questions such as: (i) To what extent do you think poverty plays a role in promoting trafficking of women abroad for commercial sex in this area? (ii) Can you say if those who are trafficked abroad from this area and their relatives do well and benefit economically upon return?

Question 3 - What role do socio-cultural practices play in facilitating sex trafficking in South-south Nigeria?

This question was operationalised through field questions such as: (i) Do you feel that the position of women in local culture and society e.g the tradition that women are not allowed to inherit property, facilitate human trafficking in this area? ((ii) What other cultural traditions in the area might promote or prevent human trafficking in the area? Since there are many regions in Nigeria and West Africa that suffer poverty but do not have a high

prevalence of sex trafficking, it is natural to ask what else - beyond poverty – might explain the spread of sex trafficking practices.

Question 4 - What informs global and local official understanding and conception of the causes of human and sex trafficking in South- South Nigeria?

This question was operationalised through field questions such as: (i) What informs your understanding of the causes of human trafficking? (ii) To what extent does this affect your general idea of contributory factor? This fourth research question sought to understand the philosophy and foundation of responses of both international and local authorities in Nigeria and Western countries. This was mainly to establish if practice responses were based on an adequate understanding of the problem. This was also followed by a sub question as can be seen in research question 5

Question 5 - How does official understanding in turn shape practice responses?

How does this affect practice responses?

A breakdown of this research question included the following: (i) Do you reflect this in response plans? (ii) To what extent does this determine what you consider as ideal and the nature of your response? This fifth question hoped to determine whether or not the right conception of contributory factors translated into effective practice response or not.

## PART ONE

### **6.1. Study Design**

This subsection deals with the study design including the research method, the theoretical framework/orientation, the selection of field area and participants, and the development of the data collection instruments.

### 6.2. Research Method

This study utilised qualitative research methods as the research questions were primarily explorative. Qualitative methods investigate the why and how of the underlining process of

a social problem (Jones, 1995; Sanjari, et al, 2014). It is seen as a systematic approach of gaining understanding of a problem from a perspective of a given population who have encountered that problem (Castallan 2010; Creswell 2009). Basically, the study decided to use a qualitative approach because most previous work on sex trafficking within and outside Nigeria have been quantitative, emphasising enumeration (see, Udensi, 2011). Most Western researches on the phenomenon have particularly often stressed the counting of incidences with little attention paid to understanding the issue from an insider perspective and within the context of the people's (victim's) social life experiences (see, Giddens and Sutton, 2013; Gozdziaak & Micah, 2008). This approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of the underlying contributing factors to the problem rather than relying on superficial indications.

Though some have criticised its inability to comply with standards for reliability and validation in the traditional sense (see, Creswell, 2007; LeCompte and Goetz 1982), qualitative instead of quantitative methods sufficed in this study based on certain epistemological advantages. First, using a qualitative method allowed voices to be heard; reflecting the understandings, experiences and imaginings of research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings they generate. These features fitted this study as it sought to understand the nature of the relationship that exists between trafficking in persons and poverty and other key explanatory factors from the perspective of those who have experienced it in South-south Nigeria.

Qualitative methods lend themselves to the study of vulnerable and abused groups like the studied returnee victims of sex trafficking in this research. Qualitative approaches are quite flexible (Creswell, 2007), allowing the research, both to adapt to unexpected field situations and to be sensitive to the needs of vulnerable respondents (Correia and Wilson, 1997; Warden 2013). Epistemologically, a qualitative research approach is hinged on certain assumptions that form the justification of its use as a preferred research method in certain research situations including this. It is assumed the world is better understood when viewed from a subjective rather than an objective angle (Creswell, 2007; Udensi, 2011). That is,

interpreting the world in terms of an individual's subjective meanings instead of the researchers' objective construction as in quantitative approach.

Qualitative and quantitative epistemological approaches have come to represent two distinct school of thoughts in knowledge acquisition. While qualitative represents "interpretivism", (Stake, 2010), that is the system of knowing about reality through interpretation; quantitative represents "positivism", which emphasises reality only exist on cause and effect principles and that this reality can be measured (see, Udensi, 2011). Also, while quantitative work carries its meaning in its tables and summaries, qualitative work carries its meaning in its entire text; its meaning is in the reading (Holiday, 2007).

Meanwhile, when a qualitative method is chosen for a study, the theoretical frame work or philosophical orientation acknowledged should be made clear (Creswell, 2007). This study's theoretical framework is discussed below.

### 6.3. Research Method Theoretical Framework/Orientation

This research design locates the study within the theoretical frame work of social constructionism and thematic analysis. Social constructivism, often known with "interpretivism" (Mertens, 1998) is an interpretative framework in which individuals attempt to understand their world and construct their own meanings that match their experience (Creswell, 2013). The approach enables participants to willingly tell their experiences (Andrews, 2012; Creswell, 2017; 2013), and the researcher then has the task of making sense of the meanings these participants have about the world. Rather than starting with a theory while applying social constructivism, researchers often inductively develop a pattern of meanings (Crotty1998; Neuman 2000). Philosophically, in social constructionism the social phenomenon constituting the social world can only be real in the sense that they are constructed ideas reviewed regularly by social actors through social interaction and reflection (Galbin, 2014; Gergen & Davis, 1985; Matthews and Ross 2010). This view connotes that no social reality exists outside the meaning of the social phenomenon for the participants.

Social constructivism could mean a paradigm of research whereby knowledge is not seen as an insight into some objective reality, but constructed by humans, partially through social interactions (Andrews, 2012). The framework assumes an anti-realist, relativist epistemological position (Hammersley, 1992). Meanwhile, a difference can be made between social constructionism and the closest form – constructivism, as theoretical frameworks. While Constructivism proposes each individual mentally constructs the world of experience through cognitive processes (often used in Psychological researches), social constructionism has a social rather than an individual focus (Young and Colling, 2004).

The social constructionism framework was fitting for this qualitative research as it was a useful means of gaining access to participants' views and experiences of sex trafficking from South-south Nigeria to Europe. Importantly, the research undertook a cross-sectional study, that looked at individual participant's experience and opinions (Matthews and Ross, 2010), regarding sex trafficking, issues of poverty, other key explanatory factors and responses to the practice in South-south Nigeria.

Following the qualitative design embedded in the theoretical frame work of social constructivism, this research adopted an explanatory, descriptive and narrative approach in the presentation of field findings (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Mohammed, et al, 2014). This was preceded by the conducting of in-depth interviews; and then data analysis - thematic analysis (Creswell, 2007). Reporting of the victims' experiences under the findings section was done by first presenting specific life stories of returnee victims to represent a typical case of a trafficked victim, while trying to understand the life events surrounding victims' pre, during, and post trafficking experience. This helped capture cross-sectional accounts of trafficking victims' experiences as opposed to the usual practice of often focusing more on the immediate victim's event, downplaying long-term explanatory factors.

This research partially utilized an adaptive qualitative approach (Layder, 1998), being positioned somewhere in between case study and phenomenological research approaches. Instead of other specific qualitative approach, this adaptive approach was adopted as a more suitable alternative for the studying of a vulnerable and abused group, whilst at the same time capturing the voice of other relevant information-rich non-victims.

#### 6.4. Study Site and Area Selection

Creswell (2007) suggests, in a qualitative research, it is pertinent to adopt a purposeful method in selecting the site for study. In essence, the selection of a site is based on the fact that it can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (ibid). The study site in this work was Ikpoba-okha local government area (LGA). The area is one of the 18 local government areas of Edo state (south-south Nigeria). The area was identified because it had the cumulative highest cross-border sex trafficking cases in the state and in Nigeria (Olujuwon, 2007; NAPTIP, 2016), with Nigeria itself among the main source countries for human trafficking victims in sub-Saharan Africa (Carling, 2005; Onoiribholo, 2008; Okojie, et al 2003). Nigeria's main anti-trafficking agency NAPTIP had reported the area among the country's leading local areas out of 774 LGAs with high trafficking incidences over the last few years and said that it is now arguably the highest (NAPTIP, 2017).

The area was also identified because it is an area with serious spread of the practice existing side by side widespread poverty and inequality (National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) 2015). It is also an area with a mixture of rural and urban settlement, and most victims of sex trafficking are argued to often come from rural and rural-like settlements (Mohammed, 2014). Other areas where trafficking is also endemic in the region which were not selected include, Oredo, Egor, Abudu, Iguobazuwa, Okada, Ekpoma, Uromi, Auchi, Aviele and others (NAPTIP, 2016). These areas were not preferred for the study because they offer less in view of the focus of the field exploration and the research aim, compared to Ikpoba-okha. Ikpoba-okha has an area of 862 square kilometre, with a population of 372,080 (Male - 184,725 and female – 187,355) (City-population, 2017). The predominant ethnic group in the area is called the Bini. The researcher refers to this area as the 'main field area'. Participants from among inhabitants of the area were identified for the field work. Below is a chart showing prevalence of human trafficking per local government area in Edo state as published by NAPTIP, wherein Ikpoba-okha is indicated as a core endemic area.

Table 1. Below is a chart showing prevalence of human trafficking per local government area in Edo state.

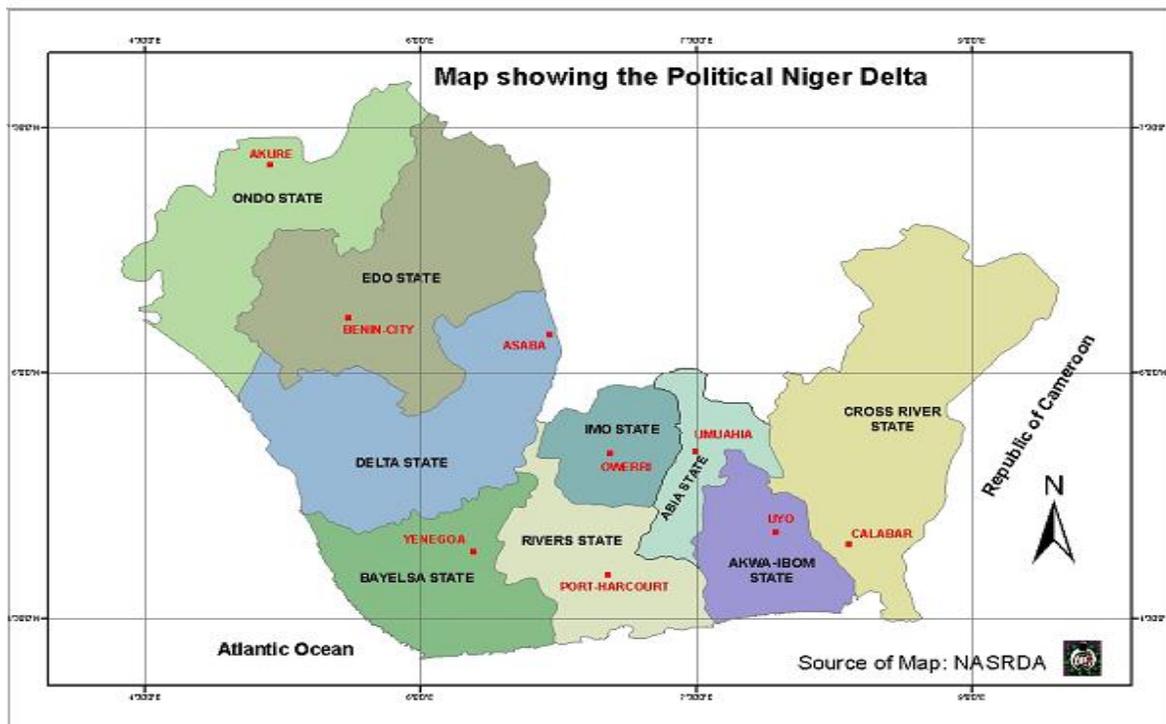
Victims of Human Trafficking from Edo state from 2004-March 2017

S/ N	Local Govt Area/HQTS	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
1	Oredo (Benin City)		3	9	3	6	20	7	20	7	10	12	9	15		121
2	Orhionmwon (Abudu)		5	8	5	12	19	18	39	10	13	22	14	18	3	186
3	Ikpoba-okha (Idogbo)			18	13	18	16	19	43	14	19	25	13	9		207
4	Igueben (Igueben)		1		4	6	6			2	3	1	4	6		33
5	Esan Central (Irua)	2	1	2	7	1	2	6	8		4			4		37
6	Esan South East (Ubiaja)	1	1	1	10	7	5		7	2	5	1	4	11	1	56
7	Esan North-East (Uromi)	4	7	7	7	12	7	9	11	8	5	14	15	8		114
8	Esan West (Ekpoma)		1	1	10	11	7	5	12	5	6	4	6	5	1	74
9	Akoko Edo (Igarra)				7	1	5	7	1			7		3		31
10	Owan East (Afuze)				1	1	7		5		2			3		19
11	Owan West (Sabongida Ora)		1				6	8	3					6	1	25
12	Etsako Central (Fugar)		1			5	3							2		11
13	Etsako West (Auchi)		1	2	2	1		2	2	2	6		5	3	1	27
14	Uhunmwode (Ehor)		8	4	4	7	7	7		7	5	8	5	30	3	88
15	Egor (Urelu)		1	3	3	8	6	7	10	11	3	10	6	13		81
16	Ovia-South-West (Iguobazuwa)		1			2	3		14		3	3	7	6	1	40
17	Ovia North-East (Okada)			2	2	4	4	1	13		6	8	7	17	1	65
18	Etsako East (Agenebode)					2	1		9		1	1	3	3		20
	Total	7	32	57	78	104	124	96	197	68	91	116	98	162	12	1235

The above chart obtained from NAPTIP indicates the number of human trafficking victims per each of the 18 local government areas of Edo state from 2004 to 2017. In it, Ikpoba-okha the field area of this study on serial number 3 has the cumulative highest cases of identified victims of human trafficking for the period considered. Ikpoba-okha was reported to have

207 cases while Orhionmwon (serial no.2) and Oredo (serial no.1) local government areas which are the main neighbouring areas to Ikpoba-okha are second and third respectively in terms of prevalence. The nearness of the first three leading local government areas (Ikpoba-okha, Orhionmwon and Oredo) geographically may say something about the wide spread of human trafficking activities in that particular geographical space of the south-south region. In other words this could be explained by some unique factors which need to be investigated by subsequent studies. In the chart, it was reported that within the period considered, about 1,235 cases have been recorded in the state. These however, represent cases that victims, relatives and other interested persons have come out to report to the agency. Many trafficking activities are believed to be shrouded in secrecy as referenced earlier in the literature review. In other words more cases of trafficking than what was documented could be said to have been going on in the area over the period covered by the chart.

Figure 5. Map of South-south Nigeria



Map re-produced from Google site [https:// www.google.co.uk/url?](https://www.google.co.uk/url?) Source: NASRDA. (<https://www.nasrda.net/>. Assessed (31/07/2018);

Above is the map of South-south Nigeria, showing the six states of the region including Edo where the field area of this research is located. Three other states (Ondo, Abia and Imo) which are not South-south states but oil producing states, are also seen in the map.

#### 6.5. Participants' Identification and Recruitment

Similar to the identification of the study site the purposeful sampling method was used in selecting the population for the study (Castellan 2010; Creswell 2009). Under purposeful sampling, individuals are selected because they have experienced the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). It involves identifying and selecting individuals or group of individuals who are knowledgeable concerning the problem of interest (*ibid*), this time sex trafficking. This is relevant since qualitative work entails understanding actions from the perspective of human agents (Haig 1995). In a qualitative research, a definitive sample size is not mandatory before going to field (Udensi, 2011). However, in view of the research design, a projected number of participants was identified for the field work.

Officials of the main official response agency – NAPTIP and that of two (visible) NGOs were selected/identified and assisted in identifying and recruiting participants for the field work in Nigeria. Their involvement in this regard was in the area of identification and access (which is important because of their existing working relationship with victims and relatives). This replaces the possible use of political leaders (councilors) to identify participants in their political wards to minimize potential political bias. NGO and NAPTIP officials who assisted in the recruitment process were given orientation regarding the ethical standards of the research work and made to familiarise themselves with the information document and the informed consent form before participating in the exercise.

Participants in the research field work were categorised into three as can be seen below in table 2.

<b>Category one</b>	<b>Category 2</b>	<b>Category 3</b>
1.Selected returnee victims of sex trafficking of the study area	1.Seleceted inhabitants of the area	1.Selected Nigerian government representatives
2.Selected relatives of victims of sex trafficking of the study area		2.Nigerian government main official response agency
		3.Selected Nigerian NGOs

### Category one

Under category 1, identifying the ex-victims (women and young girls) as participants is clearly central to understanding the trafficking survivor experiences. The relatives of trafficked victims are also relevant in a qualitative exploration like this because they can often be seen to play a major role in Nigeria in the process of exposing victims to exploitation (Carling, 2005).

For this category, efforts were made to identify at least one returnee victim from each of the ten political wards in Ikpoba-okha. At least one relative of a victim from each of the ten political wards was also identified to participate. Two returnee victims were identified for life stories to enhance understanding and complexities of victim experience.

Participants in this category responded to questions on research questions 1 and 2.

#### Category two

Under category 2, the inhabitants of the area identified are important because victims come from among the wider population who form part of the potential victim population. Understanding the wider demographics and circumstances also locate victimhood in the social environment as part of the overall trafficking process in the region. They participate in the process of human trafficking activity from a privileged close range, so they know almost as much as the relatives of the victims would know and would want to make more revelations than the relatives would make.

For this category, inhabitants of the area who are not relatives of victims were identified (five participants) from each of the 10 political wards. An additional seven of them were identified for one of the two focus group discussion sessions.

Those in this category responded to questions on research questions 2 and 3

#### Category three

Under this category, Nigerian government, agency and relevant non-governmental organisation officials interviewed are important as they not only have insights into the nature and characteristics of trafficking but they also have key insights into policy formulation and practice responses in the area.

For this category two active NGOs operating in Edo state namely the (1) Girls Power Initiative (GPI) and the (2) Idia Renaissance were selected as participants. Apart from interviewing a representative from each of the NGOs, the researcher worked with one of them to organise one of the two focus group discussion sessions involving their management team (seven of them). This researcher did not only leverage on the existing working relationship with the NGOs to secure their cooperation but also convinced them on the benefits the outcome of the research holds for their official activities.

Under this category, a representative each from the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs of Nigeria, the Edo State Ministry for Women Affairs, the Ikpoba-okha local government council, and the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons in Nigeria (NAPTIP) were included in the interview sample.

Participants in the focus group discussed issues concerning research questions 1, 2 and 3. Participants interviewed as representatives of the NGOs and NAPTIP responded to research questions 1 and 3. For representatives of government at the different levels, focus was on research questions 1, 4 and 5.

#### *Why Traffickers were not Interviewed*

It may be expected that known traffickers be included among the participants identified for research exploring trafficking patterns. This is especially as they are the offenders reported and known to commit the act. I did not include traffickers for two related reasons – which are access difficulty and safety. As individuals who are classified as criminals and wanted for prosecution by the law, traffickers will be hard to reach for the purpose of a research study like this. In their absence, victims' accounts provide relevant information in relation to their routes to identification and victimization.

### **6.6. Developing Data Collection Instruments**

In qualitative research, to examine people's experience in detail, a specific set of research instruments such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, life histories, observations, and content analysis are recommended (Hennik et al, 2011; Patton 1990). This study therefore used some of the above listed tools for data collection. This includes: interviews, focus group discussion and life histories/stories. Field notes were also kept during the field work to aid reflection and clarity. Field notes are an important tool to provide an outlet for the researchers' thoughts, interpretations new understandings and a place to continually write about emerging new ideas from the study (Forner, 1995).

During the field work, participants were interviewed using semi-structured open-ended questions. According to Cohen & Manion, (1989, p307), "Interview is a form of conversation that are 'initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining

research-relevant information and focused on content specified research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation”. It may have been argued that this type of research tool may come with its own challenges but it is clear that the advantages in applying it in a qualitative exploration which focuses on understanding meanings and underlining motives through reliving participants’ experiences is critical. With interviews, the researcher can explore ideas or concepts that cannot be directly observed (Patton, 1980) while engaging the participants. Research interviews explore the views, experiences, beliefs and/or motivations of individuals on specific matters (Gills et al., 2008). Interviews were used in this work to explore victim’s views, experience (and motivation for moving) of sex trafficking victims. Other participants’ views and understanding regarding sex trafficking and poverty in South-south Nigeria was also explored through the interview technique.

Unlike standardized questionnaires semi-structured open-ended interviews allow respondents more opportunity to express their views in their own words rather than limiting them to fixed choice responses. The flexibility of the approach compared to structured interviews or questionnaires allows for the discovery or elaboration of information that is important to the participants but may not have previously been thought of as vital (Gills et al, 2008). This attribute of interviews enhances the work as it emphasised explanation and exploration of sex trafficking and poverty in detail. Since this type of interview is also usually fairly informally, it is suitable for work with more vulnerable population (like this involving returnee victims of sex trafficking) as participants may be relaxed feeling they were taking part in an informal conversation. The use of open-ended interviews helped during the work allowing participants considerable control over the interview process (Corbin and Morse, 2003), thereby balancing the inquirer’s power against the participant’s.

The interviews were conducted in venues most suitable for the participants (Gills et al, 2008) and the researcher. Victims and relatives were interviewed at the NAPTIP office, inhabitants in their homes and others in their offices. The researcher ensured the participants are comfortable with the idea of being interviewed using the interview format.

Focus group discussions, a research technique that employs interviews on a specific topic with small group of people (Thomas et al, 2015), are also included in the design. The field

work conducted two focus group discussion sessions examining the views of participants on some of the research questions. This type of research technique may have some demerits but it is obvious that the merits in applying it in a qualitative exploration which focuses on understanding meanings and underlining motives through peoples accounts, is significant. It is normally useful in generating rich understanding of participants' experiences and beliefs (Morgan, 1998). As a qualitative tailored technique, it is suitable for this type of research which seeks rich understanding concerning the sex trafficking phenomenon and poverty in the region under study.

This technique is also particularly efficient because researchers are able to gather information about several people in one session (Thomas et al, 2015). This enhances the quality of data gathered in this study as participants knowledgeable about sex trafficking in the field area (Ikpoba-okha) easily discussed ideas and thoughts in the group setting. This technique helps especially with the opportunity to get information from a collection of field workers and experts dealing with trafficking activities in the south-south Nigeria in a single session. The group participants brought to the table salient, technical and informed viewpoints regarding the phenomenon of trafficking in the region, arising from their daily field experience. Since focus group discussion interviews can also ensure quality controls as participants tend to provide checks and balances by curbing false or extreme views (Patton, 2002), using it in this study provided additional advantage. Using this technique the group members get to hear the views and thoughts of others which may stimulate the individuals to perhaps rethink their own ideas (ibid). Also, because focus group discussion sections are usually exciting, participants think less of being evaluated and then do not hold back whatever information they have about the subject matter. This is another good attribute of this instrument which helped the quality of the textual data needed in this research.

Regarding life stories, Creswell (2007) defines "story" as aspects that surface during an interview in which the participants describe a situation, usually with a beginning, a middle and an end, so that the researcher can capture a complete idea and integrate it, intact, into the qualitative narrative. When a story is about a person, it captures life history that reveals certain encounters of his/her life. This is vital especially when an individual's life story can illuminate a phenomenon like sex trafficking under study. Drawing on these positive

attributes of life story work, the researcher uses the technique with two participants (returnee victims) to further explore socio-economic, cultural or other events that led to sex trafficking. It was also used to particularly ensure more in-depth exploration of specific antecedents preceding victimization, contextualizing and personalizing victim experiences from other interviews.

The use of life story technique particularly helped the research design of the thesis because the work focuses on looking out for existing experiences of victims rather than looking at the immediate in explaining sex trafficking practice. In essence, a life story perspective on the victim's journey towards trafficking provides a richer way of looking at the problem rather than short term account that is often identified by the West, for example, focusing on victim and offender frame work.

#### ***6.7. Distinction between the Two Life Stories and the Regular Interviews of Victims***

Two victims' life histories were included in the research design despite the use of open ended interviews because life stories can also illuminate hidden information about an individual that ordinarily short term accounts interviews will not capture. Such salient information may help in understanding certain actions or decisions taken by some women or girls or even their relatives (that may have resulted in exploitation) by placing these decisions within the broader context of their life course and life experiences. In summary, life histories capture a victim's journey towards trafficking offering a richer way of looking at the problem rather than short term accounts (from interviews) informed by aggregated experiences.

#### *Samples of Field Questions for the Various Participants*

In a social constructivist perspective qualitative research questions are expected to be open-ended, broad and general so that participants can construct meaning of situation via interaction with the researcher (Creswell, 2007). This stance also informs the field questions that were asked at the fieldwork as shown below. Here are samples of the field questions

Questions for Victims of trafficking

Can you recall what pushed you to become trafficking victim?

What do you think make most women in this area to become victims of trafficking?

What role do you think poverty plays in women becoming sex trafficking victims?

Do you and your family benefit financially from being trafficked abroad?

Can you please explain how poverty can possibly lead to trafficking of women abroad for prostitution?...

(See Appendix C as attached for guide to field questions).

## PART TWO

### **6.8. Gatekeepers and Access Arrangement for Participants**

The ability for a researcher to liaise well with gatekeepers is often very important to any success in accessing participants, field sites and other vital facilitators of the field work (Johnson, 2014). Sometimes they represent the needed guide and guard for the navigation of the field work process. For me my supervisors (in a way) were the first gatekeepers that I needed to work with prior going to the field area of my study. This was followed by heads of the Benin Zonal Command of NAPTIP (the Commander and the Public Relations Officer); heads of the two local NGOs in the region that participated in the field work (GPI and Idia Renaissance); the Director of Women in Federal Ministry of Women Affairs of Nigeria; The commissioner of Women Affairs and Special Duties of Edo State; and the Head of Service of Ikpoba-Okha Local government area in Edo state. It is important to note that the public relations officer of NAPTIP Edo Zonal Command was crucial in accessing the organisation's key informant that participated in the field work and in having access to the returnee victims. Additionally, the officer facilitated my daily access to the command office where there is substantial restrictions on movement in and out of the arena in view of the sensitive nature of its statutory task.

Regarding accessing the participants, key informants of the main agency and identified NGOs involved in responding to human trafficking, were willing to partake in the exercise

seeing it as aligning with and complementing their official responsibilities. But having returnee victims of human trafficking and their relatives agree to participate was challenging as was access to some government officials for interviews. The reasons are: the issue of human trafficking is a serious crime and people may not want to publicly identify with it for fear of stigmatization. Secondly, bureaucratic conditions can delay official approval for government workers to participate especially in sensitive issues like this. The engagement of NAPTIP authorities and the NGOs (Idia Renaissance and GPI) to access participants especially victims of sex trafficking, victims' relatives and their own officials, made the task easier.

The researcher sent out letters of appointment for interviews early to the various government and non-governmental institutions. This was sent way ahead to allow the participating representatives to secure approval and schedule the interviews. Responses to these letters were positive as they all agreed to participate as already indicated above. Before sending these letters the issue was discussed with the respective organizations through my contact persons prior leaving for my field work from UK, which also facilitated access. Access arrangements were commenced with the Federal Ministry for Women affairs of Nigeria when I got to the field area in Nigeria, a process that was more straight forward and helped with data collection.

Mohammed et al., (2014) and Lewis (2015) emphasise the need to establish rapport with participants to provide study access and yield valid data. The researcher leveraged on an existing rapport with the Nigerian local NGOs officials and government representatives to secure interview appointments. Essentially, the researcher moderated the process of the access agents' (NAPTIP and NGOs) involvement to avert what could be seen as undue influence on the field exploration process which may have negative ethical implication.

#### ***6.9. Access Arrangement for Participants: Returnee Victims, Relatives of Victims and Inhabitants of Ikpoba-okha***

Generally access arrangement for participants, was challenging and complex both ethically and logistically. I however relied on existing rapport with many of the agencies and other

stakeholders who are actively involved in responding to human trafficking in the region to arrange and reach participants.

#### *Access Arrangement for Returnee Victims*

The official government agency operating in the region, NAPTIP, had the most direct contact with returnee victims and was therefore used to engage and reach these individuals. I had informed my gatekeepers in NAPTIP that I would like to interview at least one victim from each of the ten wards in the area (The local government area was divided along the existing ten political wards of the area with two victims (at most) interviewed per ward, for appropriate spread of the sample). I also told them that I would prefer those who had returned a few years back that the agency had worked with. The officer worked with me to select the victims and he then made the initial contact (and placed phone calls across to the people). Through this method, we were able to get just enough representing the various wards to meet the proposed sample. Those who volunteered to participate were fully briefed and following consent were scheduled for interview on days convenient for them, with each interview taking up to one and a half or even two hours in some cases.

#### *Access Arrangement for Relatives of Victims*

Similar to the returnee victims' case, relatives of victims in the area were also selected via an arrangement made in conjunction with staff of NAPTIP. The staff simplified the process by agreeing to contact relatives that they had worked with in the past who have become regular visitors to the office for one issue or the other regarding their daughter/ward. Fifteen were able to be reached and accepted to part take in the field interview. Those who volunteered were scheduled for interviews on different days that were convenient for them. Some of the interview dates had to be rescheduled as a few participants were unable to attend on the agreed date while one particularly refused to turn up. This eventually resulted in 14 participants who finally participated in the interview. I had also ensured that at least I reached one relative (whether male or female) from each of the ten wards of the local government area.

### *Access Arrangement for Inhabitants of Ikpoba-okha Local Government Area*

Though NAPTIP and the NGOs also helped to identify a few of the inhabitants of the field area (Ikpoba-okha), I personally had to visit most of the various wards to select those who were interviewed. This took a two day initial visit to the area taken time out to classify the area working with my contacts in NAPTIP particularly and some informal informants resident in the area.

#### Day 1

Following my first visit I had identified a few streets in each of the ten wards based on certain informal information I had gathered (regarding which streets were most likely to have residents who were knowledgeable about trafficking practices in the area) to select persons who were willing to participate. They were then named (e.g. unit 1 ward 1 and 2).

#### Day 2

On my second day of initial visit five participants each were identified to participate from each of the wards for interview. I held preliminary recruitment discussions with those that volunteered to be interviewed agreeing on when I would come back to conduct the formal interview. During this second visit I administered the information sheet and the informed consent document to those who had volunteered.

A few of the volunteered participants could not read and I had to read the content of the informed consent and information sheet to them, obtaining their consent verbally. There were a small number of cases where even after initial introductory visit individuals were still unsure whether to participate or not when I returned on the scheduled date for the interview. At this point they were allowed to take their time and make up their mind. Almost all of them eventually participated, with the exception of five people who had changed their minds. In all a total 45 inhabitants of the area participated. Additional reflections on access arrangement for inhabitants of the field area (Ikpoba-okha) will be discussed under the field reflection section.

### *Access Arrangement for Focus Group Discussion Participants*

While one of the local NGOs (GPI) volunteered its management team for the first focus group discussion the other session was undertaken with inhabitants of Ikoba-okha. The process for arranging for the NGO focus group discussion participants was completed during my meeting and discussion with the head of the NGO (GPI).

Following the permission of the head of the NGO, the organisation's unit heads were assembled and briefed of my intention. They all agreed to participate after reading the information sheet and signing the informed consent document. We agreed to fix the meeting for the same date with the weekly management meeting of the NGO. This was to enable full attendance of the selected unit heads during the focus group discussion section. Those that participated were heads of units in charge of functions like awareness campaign and sensitisation, girl child education, victim rehabilitation and reintegration etc.

For the second focus group section, during my visit to identify those to participate in the interview of the inhabitants, I had used the opportunity to identify potential focus group participants. (The potential participants were identified based on information that they have personally closely experienced trafficking or knowledgeable about the problem. Two of them have relatives who have been trafficked while two were still under pressure to get to Europe either through sponsorship by trafficking syndicates or family efforts. The fifth one did not belong to any of these categories but demonstrated deep knowledge of trafficking practices in the region. I discovered this about the potential participants through informal information gathered before embarking on the selection).

To select the five of them that participated, I had also divided the ten wards of the local government area into five units and got one participant each from each of them. Having identified the five participants I sought for their consent to participate after explaining the objectives of the study. They familiarised themselves with the information sheet and consent form and agreed to participate. The focus group was held in a space (a school Hall) that was provided by one of the participants.

## **6.10. The Role of Research Assistants in Data Collection and Resolution of Emerging Ethical Issues**

To minimise potential for secondary victimisation, (since the main participants in the study were females), I engaged the services of female assistants to assist during the field work. Two female assistants were employed to interview returnee victims both in the interview section and life histories. These assistants were staff members of NAPTIP who were recommended by the authorities to me. Both assistants were paid by the researcher and not by NAPTIP their main employer. An appropriate wage for this fieldwork assistance was determined in consultation with the assistants and their main employer. Both assistants had worked with trafficked victims and were familiar with the sensitivities involved. They were both appropriately briefed on the specifics of the research and the particular ethical considerations and processes involved.

The assistants' role was to conduct the interviews and to hand audio recordings over to me for transcription and analysis. They were given orientation on how to handle victims to avoid further victimisation and other ethical challenges. For instance they were told not to insist that the returnee victim continued to relive her experience if she became unwilling. In cases where the victim becomes deeply emotional or impacted by the questions they were also told to discontinue the interview. There was a particular case where the victim broke down while recounting her experience and the female researcher had to discontinue the interview. Another envisaged ethical issue that was also resolved was to make sure the female assistants were in possession of my telephone number and that of my contact person (a colleague of theirs) in case any incidents or safety concerns arose during interview sessions.

## ***6.11. Ethical Implications in Access Arrangement and how they were Resolved***

The involvement of NGOs and third parties to help arrange access to individuals raised ethical issues. I ensured that the involvement of the agency and NGOs staff for recruitment and access arrangement for returnee victims and relatives of victims did not affect the outcome of the study both ethically and in terms of credibility of process. The arrangements were supervised and moderated by myself to monitor the process and to ensure the agents

and NGOs only provided recommendations and initial access to the participants. All those involved in the process were provided with an orientation and briefing reflecting the content and specifications of the ethics approval given by the school's ethics committee. Also while making arrangement for access and identification of returnee victims interviewed, care was taken to ensure that only those who returned to the region a long time ago were engaged as noted earlier. Those who just arrived were not selected as they were viewed as being more vulnerable to reliving their traumatic experiences, and asking them to recount their stories may further aggravate their distress and any underlining mental health conditions. Less recent returnees also tend to be safer to interview because officials (from NAPTIP who assisted with interview) have known them and their relatives and understand their vulnerability to questioning.

Also because of the sensitive nature of the research I ensured that all participants (including the 45 inhabitants of the area that were interviewed) understood the purpose of the research and were able to provide fully informed consent before participating. All the participants were aged 18 years and above (i.e returnee victims, victims' relatives, inhabitants and others) negating the need for additional consent of a parent or guardian. This does not mean that some returnee victims who participated may not have been trafficked while they were in their early teens but by the time they were interviewed they were at least 18.

Safety, both physically and psychologically of participants (and the interviewers) were seen as potential ethical issues during the field work. This was handled in the following ways: (1) through the employment of the female assistants to interview the female victims; (2) by not selecting returnee victims that just returned; (3) by not insisting to interview a victim who becomes emotional; (4) by making sure that participants were only interviewed upon their consent; (5) by interviewing participants at areas ascertained as free from any form of security threat; (6) by making arrangement with a contact person who could be reached at the event of any security threat or unpleasant occurrence; and (7) by making arrangement for easy reach to security authorities in the area. Further ethical issues and how they were tackled will be discussed under the field experience reflection and ethics sections in this chapter.

## 6.12. Field Work

Following the ethics committee approval, I embarked on the fieldwork. As mentioned, the fieldwork was carried out at Ikpoba-Okha in Edo state, Nigeria. The Fieldwork lasted for seven months (September 3, 2016 to April 4 2017). I had conducted 82 interviews (including two life stories) and two focus group discussion sessions. This was against the 96 that was initially considered. The reason for the discrepancy was that some of the participants who were originally identified to participate failed to part take. For instance, only 17 out of the 20 proposed returnee victims were finally available to participate. Also, only 14 out of the 20 proposed relatives of victims were ready to participate. For the field area inhabitants, 5 out of the 50 earmarked declined participation.

The two proposed focus group discussion sessions were carried out as tabled below.

Table 3. Table showing the focused group discussion schedule chart during the field work

Focus Group Category	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2
Participants	Management of one of the participating NGOs	Selected inhabitants of Ikpoba-okha local communities
Number of participants	7	5
Duration	1hour 15 minutes	1 hour 5minutes
Date	16/11/2016	18/01/2017
Venue	NGOs' office	Donated space at Ikpoba-okha community

In all, out of the 110 projected participants 94 finally participated.

The achieved sample during the fieldwork is represented in the table below.

Table 4. Table showing achieved sample, key characteristics and codes

S/N	Category of participant	Gender	Role	Anonymised code	Number of sample
1	Returnee victim of sex trafficking	Female n=17	Sex trafficking victim	HTP01-victim	17
2	Relatives of victims	Male (n=5) and female (n=9)	Parents, siblings, others	HTP02-relative	14
3	Federal government main response agency (NAPTIP)	Male n=1	Human trafficking government response	HTP03-Govt Agency1	1
4	Representative of federal government ministry of women affairs	Female n=1	Human trafficking government Response	HTP04-Govt Agency 2	1
5	Edo state government ministry of women affairs	Male n=1	Human Trafficking Government response	HTP05-Govt Agency 3	1
6	Ikpoba-okha Local Government Council	Female n=1	Human trafficking Government Response	HTP06-Govt Agency 4	1
7	Local anti-human trafficking Non-Governmental	Female n=1	Local NGO involve in human trafficking response	HTP07-NGO1	1

	Organisation (NGO) (GPI)				
8	Local anti-human trafficking NGO (Idia Renaissance)	Male n=1	Local NGO involved in human trafficking response	HTP08-NGO2	1
9	Inhabitants of Ikpoba-okha Local Government Area	Male (n=17) and female (n=28)	People living in the area of study	HTP09-Inhabitants	45
10	Focus Group Discussion Participants	Female (n=7)	(1)Management team of one of the Local NGOs  And	HTP10-FGD1	7
11	Focus Group Discussion Participants	Females (n=2)  Males (n=3)	(2) selected inhabitants of the study area	HTP11-FGD2	5
*Not e	Of the 17 victims interviewed about 60% were between the ages of 15 and 19 when they were first trafficked.				

No discernible pattern was noticed for the non-participation of the earlier identified participants. Non-participation though could have plausibly been for a variety reasons. For the victims, it could have been for the reasons of fear of stigmatization, shyness or not wanting to recall her traumatic experience or even family protest against the idea of talking to people about her trafficking experience. For the relatives it could be for the probable fear of getting implicated. As revealed from the field exploration, parents and relatives were also

often suspects as collaborators in the trafficking of their daughters and wards in the region. Decisions not to participate were respected.

### **6.13. Data Analysis**

In a qualitative study, data are collected focusing on a multifaceted interviews and narratives to produce a description of the experiences (Mohammed, et al, 2014). To ensure this, data analysis is important, and the approach in this work is thematic analysis (Creswell, 2007). Thematic analysis involves identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within textual data. The process also involves simply coding, categorisation and identification of themes. It often goes further to interpret various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis 1998). Because thematic analysis does not rely on pre-existing theoretical frameworks like discourse analysis and others, it is a more accessible approach, and applicable to a broad variety of frame works (Braun & Clarke 2006) including the case in this research. Using this approach, the researcher makes sense of the collected data by exploring and interpreting them. The inquirer therefore plays the role of a mediator between the participants and their experience (Bloor, 2006).

In this study the data analysis commenced while on the field. The researcher generally started by preparing and organising the data, reducing the data into themes and interpreting the results during and after the field activity (Lewis 2015). As an ongoing process, the recorded textual data were transcribed electronically, coded with phrases for easy interpretation, the data was then sorted, sifted, read, reread and themes were codified for easy categorisations and final reporting (Strauss and Corbin 1987). Generally, the data analysis process was done manually by this researcher (Lee and Fielding 1991) as described below.

#### *Practical Process of the Manual Data Analysis*

The adopted manual data analysis followed Lofgren (2013) “qualitative analysis of Interview data”. I started first by familiarisation with the manuscripts from the field work; then reading and re-reading the manuscripts. This was to make sure I become more conversant with the work. Acquainting myself with the data started from the field. I tried to

listen over and over again to participants' responses after every day's field work. In the next stage, I made notes from the manuscripts identifying what I feel is striking regarding my preconceived notions, existing knowledge and theories about the core phenomenon (sex trafficking) and what is common across participants responses. Then thirdly, I created codes out of the identified notes by indexing them. The fourth stage was to select these codes into themes/categories to form part of the findings. Then the fifth stage was to label these categories into a sort of broader themes. These themes were then interpreted. It is these interpreted thematic findings that represent the result of the exploration (Mohammed et al, 2014), which are used to respond to the research questions, and propose new ideas about the nature and characteristics of sex trafficking in the region.

#### ***6.14. Validity, Reliability and Representational Generalisability***

In qualitative research, validity means the quality of the theoretical inferences that are made out of the qualitative data that is crucial to the assessment of generalisation (Bryman 2004). It concerns the integrity and application of the methods undertaken and the precision in which the findings accurately reflect the data (Nobles & Smith, 2015). The validity of the outcome of this work was primarily enhanced by employing the most suitable method of participant recruitment, data collection, data analysis and compliance with ethical standards. Significantly, I ensured personal biases were reduced considerably not to undermine the field findings and overall research outcome (Morse et al, 2002). I also ensured that rich and thick verbatim descriptions of participants' accounts were used to support findings in the final report of the thesis (Slevin, 2002).

To ensure validity, I also resorted to data triangulation using different perspectives to help produce a comprehensive set of findings (Long & Johnson, 2000; Fraser & Greenhalgh, 2001). Triangulation allows the qualitative research to gain some level of a detailed and balanced picture of the situation regarding the subject of study (Altrichter, et al, 2008). Use of more than one method in this research data collection (one-on-one interviews, focused group discussion, and life history, plus the literature review) is a form of triangulation that helped in producing detailed information on the sex trafficking subject which enhanced the validity of the work. The combination of diverse data sources (victims, relatives, non-

victims inhabitants, practice response agents, government) was also a triangulation process in order to ensure a clear and quality understanding of key explanatory factors of sex trafficking and challenges of responses to the problem in south-south Nigeria as explored. Though triangulation itself may not necessarily ensure validity but Mays & Pope (2000) consider it a reliable means of producing a complete and reflexive data analysis.

I also took cognisance of the importance of the issue of reliability in a qualitative research work like this. One of the methods I applied to ensure this was to carefully describe each of the processes involved in the study. This was to help in eliminating possible misrepresentations or personal biases since data which represent life experiences are collected via face-to-face situation which is opened to misinterpretation. Other approaches which helped with enhancing the reliability includes the systematic way the research was conducted and reported and the quality support of interpretations by data (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). Also, clarification was often sought in case of uncertainty (Shank, 2006). Similarly, clarity, as a matter of importance, was ensured during the data analysis and interpretations (Sandelowski, 1993) clarifying processes, procedures and concepts.

The study also possesses some quality of generalisability though not in the quantitative sense of it. Generalisability is the traditional strength of quantitative research, but qualitative research is considered to have stronger validity. The study ensured what could be termed representational generalisation making sure the sample is a true reflection of the population studied and that the conclusions therein are exact reflection of the participants' responses (Murphy et al., 1998). In this work, collected data was used suitably and fully to strengthen the interpretation provided as mentioned earlier. This was done in the study by reporting the research finding with a detailed description (Geertz, 1978). This entails ensuring that diversity of the data was contained within the reported findings as can be seen in the findings section (see chapter 7, 8 and 9).

#### ***6.15. Positionality and Reflexivity***

Qualitative inquirers are often required to clarify their role in the research process (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2010). This researcher was involved in all phases of the research starting from the definition of concepts to design, interview, transcription, analysis, verification,

interpreting and reporting themes (Fink, 2000). In this processes issues of reflexivity and positionality were taken into serious consideration as qualitative researches are hardly value free (Hume 2007). Qualitative research is normally mixed with the researcher's emotions, assumptions and other personal biases (Ribbens and Edwards, 1997). Consequently, there is the need to understand the researcher's subjectivity of the research participants and take cognisance of the power dynamics (Hallett, 2013; Hume, 2007).

Importantly, qualitative research raises the need for the researcher to position himself/herself in such a way that the research outcome will not suffer credibility. As argued by Hall (1990, p18), "there is no enunciation without positionality. You have to position yourself somewhere in order to say anything at all". From a social constructivist sense, since researchers' background and experiences shape the interpretation of what they find, "they need to position themselves and acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural and historical experience" (Creswell, 2007;p21). I was very mindful of my positioning and in balancing my subjective posture with objectivity in the study.

Regarding reflexivity, Lincoln and Guba (2000) present it as the process of reflecting critically on the self as a researcher, the human instrument for research enterprise. I was careful not to allow my personal bias and assumptions as someone who has a close experience of realities of trafficking from the region to taint the research process. I also kept an open mind and relate from a neutral perspective while the study lasted. I understand for example that my personal experience as one who had trafficked relatives and once come close to having a sibling trafficked, can shape my interpretative process of the situation on ground during the study. I ensured this consciousness did not unduly affect my emotional dispositions and perceptions while working on the field.

Also the reflexivity concerned with considering the mode of enquiry and attending to the conditions of the production of knowledge was also noted. The purpose of generating data and adding to knowledge, is what differentiates research from other everyday interactions (Bourdieu 1999). It is in the consistency of the research design and the reflexivity of the researcher that the data and findings can attain a reasonable measure of credibility and rigor

(Punch, 2005). Throughout the field exploration reflexivity was an essential part of the data collection and analysis processes.

### ***6.16. Power Dynamics and Trust***

Mindful of the power dynamics that often come to play in a qualitative research work particularly that which involves vulnerable participants like this, the field work was carried out to avoid the temptation of making this obvious. The open-ended field questions used also helped in providing space for the participants to respond in their own terms. This no doubt minimised the researchers' power over the participants. Trust and respect between the inquirer and the participants which are critical in qualitative research (Coffey 1999; Punch, 2005), were ensured. In a sensitive area of work on a subject that is itself sensitive, with particularly vulnerable people like victims of sex trafficking studied, trust and respect were crucial for me in negotiating access.

The field area researched is a unique society requiring much of trust and respect for ease of field exploration. The dominant Bini people of this area represent an ethnic group that is highly traditional. Much has been said of the people as a highly patriarchal society (Ugiagbe et al, 2001). It is also known of the people as traditionally religious and cherish respect for who they are. And there also exist stereotypical impressions about the people regarding the spread of sex trafficking among them. All of these features make them a unique and somewhat difficult group to study especially with the nature of the topic of sex trafficking.

Interviews as data collection method in studying issues like sex trafficking can magnify feelings of powerlessness, shame, and guilt for the female interviewees having been victims of rape before. In view of this, the researcher ensured respect for the wishes and desires of the participants in cases where they objected to the interview or asked for an alternative approach. The researcher instructed the hired female interviewer to temporarily suspend the interview session if the interviewee becomes distressed. This also helped with issue of power dynamics.

## 6.17. Field Reflections

### *6.18. The Experience with Participants*

Reflecting generally, on my experience during the field work, represents another informative and interesting aspect of the study. The outcome of the short discussion with my supervisors (Dr Niall Hamilton-Smith and Dr Paul Rigby) no doubt spurred me on the first field day. Although I had my written field schedules, the nature of the field encounters did not quite allow me to follow them strictly. I took the engagements as they came. But I tried to ensure certain category of participants were reached and interviewed first before the others. This allowed me to generate useful information that was needed to navigate through others. Researchers are often advised to consider how many interviews they should take weekly (Cowles, 1988), but I took as much as I could weekly as the opportunity came. This was especially the case with the ex-victims, the relatives and the inhabitants of the Nigeria field area.

The female research assistants employed to help interview the female ex-victims (Mohammed, et al, 2014; Tolich and Fitzgerald, 2006), reported an interesting experience with them. They ensured that emotions were not evoked to cause the ex-victims more trauma and hurt. One mentioned of two participants who almost broke down crying remembering their experiences which she handled with care. “One of them showed me the bold scar under her arms saying it was her madam that inflicted her the day she did not return with enough money from the street where she was prostituting in Europe”, the assistant had told me. She reported a particular case that refused to say anything during the interview after she had initially agreed to participate. She said she allowed her to back out without insisting she stayed. Before agreeing to participate, she said many of them would ask questions, like, “dem wan show am for news for television and newspaper?” (meaning - are they going to air it on television and newspapers?). Others would want to know if their names would be mentioned when the conversation with them is published. She said she took time to enlighten them on what the research was all about. Because they had worked with most of them before as a staff of NAPTIP, they trusted them and talked freely.

My main challenge in terms participants' participation was with the relatives of the victims. Only about 60 percent of my proposed number was available to participate as noted earlier. Part of the possible reasons for this was most of them were scared they could be exposed to arrest by NAPTIP as culprits or collaborators with those who trafficked their daughters or sisters. Just before I rounded off the field work a parent agreed to meet with me at a venue in the evening only to get a message from him he could not return from the farm that evening any longer. Though relatives who participated responded to the interview questions, you could see that they were elusive in responses in some cases. One of them was only open and clear when she was talking about the fact that her sister, rescued, a couple of years back, was yet to be helped to set up her catering business as promised. The sister, who was among the victims interviewed for the life history session, corroborated her concerning this and a few other facts but said something different especially while responding to questions on events leading to her trafficking.

Interviewing the inhabitants of the local government area, a few were willing to participate upon contact while others would need a lot of explanation before they could agree. A particular case told me she was not interested that I am a government person, that the same government has made life difficult for her and her family and that they are now trying to return her sister who travelled with a madam the previous year. She only changed her mind after telling her I was a researcher on an academic project.

### **6.19. Epistemological field Challenges**

#### ***6.20. Changes in my Field Research Questions***

Occasions may arise where you may need to change some of your set of field questions while on the field in a qualitative research like this (Creswell, 2007). Some researchers may even go as far as having to change their main research questions arising from field development. Following discussions and supervisory interface with my supervisors while on the field (McCosker et al., 2001), I had to make changes to some of my field questions. This became necessary following some early field revelations. For example, questions on victims' reintegration and rehabilitation were not originally part of my field questions, but in view of emerging revelations which reflects situations that facilitate re-trafficking, they became

necessary. Some response agency participants were asked questions like, “how are you helping to rehabilitate and reintegrate rescued victims back to the community?” Victims were also asked if they were receiving support to ensure they were properly reintegrated and rehabilitated.

### *Dealing with Gendered Research*

Doing a field research on a feminine topic as a male researcher comes with its own challenges and uncertainties. Since the power of interpretation lies with the researcher (Banister, 2007) I could not avoid dilemmas especially regarding honesty, open interactions and misinterpretations (Warusznski, 2002). I had struggled with the temptation of becoming gender biased. As an African male researcher you cannot remove the possibility of allowing bias and emotions emanating from the way men typically view the action of women, affect your judgments and interpretation. Though I ensured the protection of the female ex-victims against further psychological harm (Mohammed et al, 2014) by ensuring a female assistant interviewed the ex-victims, but I cannot pretend not to have had conflicts of thoughts at certain critical moments.

For example, midway on the field certain textual data suggest that some of the female victims consented to the trafficking as they seek to be trafficked thereby exonerating the role of deception and lure by syndicates. But due to exigencies of positionality and reflexivity, further possibilities and perspectives were considered. I have to appreciate the position of women in African society, the weak background women are coming from in Nigerian society, the issues of power relations between both gender, and how these have affected their economic opportunities and chances. I concluded that even if some of them fell easily to the traffickers because they wanted to travel in the first place, you can not entirely blame them but rather society that has made it possible for them to settle for that option. Apart from this instance there were other occasions on the field where I was almost “caught napping”.

### *Mistrust and Suspicion while on the field*

Studying sensitive topics creates both methodological and technical issues like suspicion, mistrust, concealment and dissimulation between researcher and participants (Lee, 1993). I have had to deal with this often while in the field. Using the female assistants to interview the ex-victims however helped in tackling much of the challenge. But there were some other cases like talking with a relative of one of the trafficking ex-victims who was not certain if talking with me will cause her troubles in view of what may be the outcome of it. This feeling of mistrust needed to be doused by my links from NAPTIP before she could participate. Despite the administration of Informed Consent and Information sheet (Brenner 2006; Hoeyer et al 2005), many uneducated ones will not normally be informed that there is an assurance of confidentiality and anonymity until further explanation.

### *Impact of going home for the field work on my data collection*

Researching in your native home can be easy as well as difficult. Participants can withhold certain information from you just because they know you are one of them, the same information they will freely give out to a foreigner. For example, some relatives of sex trafficking victims who know me personally, refused to participate in the field work partly because they see me as one of them. On the positive side, it could benefit the research. For instance, as a native of the researched area I was able to connect to some extent easily with access to both the locality and some of the participants.

Another advantage in this respect was the use of a local language, which I understand and speak fluently. This made transcription and interpretation of participants' contributions much easier. Some researchers working in foreign societies may rely on an interpreter and this could result in losing the originality of the participant's account in the process. Getting and understanding a participant's account goes beyond the words but also entails capturing how they were said as well as the intent behind it (Heather, et al, 2001). This is much more possible when the researcher (interviewer) speaks the same language with the interviewee.

## **6.21 My Personal Encounter with Sex trafficking**

My previous encounter with the practice of sex trafficking is partly the reason I decided to research into it. Growing up in a family of eight children life was not quite rosy for me and my siblings. Having lost our father when I was six, the burden of providing for us fell on my mother who was a petty trader. And the period of our growing up (late 1970s to 80s) coincided with the inception of serious economic crises in Nigeria which dove-tailed into the beginning of the surge in human and sex trafficking from the country (Akor, 2011). While we were struggling to survive the harsh socio-economic realities (this time I was already in my late teens around 18, 19 and my only sister around 15, 16, 17), my mother was constantly under pressure by some visiting relatives to introduce her to a madam that will help take my sister abroad for sex work. There was this particular aunty who kept coming. She never actually explained to my mother what my sister will be doing when she gets to where they are taking her to. All she kept saying was that, 'once Joy (not my sister's real name) gets abroad, poverty will be gone in the family'. Then I had heard of different stories how young girls were deceived and taken abroad particularly Italy and Spain in Europe and trafficked into commercial sex. Just when my mother was about to yield to the pressure, I had to intervene and told her that I do not support the idea. I took time to educate my mother about the risk involved and also called in my two elder siblings who were away outside the town where we lived to inform them of what was going on. They also joined me to prevail on our mother, who I would say is not educated enough to reject the proposal by the aunt. That was how my siblings and I prevented our only female sibling from becoming a victim of sex trafficking.

Other relatives - nieces, cousins and even aunts have been trafficked to Europe as a means to escape poverty. I also got to know of female friends who I grew up with and friends' siblings and relatives around our community that have also been trafficked. Many of them have not returned after many years. I have heard of stories concerning many who have died, and some with terminal health (mental) challenges, with many others missing. This experience, as earlier noted, informs my passion to research into the phenomenon of sex trafficking.

## 6.22. Ethics

The relationship and intimacy established between inquirers and participants in qualitative studies raise a range of different ethical concerns, and qualitative researchers face field challenges such as respect for privacy, honest and open interactions and avoiding misinterpretations (Sanjari et al, 2014; Warusznski, 2002). Ethical issues can become more severe with sensitive researches, especially with vulnerable groups like victims of sex trafficking as studied in this research. Though a researcher's position of dominance can never totally be eliminated, qualitative designs continue to focus on striking a balance of power between themselves and the participants (Banister, 2007). To ensure this balance and avoid ethical errors this study was carried out taking exception to important inherent ethical issues. Basically, I ensured the standard prescribed by the Economic and Social Research Council (2012) during the process.

### *Vulnerable Participants*

Participants in a field exploration like in this case can be vulnerable especially returnee victims of human trafficking. The principle of 'no harm' to participants ought to be considered by researchers, who should be aware of the potential harms that might be inflicted upon study subjects (Mohammed et al, 2014). Since harm can also come from the manner of interaction with participants, qualitative inquirers are expected to be mindful about close interactions that can be potentially harmful to them over time (Tolich and Fitzgerald, 2006). This informs the use of a female to conduct interviews with the returnee female trafficking victims. Asking the returnee trafficking victim to relive her experience as a male interviewer amounts to subjecting her to the emotional strains and trauma of her victimisation all over again (secondary victimisation). This partly ensures the psychological safety of the participant in this work. Also, victims who returned a long time ago, instead of new returnees, were specific targets for selection. Those who returned long time ago are more likely easier to access for a productive and harmless interaction having had overcome, to some extent, the trauma of victimisation and dehumanization, against new returnees who are still fresh with their painful experience. Other strategies adopted to protect the participants was ensuring the textual data collected will only be disseminated in ways it will not expose them to any further emotional danger or harm.

Apart from psychological safety, physical safety is also major issues in research work (Heather, 2001). During the field work, I ensured only victims who were guaranteed as willing to fully cooperate were selected. This helped to ensure protection for participants themselves, the researcher and the hired interviewers against any form of physical and emotional safety challenge. The same precaution was taken in the case of other participants making sure nobody was forced against his/her will in participating in the field work. Other measures taken to ensure physical safety was, to avoid crisis prone areas, hidden and uncertain venue regarding security for interviews. Interviews and focus group discussions were undertaken in safe venues outside conflict prone environment.

#### *Anonymity, Privacy and Confidentiality*

The rules of anonymity and privacy was upheld during the field work and while writing the field report. To ensure anonymity right from the field each of the participants was labeled with a reference number (e.g. HTP01/02/ -victim or HTP07- NGO1) and this was reflected while writing the field report. Richards and Schwartz (2002) suggest pseudonyms can also be used to protect the identity for the participants and ensure anonymity. I also used pseudonyms while reporting the findings (e.g. “Mariam” the returnee victim interviewed in the life history session). To ensure confidentiality, the data collected from the field work was protected and kept in strict privacy and in my computer. All stored data was anonymised so that participants cannot be identified. Also, the data collected was backed up in a separate hard drive which was password-protected. A separate password-protected email-account, different from my regular email-account where the data was stored as a back-up, was set up. It was however made clear to the participants the impossibility of the assurances of a hundred percent confidentiality especially with narratives and life histories (Ensign, 2003).

#### *Informed Consent and Information Sheet*

The phenomenon of informed consent borne out of the right to know and consent before participation is ethically significant in qualitative study (Hoeyer et al, 2005). Basically, the document spells out participants’ role in the field work and offered them the opportunity to indicate willingness or not to participate in the study. The participants were made to attend to the form before participating in this thesis. This gives the participants some idea of what

is to be expected from the interview, and increase the likelihood of honesty (Gills, et al, 2008). Because there are often cases where written consent puts the participants at risk especially in sensitive investigations like this (Brenner, 2006), verbal consent was sometimes taken. Participants were offered the option to withdraw their consent at any time they wished to (see Appendix A).

Also, an “information sheet” containing the background of the researcher, purpose, benefits, funding, process of the study and how to obtain a summary of findings was given to the participants before engaging them. Those who assisted in the fieldwork like the selected NGOs and the female research assistants who helped in interviewing the returnee victims were given the information sheet and briefed on the purpose, methods and intended use of the fieldwork. The female research assistants were also asked to give and explain the sheet to the participants before interviewing them. A copy of the sheet is attached (see Appendix B).

### *Language*

There was limited language barrier during the work as the researcher and the female research assistants speak the same language with the population of the study area which is Bini language. Apart from that many of those selected as participants are also known to be able to speak the official language in the country Nigeria - English language - just as the researcher and the assistants. Though some of them were not able to speak and understand formal English everybody in the area can speak what is called the Nigerian Pidgin (Broken English) which is the corrupt version of the English language. It turned out that many of the returnee victims and relatives as well as inhabitants interviewed used the Nigeria Pidgin.

### *Benefits to Research Participants*

Participants in this research study especially the NGOs, NAPTIP and governments can have access to a summary of the field report after the exercise if they desire, to serve their official responsibilities. In this case they will benefit from a written policy/practitioner oriented summary of the field findings which shall be made available to them after the entire exercise. Aware of this, officials of the anti-trafficking agency were very enthusiastic about

the fieldwork, ensured full participation and were very supportive. This will also in the long run benefit potential victims and people of south-south Nigeria.

## *Chapter Seven*

### **7.0. Findings: Experience of Victims from South-south Nigeria**

Chapter Seven presents the experiences of victims of sex trafficking from South-south Nigeria to Europe. The chapter starts with two victims' life stories before considering the experiences of other interviewed returnee victims.

#### **7.1. Life Stories: Mariam and Uyimmen**

The two life stories that were conducted were Mariam's and Uyimwen's accounts. These represent victims' experiences in the area. Much was revealed by their stories regarding their early life; their recruitment; their experience as it relates to the nature of the journey through the desert and the Mediterranean to Europe. Data generated from these accounts helped in exploring the direct experiences of trafficking to more long term life experiences and living conditions.

#### **7.2. Mariam (not the real name): HTP01/01/02**

##### ***Family and Social Background***

Mariam started by reliving a family background that indicated hopelessness and despair. She did not only emphasise her poor background, but was clear that this was largely contributory to her vulnerability before her trafficking experience.

I don't have father I don't have mother. It was when I came to Benin before I lost my father and my mother. My father died before my mother. ...Let me say my mother died 15 years while my father died 12 years ago... my parents were farmers before they died. They were both sick before they died especially my mother... I believe my mother died from excessive farm labour. So I grew up meeting my parents doing farming. They farm in cassava and yam... anything farming. We were living in the village. Before I now came to Benin. I now stayed with one of my aunties... my eeh... father's sister...  
{*Mariam, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 17, field work, 2016-2017*}

### *How Mariam Was Recruited*

Mariam's account also revealed the circumstances surrounding her recruitment by the trafficking syndicates. According to her:

I passed through pains so much. Immediately I left my aunt's house I stayed with a friend. ...Her name is Juliet. So we met somebody that promised to take us to abroad. A man... We were teenagers my friend and I both of us were staying together...I was 17 years then. So we used to follow the guy...the guy puts us through, he doesn't even tell us what we were about to do. ...he just told us, when you get there, before one year you will pay up your money. Your money is not going to be much. So the guy promised to take us to the place... {Mariam, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 17, fieldwork, 2016-2017}.

### *Her Journey through the Desert and the Mediterranean*

Mariam's account also informed of her experience during the journey from Nigeria to Libya via the Sahara Desert which also involves other victims. She said:

...The guy really succeeded in taking us to Italy. That very day we went to the guy's house. The guy did not tell us it was land that we were going to pass... The guy took us and say ok let's go and enter bus. We enter the bus, he said that there is place we are going to stop, where they will now take us to... a place that we are going to enter the flight...So we never know... we never have any idea all this. And because he realise that we don't have any idea all this that is while he deceived us to that extent... So we now follow the boy to the place. [...] by boundary. {...} It took us more than three days to (the first town) Sabara. ...Anywhere we get to like some of the camps... there is somebody that knows how to speak Arab that is inside the bus, he will now speak Arab for Arab... So they will now pack the vehicle and say let's pay... we settle them. We pay the money

individually...The man that is taking us there will still behave like as if he is a passenger. When we are about to get to the place everybody will now hold money. They will just tell us 'out...out out'... Everybody will line up and start searching you. 'Bringing out your money from your pocket', ehen...collect some other things they want to collect...may be if they see a fine phone they can collect. So when we get to {...} When it was late we went to one village. I have forgotten the name of the village. So we went to the village. So when we get to...to... Sabaru we now slept and we ate. After eating we wait for other bus then we now drove to Libya... {*Mariam, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 17, field work, 2016-2017*}.

Mariam continued narrating what happened at their brief stop at what he called "connection house" in Libya.

When we got to Libya the guy now took us to a connection house. ...There is a place where they call connection house {A sort of stop over house also controlled by the network where victim put up first before crossing the Mediterranean Sea}. They now told us that we are going... to...stay with the madam that is there {the first madam victims usually meet in Libya and another member of the cartel}. They said for staying in the woman's place...so ...the money is going to be between we and the madam on agreement...But we now asked the boy this is not Italy... he said no we should not worry that from this place, after we pay the woman, the woman {ie the madam in Italy} will now come and send somebody to come and pick us up... from there we will now be in Italy...We don't still have the idea of what is going on. So we now paid...we now paid...ennn.. 1.5... {...} to the woman in Libya. As at this time we have started prostitution work in Libya... After paying her they trafficked us to Italy to continue with the prostitution work... The guy now said for us to stay in Libya, we can't stay in his own place...The woman now say there

is no way we can pay him rather we should prostitute and pay him so that we can be able to go to Italy...We don't have idea, before we now paid the money... {*Mariam, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 17, field work, 2016-2017*}.

### ***Crossing the Mediterranean Sea to Europe***

Mariam revealed what her experience and that of her friend as well as the other victims who were on board the dingy boat they used in crossing the Mediterranean Sea, was like. She narrated:

...The first day we got inside the Libya river,... the very first day we wanted to cross...{...} we went there in the midnight... when it was day break we saw ourselves on top the sea. We looked at this way, we looked at that way...hey... We were shedding tears, both of us. We used balloon, rubber boat to cross. The balloon is so thick... All of us were there inside the boat. That day we thought we were going to die... We thought our life was going to end there. We were on top of the sea for two days. We went there around twelve in the night, we started our journey, the next morning we were there, till the other day... they now told us that we have lost our way...{...} It was after two days we now saw rescue team {...} we thought that all hope was gone. It was something that nobody that can ever forget about that during her life time. Everybody that was inside that boat was shedding tears throughout. So painful tears... I held my friend, she held me, we were shedding tears. No food, no water... we were not even thinking about food ooo... or water. We were thinking how are we going to end it up... That was our thinking before rescue team now came... {*Mariam, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 17, field work, 2016-2017*}.

### *Experience while in Destination Europe*

Mariam explained what she, her friend and others went through in Europe selling sex while under the control of the madam in Italy: Mariam said:

... While there enn...they did not allow us to go out because they were just monitoring our movement. We now leaved the camp to go and live with the woman. Some time when we go out the woman just position us, 'you people do this... do that'. She will position us umm...(laughter). And when we are in the road side, we get customers. Some time we take them to her place. ...There was a time the woman didn't allow us to be going out with anybody. She will just invite them... tell... and come and tell us somebody wants to see you. Just like that. Somebody wants to see you. You are not going anywhere, you are not clubbing anywhere.{...}. A day you will get some... enn... you will have men... you know what I am talking about...eh...that will come and see you there to make love. Even if they want to pay, they are going to pay the woman. At the end of the {...} she will call you, she will tell you... today food we spend so-so money, or light bill, the house rent. Then she will minus it from the money they paid her... before she will now minus her own. We have note... everybody has her own note where she calculates and record... So the girl {her friend} said she is not going to continue that she is going to leave. That we have not sent any one naira to anybody... Sometimes she {i.e the madam} will just fill happy and said ok, eeh.. you people should come ooo, come and call your people. Come and call them, let them know that you are ok. She will give us phone and we will make the call. Ehen... (laughter) we will still make the call... {*Mariam, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 17, field work, 2016-2017*}.

Mariam continues with her story. She revealed the identity and character of the trafficker (madam) and her encounter with her especially as it has to do with the financial exploitation.

...The woman is a Nigerian, she is Bini {Bini is the dominant ethnic group in the area of study} woman. So there was a day my father complained... that he is... eeh... that he is feeling sick... that I need money. She said ok I eeh... I will give the money, it is going to be next week. Let's see how you are going to work it out, it is going to be next week. So my friend said ok wait, let's see what this woman is up to. So I now called my father we were talking and talking. She will put it in loud speaker. My father was really complaining. I now said ok... don't worry I will give you next week. When it get to next week I will now send the money. She said ehen... 'which money, which money? You have not balanced you are talking about ... money. Do you think this is how I will continue with you? Do you think this {...}' ... And this one we are talking she said we are going to pay ten million {ten million in Nigeria currency – the naira, i.e about 21,000 pounds by current value}... Each of us is going to pay ten million... How much have you paid that you are talking about sending money to your parents... And we don't know anybody, we don't know anywhere to go. So my friend said ok, since this woman don't allow us to go out, we are going to meet a friend... There is one German man that used to come, the name is eeh {...}. So the guy used to come and pick that my friend. Is like the woman knows the guy very well... before. So the guy now started to come again that he wants to pick us out and that he will pay for everything. The woman said no....{*Mariam, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 17, field work, 2016-2017*}.

### *Victim's Freedom*

Telling more about her story Mariam stressed how difficult it is for victims to get freedom though she, and her friend who was trafficked with her, managed to escape. According to her:

...But when we now went one day we met police men who arrested us and now took us to NAPTIP agents. They now took us down to {...} Before we know it they took us down to Benin. NAPTIP went to go and sue the woman to court. They sue the woman to court she didn't...didn't come. They went to the family's house. It was through the guy we now locate the woman. The guy that took us to Libya... We now got information that both... the two were working hand to hand. The one we met in the connection house has nothing to do with us. It was the guy and the woman that has something to do with us. ...the guy knows that there is never a time we can stay in his own place. That is going to be connection house that we will stay... Sometimes police used to come around there. They will still settle them {meaning bribe them} people will run away. There they live a rough life. Not free life...at the end... Before NAPTIP now took us back to this place, the police handed us over to some elderly women... {*Mariam, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 17, field work, 2016-2017*}.

### **7.3. Uyimwen (not the real name): HTP01/02/02**

#### *Family and Social Background*

Like Mariam above, Uyimwen also presented a family background that describes conditions that were liable to lead to poverty and vulnerability.

My family background... am from a polygamous family...Polygamous home...family with four wives. My father

has four wives, my mother is the senior of the wives in the house. Am the senior {eldest} daughter of the family and my father is late. My mother has {had} nine children then it remains five... which is ennn... two boys three girls...i am the senior. {*Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2016-2017*}.

### ***Uyimwen's Early life Experience***

Uyimwen's early life was impacted by her family background, with her family life worsening as she grew up.

My early life...(laugh) me... I have not enjoyed because i lost my father when i was very young... So when i was in secondary school, JSS 3 {Junior secondary school 3 equivalent to class three in grammar school} then i got pregnant of my first son...i delivered the baby. My father said after i finish the JSS3 exam i will further. So that very year that i finish the JSS 3 exam which is 1997, my father started sickness... {...} When my father goes to the village he goes to work on the land that they shared to him...he cut one of his feet. So from there different... different... type of temptation...he will say hypertension, he will say...eeeeee...heart pain, he will say this, he will say that, dried blood, from there they say HIV, from there they say leg, different type of things, the left leg became dark... He was taken to different hospital. They took him to many...many places, even churches to no avail. So... {...} my father died.

Hmmm... me i don't have any joy. Because why i said that i don't have any joy, nobody help me... since i grew before my father died no help... Even... my uncles no one wants to help us. Even since my father died not any of them say ahhh Uyimwen, what are you going to do for your living? Nobody.

So, my junior {younger} brother, that one said am going to school ooo...Uyimwen i must go to school ooo... I now said what are we going to do to train you? He said you know what you will dooo... From there... my father's gratuity... when they pay {paid} my father na, I now tell my brother let me travel out so that i will take care of you people. Then... my brother now said ok. {...} Then from there the remaining money... me i now use it to travel out... i leaved {left} Nigeria 2004 for Italy... {...}. Since my brother finished university he does not have job ooo... (laughter)... {Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2016-2017}.

### ***The Point She became Vulnerable to Sex Traffickers***

Uyimwen told a story that explains the point at which she has to contemplate migrating abroad for greener pasture. From her early life story above she just finished junior secondary school and was preparing to return for senior secondary school education when the father died, and was forced to stop schooling, then she was compelled by her condition at that teen age to travel.

I was 'exposed' {had no option but} to go abroad after the death of my father in 2003 when things became more difficult. I went there on my own i was not taken by anybody. I decided to go to help my family... People travel because of poverty. When i got there and saw what they were doing and how people were enslaved i was scared... {Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2016-2017}.

### ***Role by Relatives***

Uyimwen's story indicates whether or not 'the family' often play roles in the trafficking of their daughters or relatives.

I did not tell them {any member of my family} anything...even though my aunty self did not know. It was only my brother that knew. {*Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2016-2017*}.

Unlike the case of Mariam earlier presented, Uyimwen's life story account (as relived below) indicates that she was not deceived to go to Europe for commercial sex by anybody. This shows that it is not in all cases that victims are deceived to be trafficked abroad for sexual exploitation as often reported by state agencies like US TIP and others.

Nobody deceived me, me and my brother decided to do that... because there was nobody to help. {*Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2016-2017*}.

### ***Uyimwen's Expectations before Leaving for Europe***

Uyimwen's story tells of her expectation before travelling to Europe.

Before i travelled i work(ed) at Oko Prison yard (Oko Prisons is one of the federal prisons service units in Edo state where the area of study is located). There is one Beer Parlour {a bar} at the prison compound... i used to work there because me i don't want to do nonsense. I said if i go to Lagos it is the same thing i may find to do. If i go abroad it may be the same thing. But later when i went to abroad it was different thing {not what I expected - she had expected to make bigger money by working as sales girl in bars abroad} {...} {*Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2016-2017*}.

### *Uyimwen's Experience in Europe*

Uyimwen's life story revealed much about her personal experience while she was in Europe.

Before i travelled i said that am not going to work on the street when i reach there. Then but when i reach the country... i don't know anybody... {...} i don't know where is Calcat... {...}. But the moment we reach there we waited for the sojourner {a sort of document often given to migrants to allow them temporary stay in some foreign countries} of six months. If you reach there...if you want to run away, you can run away. Because it is not compulsory that you must stay there in the camp... if you see the situation...ahh... me i come here to find money... My friends there at the Camp were saying... me i need money... i need money... so Uyimwen if you are ready let us go. I said i don't know anybody here ooo... {ie. after a while at the migrant camp Uyimwen and her friends who travelled together became anxious and have to escape to other cities in Italy in the desperation to start making money as soon as possible}. What are we going to do?

### *Getting Involved in Commercial Sex*

Then one of my friends now took me and said let us go ... and said her sister lives in eehhh... Verona... another of her sister lives somewhere else. We went there. When we reach(ed) there na... When it was night they all dressed and said let us go. I said haa... where are you going? They said it is hustling ooo... We used to hustle here ooo...Then i said eh... hustle... They said won't you pay house rent... won't you eat. I said no ooo... Let me follow my friend Pat to Verona...then Pat now said let us go {...}. Then i followed that one to Verona. When we reached Verona, I now see that it is the same thing that they

used to talk about there... in Verona. So, they said that if i am not ready to follow them out they will drive me away. I said me...I don't even hear language talk less of i will know where to go. Then i followed them. When i reached there i saw people. They told me that people will come ooo...they come with {in} car...they will bring tea... they will bring biscuit... is eehh church people ooo. If they come don't follow them, if you follow them they will deport you ooo. I said ok. But when the people come... they will share biscuit... they will share eeehh... they don't used to say anything. {...}.They will just turn back. They will say okay... you people should take care ooo...we know that this job is not good ooo... But if you are ready for help, see our number, you can call so that we can help you out. {...}.

### ***Rescue for Uyimwen in Europe and how she was Returned to Nigeria***

So, one day i stood... eeehh...one man just came {...}, advanced man. He just said that i should follow him. I said haaa... follow you to where? He said follow me, follow me. Then i now followed him. The man now said it is God that sent me to you. I said eennn, he said yes. I said ok ooo. {...}He said what is the problem? Then i now narrated everything to the man. The man now said ok, give me your phone number. I said that i don't have phone, i don't have money to buy phone. The man now said ok tomorrow he will bring phone for me. The man now bring {brought}one old phone like that... he said i should take {...} Then he now said i should go and buy sim... I put the sim. So from there the man started calling me. The man now said eeehhh... do you like this? The man is asking me question like police. Do you like this job? I said no ooo... He said ok, if i want to help you will you follow me? I said yes, if

you want to help me, help me now. Then from there the man will write letter with Italia. I said me i don't know how to read...i will give eeehhh somebody... he said aaahhh... this man is writing good thing for you ooo... He wants to help you. I said ok. He said if the man comes, talk to the man fine. The man wants to help you. From there one day the man just called me. He said i should come and meet him at the train station. I went to the station. Then i followed the man. He took me to eeehhh... Caricas. So from there now when we reached there, we met the head of Caricas which is eeehhh... {...} The woman now talked to me. From there the help now started {...} {ie. the help that led to her return to Nigeria} {*Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2016-2017*}.

### ***Communication with Family Back Home***

Uyimwen tells in her story whether she was in contact with her family back home while at destination in Europe.

When i reached there new... you know i don't have phone. I cannot even communicate with anybody. Everybody was worried enn...abi {or}) Uyimwen is dead? We did not hear from her, no call, nothing-nothing. But their phone number was with me but i don't know how to get them. So one day, when i have phone i just called them. All of them where happy and said thank God ooo. They say they {people} are dying in Libya ooo... Thank God ooo... you are alive ooo...all of them were happy. The head of Caricas now said that eeee...tell your mother where you are... you are safe. Say you are under us now that you are safe. I was only managing to survive there. {*Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2016-2017*}.

### ***Financial Benefits to Family***

Uyimwen's story also revealed that her family and relatives had not benefitted financially whilst she was in Europe.

My family...it was zero... {...}. There was nothing...no land, even one room...{could not build even a small house which migrants sent abroad would normally want to do first}. I did not bring back any money. That is the reason for the quarrel in my family now as i am here. That is what is even bothering me now as i am here... they are quarrelling over their money which i used to travel. They have even summoned me. The first money they paid my father after death was 800,000 naira (about 1,700 pounds) {...}. Now everybody in my family is fighting me. Both my...my brother, my mother, my step mothers, my other sisters, and the entire family, they are all angry with me. They said only me used our father's gratuity money and did not bring anything from abroad. Even when my brother did marriage introduction sometimes ago i was not invited...they took the matter to the village. They invited me to a meeting in the village and my uncles said i should go and bring the money that i took to travel. They said the abroad that i go i did not buy land... {...}i did not bring money... to Nigeria ...they are keeping malice with me. {*Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2016-2017*}.

### ***Resettling after Returning to Nigeria***

She also talked about what it was like resettling after she was rescued and returned to Nigeria from where she was doing sex work in Italy.

I did not settle...it has been trouble for me since i came back... i have only gone home once. That was when i was summoned to the meeting to come and explain the issue of the money i took

to travel. Even though since i came back ... i have problem with my leg. The leg was swollen. As i came back to Benin I started sickness. I was sick i don't know what is the problem. I know how much my husband spent in traditional way. In the night i was not able to sleep. It is like they are drawing (dragging) my leg. We went to one church like that, {...} the pastor said that eeeeh... i have problem with my family because of money. He said that if i don't give them that money, i will pray hard so that they don't take my soul. I told the pastor that... is true that there is money problem with my family that i am from a polygamous home {...}. The pastor said that even your brother too is facing danger because of the money matter {...}. Even though i leave this country tomorrow, i don't have anything with my family again. The only problem i will have is that money...that is all...if i can give them their money that will be all... They say if i beg them (my) leg will heal...I now said i beg ooo... you people should not let me die ooo... the money i will bring it. They said i should remember that i am not the only child of the house... i now said yes. {*Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2016-2017*}.

### ***Support from Government and NGOs Upon Return***

Uyimwen's story also reflects the level of support from government and NGOs as a victim.

(Laughter)... it was only when i was returning from Italy... Since i came to Nigeria, nothing. I have not received any support from anywhere. {*Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2016-2017*}.

### *Plans for the future*

She told in her story of future plans as a returnee.

What i am planning to do... first i want to go back to Italy and collect my sojourner document... The police collected it... when i was coming. I have to travel back. We are suffering here... My husband does not have money. He receives 15,000 naira (about 30 pounds) monthly. The two rooms that we stay, we pay 4,000 naira (about 8 pounds) monthly for each room. We are managing. Nigeria, there is nothing here. I know people there in Italy, once i get there they will give me a house to stay before i start making my own money{i.e. Uyimwen is still contemplating going back to Europe, meaning she could be a potential victim of re-trafficking}. {Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, fieldwork, 2016-2017}.

### *Prior Knowledge of Prostitution and Sexual' Exploitation of Young Girls in Destination*

Uyimwen's life history gives indication whether most girls often trafficked are aware of sex work and sexual exploitation in destination or not before travelling.

Yes... {ie. She was aware of prostitution and maybe not too sure of sexual exploitation in destination}. But they said that not all of them do prostitution. Some of them go there to do hair {make people's hair as source of income}, to sell for people {as sales girls in shops}...it is different...different ways. The common thing is that some of them, when they get there they will go into prostitution. They don't go straight to the point. They will say...you will do this, you will do this but when you reach there you will see another thing. {Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2016-2017}.

### *Reason Girls get Trafficked from the Area in Uyimwen's Opinion*

Her story also divulged some specific reasons while most young girls and women are often trafficked from the region.

Some, it is because they come from a polygamous home. You know Nigeria men they used to marry many wives. If you come from a polygamous home...the other women ...they are doing well...the other ones they are not doing well, they will still find solution na. If one woman's children are doing well the other will say i don't know why my own is not doing well...{...} they will say the other woman's daughter has travelled out the other ...will also want her daughter to travel. Me as i am talking to you now, the daughters of my father's other wives have travelled out abroad. ...The other one the daughter travelled...the other woman too. So it is only my mother side that did not travel {that does not now have anybody abroad}. Me i was the first person to travel in the family. But my mother side ... nothing is happening now. Even one of other wives (daughter) that travelled bought a house in Sapele road {a choice area where a few successful returnees are now building houses}...{...}. My mother was no longer with my father even before my father died... {*Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2016-2017*}.

As presented in the preceding findings section, Mariam and Uyimwen's accounts represent typical cases of victims trafficked from south-south Nigeria to Europe. The findings from their stories also go to corroborate and in some cases contest or complicate characterisation of trafficking in existing academic and policy literatures. It particularly could be said to have made revelations indicating contrast to dominant claims by some Western authorities (as represented in the conceptual framework) that the issue stems from criminal tendencies and not taking a holistic view of the matter to the extent of considering local structural conditions. Though the stories also noted the role of syndicates which of course could be

said to be criminal, but it was clear that local constraining socio-economic conditions could be more paramount and compelling as explanatory factors.

As to the typical processes involved in the trafficking of victims, both cases however presented a two-way argument. While in some cases victims are sponsored by syndicates to get to their destination where they are conscripted into commercial sex work by their sponsors (as in Mariam's case); others take the risk to move over to Europe on their own (of course not without the assistance of less vicious intermediary) and are lured into prostitutions either by their colleagues or 'madams' (traffickers) who may have assisted them with (temporary) accommodation and feeding upon arrival (as in Uyimwen's case).

With this, it was clear both cases of life stories typify the complexities and apparent interplay of individual distinct circumstance and structural influences in the experiences of most victims from the area. The fact that some are moved to destination on their own accord and others lured or deceived to travel by syndicates before exploitation as indicated by the distinct individual experiences highlights complexities in the narration of trafficking processes in the region. But despite the distinction of the individual cases it was obvious that structural conditions (household poverty, poor economic condition, patriarchy, polygamy, economic inequality etc) play critical roles in orchestrating the trafficking of Mariam and Uyimwen into sexual exploitation abroad. This could be said to represent what many of the victims go through in South-south Nigeria.

More regarding findings on victims' experiences under thematic representations and reflections are presented in the following sections. A look through these (which derive from various victims' interviews) will also indicate about the same understandings and meanings (especially regarding trafficking victims' experiences and circumstances in the region) as discovered from the two cases of life history above but with some additional revelations and emerging ideas.

#### 7.4. General Views on Victims' Experience by Other Participants

Having presented Mariam's and Uyimwen's cases, and now have an idea of a specific case of victim's experience pre during and after trafficking, this sub-section, reports the findings regarding experiences of other interviewed returnee victims during the field exploration. Unlike the approach in which Mariam's and Uyimwen's cases were presented, this part is reported across themes supported by responses in view of the different returnee victims' particular experiences.

##### *Risky Conditions, Torture and Death of Victims*

From my findings, many of the victims of sex trafficking from south-south Nigeria do not survive, if they do, they are perpetually at risk. The risky conditions faced generally by victims include the deadly experience on their way to destination, the torture they go through under their madams, the violent clients they encounter while selling sex, and the post experience conditions. One victim said: *Many of my friends... they pass through this same experience... they didn't come back again, they died...* {HTP01/01-victim}. From accounts given, victims' experience, while held by trafficking cartels are harrowing and traumatic. It leaves a sad memory that they have to deal with throughout the rest of their life. *I don't want to remember things that happened then... because when I am remembering them I will be crying...* {HTP01/11-victim}. Stories were told of many of the girls from the area who travelled through the desert and the Mediterranean but never got to their destination in Europe.

*...There was a case of two students {...} this area...they just graduated from the school of nursing here {pointing to the direction of the said school}... They were trafficked through the dessert. One died on the road while the other crossed over to Europe... {HTP06/28 - inhabitant}.*

From what was found, many of the girls forced into prostitution were either killed by the traffickers or by violent mafias who are their regular patrons. Some parents are still waiting for their daughter years after she was killed. Responses below said much.

*Some lose their lives, some are kidnapped for life...um... Some are permanently enslaved. Their parents think they are alive enjoying in Europe not knowing they are enslaved or even dead... {HTP09/13, inhabitant}.*

*...especially for those travelling through land...eh... We learnt that they kill them on the way... {HTP09/14, inhabitant}.*

One participant mentioned that in her case she was a victim of regular beating and physical abuse by her clients whose violent behaviour was known to her madam.

*...Some time they are rough. Some time they give you slap, they beat you... they will still make love with you {forcefully have sex with you}. You will not even complain... even they are the one to complain to your madam that this is what you did... you disobey ... (HTP 01/10- victim).*

Another Participant recounted:

*...Working for her...everyday I balance money. I went through so many things.... There was a time a white mafia pointed a gun on my neck. He took me away by force, from the street where i was standing. My womb almost pulled out while he was making love to me {while forcefully having sex with me}.... {HTP01/01-victim}.*

As illustrated above, mafias (especially in Italy) and violent individuals who patronise prostitutes sometimes forcefully take the girls away and may not return them. They do not only gang rape the girls but even kill them. From what was discovered, when this happens the madams hardly bother or care about the where-about of the girls, they are written off as one of such losses expected in business. Another victim narrated how girls are thrown from tall buildings and killed just because they refused to cooperate with violent clients in Eastern Europe {Apart from Western Europe, victims from the area of study are also sometimes taken to Eastern Europe especially Russia}. She said:

*In Nigerian Pidgin English*

*...My experience for Russia... e nor good at all because Russia nor eehhhh... nor good. Dem nor dey friendly, dem dey beat girls. The wey dem dey even take dey throw dem dey come from upstairs if dem nor cooperate with wetin dem talk...*

*In correct English*

*...My experience in Russia... it was not good at all because Russia is not eehhhh... not good. They are not friendly, they beat girls. The way they even used to throw them from upstairs if they do not cooperate with what they ask for... {HTP01/09-victim}.*

Some displayed the scars and other bodily inflictions during the interview. This victim referred below appears still traumatised by the incidence surrounding the scar on her hand, while reliving her story.

*...The day I will not bring money, she will go and call her friends, they will beat me up ...enn...(sigh). ...I have a mark in my hand. I never dreamed to have that kind of mark. Some people ask me today how i got the mark,... I will tell them never mind, because I don't want to be telling people ... Because of beating I don't have teeth in my mouth again... {HTP01/01 -victim}.*

Recounting her experience another victim talked of the abuse she received in the hands of her *owner-madam*, and said:

*...If you travel from Nigeria to that place they will seize your phone... even those that have babies... you don't talk to your baby. So that place is not good. Even the white people there they hate us..., they hate us. They use us as slave, as in... they look... as in... our flesh is like meat to them. So they really hate the black... {HTP01/06-victim}.*

The above response also reflects on the issue of racism that many of the victims arguably face on a daily basis at the hands of their mostly all white clients while doing sex work in Europe. From this response the victim concludes that the white people hate them because they are black girls, obviously referring to how the victims are violently attacked by their clients. This is however debatable in view of existing academic reports, which argument suggests otherwise. There are arguments in earlier work that many of the victims (irrespective of race) trafficked for commercial sex, hawking sex on the street usually become victim of gender-based motives, sexual torture and mutilation as well as other abuse and assaults (Warden, 2013). Perhaps because of their physical nature and perceptions of them by the opposite sex in society, women are easily subjected to physical attack and molestation, hence their fate when on the street unprotected, doing sex work. Benson et al (2008) and Caissie (2010) also argue that sex workers anywhere globally, especially those who are victims of trafficking in Europe, are normally targets for harassment and violence of various magnitudes, and that many of them end up as victims of “femicide” meaning the murder of women. But the important point in the victim’s response above is that victims from south-south Nigeria also see themselves experiencing a measure of racism while they are trafficked for sex work at destination in Europe.

### ***Harassment from Immigration and Police Officers***

Apart from the abuse from their madams and clients, victims of sex trafficking from the region are faced with harassment from immigration and police officers of destination countries. They are either chased by the police because of the nuisance they constitute while on the street selling sex or harassed by immigration officers as many are perceived to be illegal immigrants {HTP06-GovtAgency4}. Many of the victims that were smuggled into destination countries with forged documents have their passports seized by their madam (HTP01/22). This is to prevent their escape, but creates more trouble for the victims as they are often arrested and detained by officers.

*...They...said they were law enforcement officers. They put me in their car and took me to immigration... There they were asking, ‘where your passport?’... I told them the passport is not with me but with my boss in Nigeria. They now promised that if they can see my passport they will release*

*me. But I pleaded with them to release me that my passport is not with me...  
{HTP01/10}.*

The above quoted victim's passport was confiscated by her madam who had travelled back to Nigeria before the girl was arrested by the immigration officers according to what she said while interviewed by the female research assistant engaged by this researcher. She spent months in detention before she was released and repatriated to Nigeria going by her story. This is a risk because in countries where the law enforcement agents are brutal, like Russia mentioned earlier, victims could be killed in the process.

### ***Selling Sex to Multiple Men: Sexual Exploitation of Victims***

Many victims trafficked from the area are forced to have sex with as many as 20 or more men a day in Europe (HTP 07-NGO1; also see Agbu, 2003). One victim said: *A day at least 20 men can have sex with you... In the morning she {the madam} will call her sister... she collect money from you. It could be 30,000, 40,000 {value in Nigerian naira, say 80 to 100 pounds} that you have worked on that day she will collect it... {HTP01/07-victim}*. From the victim's tone there are indications that she, like many others, never anticipated such an exploitative experience even if they were aware they were coming for sex work abroad. It also reveals that some of the madams use family members and agents to monitor and coordinate the exploitation process as indicated by the victim. Family members, as seen above, help the madam do the collection of daily 'balance' money from the victims after having sex with men. Meanwhile, many of the victims resist getting involved in sex work. Even those told that they will be involved in sex work before embarking on the trip are usually unwilling to do it upon realisation of the nature of the work in Europe. But this is not without serious consequences for the victims as relived below.

*Because when I reached, it was not what I said I was going to do that she asked me to do... So she forced me,... She beat me...eh... she said I won't eat... The girls did not give me food. No clothes. Nothing, nothing... no water. So I have no choice, I have to do it... {HTP01/07-victim}*.

Sexual exploitation and abuse of victims from the region, as discovered, starts on the way to their destination when they are forced to have sex with men, sometimes for the first time in their life. One victim said: *“It was on the road... on our way that I lost my virginity...”* (HTP01/02/02-victim). As reported earlier, at the destination, victims are subjected to full scale exploitation and abuse by the madam having sex with different men on a daily basis, working to pay her.

*... Sometimes the men have sex with us on the street... Sometimes not even in the house, they drive into a thick forest which we just play there and do it... The money has been paid before you go... (HTP 01/02/03, victim).*

From field interaction, it was found that traffickers coerce victims into sex work on arrival as they see this as the quickest way to make money off the girls so they can recoup the money spent on transporting and accommodating them as well as make profit in the process (HTP07-NGO1). Another victim said:

*...That we are going to stay in that woman’s connection place. ...The woman now say there is no way we can pay him rather we should prostitute and pay her... (HTP01/02/03).*

Victims do not only sell sex to pay the madams but do so under abusive conditions as discovered. The level of sexual and economic exploitation reported is very severe that researchers are tempted to equate it with slavery and bondage. The victims who have sex with men under compulsion never get the money which their clients pay, making their experience more dehumanising and exploitative. As noted above, sex work is the only work the victims are made to understand they can do to off-set their debt. As found, the victims are made to repay many times over what the traffickers may have declared as amount used in bringing them over to Europe and accommodate them. One particular victim recounted: *...She now said I have certain amount I will have to pay back to her... Before I left Nigeria, she said I will pay her 6,000 dollars, she is now saying I will pay 10,000 dollars now that I am here... {HTP01/02/01 – victim}.*

While under the madam, the victims are said to incur more debts to cover the cost of living in the madam's house. Consequently, the victims find it hard to complete repayment which puts them permanently in bondage. This sustains the exploitation until the victims are fortunate to be rescued or die or escape like some that were interviewed did.

In Nigerian Pidgin English

*... na becos of this naim make me run come Nigeria. As for me I nor go fit do am. But there are some en... wey be say becos of poverty they are ready to do anything... {HTP01/08 – victim}.*

In Correct English

*...it is because of this that I ran back to Nigeria. As for me I cannot do it {she means sex work}... But there are some en...who because of poverty are ready to do anything... {HTP01/08-victim}*

Negotiating for freedom was found to be rare, because once under the control of the cartel victims are hardly released as they remain sources of revenue for the network. Cartels, as was found, do let go victims who have become mentally unwell due to trauma from the abuse or the excessive use of drugs. Such a victim becomes useless to them as she can no longer be used for sex work. Victims who belong to this category now live on the street in the destination country where they were taken to and in most cases eventually arrested and repatriated to the source country. Many of such returnee victims are seen around in the area under investigation.

As found, even when many of the people here see the trafficking practice in the area as normal, a good number of them appear not to know of this exploitative side of it. There however seems to be a few of the inhabitants including some among the ones interviewed who know and detest it.

*...To me trafficking for commercial sex abroad ...is exploitative because those who are involved in it are out to make high profit... They are not really interested in the good of the victim. They normally over profit at the expense of*

*the life of the trafficked victim. They ask them to repay huge sums five times higher than the money they used in sponsoring the girl... {HTP09/38-inhabitant}.*

Because the girls are exploited and left with nothing, many of the returnees return home with no money and would have to be supported to start life from scratch.

### ***Meeting the Sex Needs of Pimps before Journey***

Before embarking on the journey some victims are said to suffer abuse (sexual and psychological) at the hands of the agents or pimps of traffickers.

*...So...umm... when I was even going they do many things with the girls, raping and other things... {HTP01/11-victim}.*

*Umm...most of the girls that are trafficked are raped even on the way by the trollies { 'trollies' are trafficker's pimps or agents } {HTP09/23}.*

As illustrated above, many of the victims put under the control of an agent or pimp are used as sex object by the pimps and other members of the gang: This is a normal practice by the pimps who take advantage of the girls in their custody. This victim said: *...It was the same guy that took us to Italy, one of the traffickers that made love to me {have sex with me} the first time... {HTP01/02/02-victim}.* Some victims are even impregnated by the pimps before commencing the journey as found. Such girls will still have to be smuggled and delivered of their baby while under her madam at destination before the sex work. There was a case which the NAPTIP office informed this researcher (post field work, update, 2018) involving a victim who was impregnated by her trafficker. It was similarly found that the pimps sometimes deliberately delay the trip of some of the girls to Europe to continue to forcefully having sex with them.

Victims who usually experience this situation, as discovered, are those desperate to travel to Europe and may have sought for the services of the traffickers to help smuggle them through to their destination and innocently agreed to the misleading terms. Others in this category are those who are aware that they are being smuggled for sex work in Europe even if they

do not have enough idea about the nature of the sex work. Though they may not like the idea that they have been reduced to sex objects while they are yet to travel out of the country, but normally bear it, seeing it as part of the sacrifices needed to get to their destination. Girls who usually want out of the contract when subjected to this kind of abuse by the pimps are normally further abused physically and psychologically by denial of food and other needs.

### ***Victims Unable to Send Money nor Communicate with Families Back Home***

While selling sex under madams many of the victims are not only unable to communicate with their family members back home but are also unable to repatriate money to them as envisaged before they left their country. Since other deductions are made for house rent, energy bill, water bill, feeding and others after paying part of the initial debt owned the madam victims are left with nothing, finding it difficult to send anything home as noted below.

#### *In Nigerian Pidgin English*

*I nor benefit anything... my family nor benefit from am. Na tears and sorrow.  
Na now wey I dey do catering work naim I don dey get my happiness back...  
{HTP01/01-victim}.*

#### *In correct English*

*...I didn't benefit from anything,.. my family didn't benefit from it. It was  
tears and sorrow. It is now that i am into catering work that i am beginning to  
get my happiness back... {HTP01/01-victim}.*

Being unable to send money home often create conflicts and enmity between victims and their families when they are returned as found. Families quarrel with returnee victims for wasting the money spent on contracting smugglers to take them to Europe. They do not consider the victim's story of the abuse and exploitation she went through while she was in Europe.

*It was zero ...nothing ooo...{...}. I didn't not bring back any money... That is the reason for the conflict in my family now. They used money to send me abroad but I didn't bring anything. That is what is even bordering me now as I am here... {HTP01/02/03-victim}.*

This particular victim was funded by her family to be smuggled into Europe through the desert and the Mediterranean but was later trafficked by the same smuggler into sex work. From her story, she is from a poor polygamous family who thought it was wise to use their family savings to send her abroad in anticipation of making enough money to help the others. She said, she was exploited by her trafficker while doing sex work until she was rescued and brought to Nigeria.

Even in a situation where the victims may have something to send to their family members back home, many are unable due to denial of access to any means of communication.

*...I experienced so many things...umm {...} Even if you want to make en... communication with your family, there is no way... {HTP01/06-victim}.*

Some madams, from what was found, however allow the victims to talk with their relations back home. This they say is usually once in a while and under strict monitoring by the cartel. The telephone line that is used in this case is assumed to be owned by the madam and in most cases with no caller identity. The girls in many cases are not allowed to own a phone.

### ***Denial of Food and Water as Control and Punitive Weapon***

As a form of control and a punitive measure, victims are often denied food, water and other basic needs from what was discovered. Some participants' responses indicate that this is normal with the syndicate especially while coercing reluctant victims to do sex work or comply with orders. The madams also do this whenever the girls return from the street with little money or refuse to have sex with any particular visiting client. Many of them are starved of food by their madams even after paying for it.

*She said two days, we are not going to eat... We didn't eat for that two days.  
She locked us up. We didn't eat for that two days... {HTP01/02/02-victim}.*

As indicated in the above response, apart from denying the victims food, the cartels sometimes lock them up in a room while they starve. This further subjects the victims to psychological torture and trauma weakening their resistance to pressure from the cartels. Some of the victims may die in the process of denial of food. This is in addition to the constant use of threats and physical abuse by the madams to ensure the victims obey. The victims, as found, could even be tortured to death (as noted earlier), whenever she resists the traffickers' command.

*She will say, she will kill me there...that nobody knows her, and nobody will ask her {...}. She used to say she has done so many things to other girls. She says she made some run mad, she has killed some, she frustrates some, so she can do likewise to me. She threatened me with such things... She used to beat some people... {HTP01/05-victim}.*

The traffickers, it was learnt, sometimes threaten the victims' parents with attack saying they have refused to convince their daughter to do sex work, that she is making them lose money after investing so much bringing her to Europe. They also threaten the girls that they will harm their parents if they do not yield to their instructions. They sometimes actually hurt victim's parents especially when the girls resist them and escape, as discovered.

#### ***Drug Use by Victims as Control Method***

Many of the victims are made to use hard drugs as a control measure as discovered.

*..There are a lot of things over there that is happening... going on there...  
Some are using drug. Some the life they are living there is not what they plan  
to live. Apart from sex, there are many things involve {HTP01/02/02 victim,  
life story}.*

Many of them ordinarily would find it difficult to sell sex as they are not used to it. This partly may be the reason many resist going into the act once forced by madams to do it. As

noted in above response, the madams may resort to the use of drugs to ensure victim's compliance. Since the use of hard drug is often addictive, once introduced into it, the victim may continue to ask for more making them totally dependent on it. Interviewed NGO officials indicated that they have to deal with handling many returnee victims who have become victims of drug abuse following their addiction before they were returned.

*...So, we try to build their sense of self-esteem for those who have not been damaged by drugs... In short trafficking is very bad, particularly into sex work...HTP07-NGO 1}.*

Victims doing sex work under a madam for a very long time are often the ones that fall under this category of those addicted to drug use according to what was found. Many of such victims may no longer want to quit, even when rescue comes. Some returnees are reported to be finding it difficult to leave sex work and drug use as they have continued with the habit.

### ***Burden of Repayment and Voodoo Scare***

Apart from the trauma that comes with the physical and mental torture victims go through, they carry the burden of repaying the exaggerated debt asked to be paid by their smugglers-turned-traffickers, as was found. Also, the voodoo scare associated with the oath they took before the journey sort of haunts some of them even after they return home to Nigeria. This is especially as many of the returnees are usually unable to complete their debt before they were returned. This victim quoted below was among returnees yet to pay off her debt.

*The lady that took me there...said I will pay her 60,000 dollars, but so far I have only paid her 3,000 dollars...{HTP01/04-victim}.*

Still nursing fear over their unpaid debt, some interviewed victims recounted that traffickers had threatened illnesses of madness and other ordeals will befall them if they failed to pay their debt. Also, families who borrowed money used as initial deposit to get the traffickers to smuggle the victim to Europe often deal with the challenge of repayment of the debt after the victim is returned. It was found this is one of the reasons some parents are unhappy

when their daughters are rescued and brought back notwithstanding their knowledge of victim's ordeal in Europe.

### *Post Return Experience*

Returnees it was found continue to suffer upon return to Nigeria after their ordeals in Europe as reported in the following sections.

#### *Stigmatisation and Secondary Victimization*

Many of the returnee victims in south-south Nigeria suffer stigmatisation, victimisation and other forms of post-experience conditions as discovered. The feeling that people will look down on them as sex trafficking returnees makes many feel stigmatised. In actual sense, returnees are stigmatised as noted by HTP08-NGO2 and earlier researched by Omorodion (2009). This leaves many returnees with low self-esteem, shame and feelings of isolation. Response officials interviewed acknowledged that stigmatisation and victimisation are critical conditions returnees face.

*Being a returnee comes with a lot of stigma... you have to agree that you are worthless for others to consider you worthless.... The way you carry yourself, would influence how they treat you. So,...we try to build their sense of self-esteem... {HTP 07-NGO1}.*

The above participant added that, building up the self-esteem of victims takes a long time (HTP07-NGO1). Sometimes, because of stigmatisation and victimisation, many returnees become vulnerable to re-trafficking (HTP07-NGO1). They feel that running away is better to avoid people who may mock them with their status as victims of sex trafficking.

Though some returnees receive support from the main response agency (NAPTIP) or NGOs as found, but a good number of them are unlucky and may be overwhelmed by their ill conditions. Many find it difficult living among their people in the community and around their relatives when they return because of the fear of stigmatisation and incidences leading to secondary victimisation. They often have to relocate to another town where not much is known about them.

*The thing is that...en...you try not to stigmatise them... Sometimes some of them will not even want people to know that they are around. Some of them will just stay in Lagos...{Lagos is about four-hour drive outside the region} Some of them...en... they will just start their business over there... {HTP08-NGO2}.*

Considering the post-experience conditions of victims, participants believed that returnee victims should be fully supported to ensure that their experience does not affect their resettling into normal community life. This, they believed helps returnees' socio-psychological healing following the trauma from the mental and physical abuse they had. *When the girl gets here, we work with her, offer her counseling services. They need a lot of psycho-social support... {HTP07-NGO1}.* But this is not always the case in the area. Some returnees do not have access to such support thereby making resettling more challenging. More on the nature of the support returnee victims in the region receive is reported in chapter nine under the 'response' section of this thesis.

### *Health Challenges*

Many returnee victims end up in life threatening infirmities (HTP07-NGO1). This could be due to the health risk inherent in sex work. It could also be due to the mental and psychological feelings of despair and disorientation upon return to their country. Another probability is that many become depressed after returning to nothing back in their country with no hope for a better life economically. Also, as found, some victims contract terminal disease.

*...Some have sex without protection... and they end up contracting diseases... {HTP09/14-inhabitants}.*

*...some will contract disease. ...They will rape some... Some will contract HIV aids... {HTP09/17-inhabitant}.*

Some who were already addicted to drug use, as mentioned earlier, are unable to stop as they continue in the habit when returned. They are infirmed in the process and could become mentally incapacitated. From what was found, while a few in this category are

lucky to be kept in rehab many are locked up, unattended, in private rooms by their relatives who cannot afford treatment. Many of the returnees are also found to be traumatised by their past experience,

*... Some who have not been damaged by drugs are traumatised by their experiences... {HTP07-NGO, GPI 1.}.*

Such victims are found to be more at risk with limited attention and care from state authorities (as reported under the response section).

#### *Regrets and Loss of Trust due to Experience*

Many returnees in the area, as found, have come to distrust people around them, especially as they now see everybody as capable of deceiving and misleading them. This could be because many of those trafficked were deceived by the traffickers who had turned from being friendly before departure to being very hostile and exploitative at the destination. This is an experience that may have negatively affected the disposition of many in socialising with others around them upon return, thus making reintegration into normal community life hard.

*...If you know how much effort goes into making them to even trust you,.. umm... it takes so much effort... because they have been abused at different levels... Their trusts have been betrayed so many times...umm... It is not something we should allow our children to experience... {HTP07 – NGO1}.*

From the field interactions, the victims appear normally pained by their encounter having been in search of a better life but ended up exploited and dehumanised in Europe. *Sometimes they come back and start regretting why they made the choice to be trafficked. This is because of the enslavement that they go through over there... {HTP09/17-inhabitant}*. One victim reflects her regret following her experience and advised others to be wary. *...Trafficking of women is bad. Even if you want to travel, have something that...ah... you have the very reason of going there. Don't allow somebody to take you there. Because if the person take you there you must do what the person ask you to do... {HTP01/02/02-victim}*. Another victim is said to always be in a depressed state according to her relative.

*... I don't know...she is trying to be herself. She is not always happy... I am always consoling her so that she remove her mind from that experience. ...I know when she is not happy. I always tell her ...what are you thinking? You don't have to continue like this... {HTP02/06 – relative}.*

For this victim, the sibling has been very supportive, helping to restore her to normal community life. But this is not always the case for many. In some cases, the family makes life more agonising for the victims as presented in the next section.

#### *Alienation and Threats from Families*

Returnee victims face alienation and threats, at the hands of their relatives, especially parents, as was discovered. Many of them are hated and denounced by their parents, either for refusing to go on the trip with traffickers/smugglers or for returning home from Europe, when they have not made money to support the family.

*Families are usually hostile to girls who decide to give up sex work to return home when they have not yet become millionaires... Sometimes we have to do family tracing...do counseling for them to even agree that the girl should come... {HTP07-NGO1}.*

Victims sometimes leave their homes and seek shelter with the main response agency or NGOs when their parents chase them out of the house (HTP07-NGO1). In many cases, the parents are recalcitrant despite response officials' interventions and make sure the girls still travel with the cartels or refused to take them in. The girls face the same ordeal when they try to reach their parents to help them return home following madams' maltreatment and exploitation. As found, even when the victims are crying while telling their story, their parents in many cases will insist the girls stay with the madam who will always tell the parents a different story if they care. As discovered, a victim who is rescued and returned home against their parents' wishes is seen as a bad child who does not mean well for the family.

#### *Rejection and Discrimination by Society*

Many returnee victims in the area trafficked as teenagers and yet to be married have problems entering relationship for the purpose of marriage as was found. They are consequently unable to have children of their own. Many men in the area often do not like having anything to do with returnee women once they hear that they were once trafficked as discovered. This could also be seen as part of the stigmatisation that was mentioned earlier. This leaves the girls further frustrated as they cannot find love vital for a normal social and biological life. This victims' experience, could be viewed as one that is very undesirable in view of their post-trafficking healing needs and for an all-round rehabilitation of their socio-economic life.

### ***Other Experiences-Victims as 'Sacrificial Lamb'***

Generally, victims of sex trafficking in the area could be seen as sacrificial lamb for the rest of the family (HTP07-NGO1). In many cases the girls are led into becoming trafficking victims abroad following the decision of their parents who view it as a means of supporting the rest of the family economically. Just like the family the girl herself seems to accept this reality. She carries the burden in her mind that it is up to her to help her family out of their poor condition no matter what. From what was discovered, this is not so much so for the boys in the area. Although some of the males here travel abroad for this reason, but the females trafficked for sex work appears to be more mindful of their family's interest in their decision to travel abroad. This is the reason many of those interviewed, say they accepted travelling with strangers to an uncertain destination abroad.

*...When I saw the family I came from... We don't have anything... Things are hard...umm... There is nobody to help, and we are 12 in number, and I am the eldest. I feel pains.... That was why I agreed to somebody that volunteered to traffic me abroad. I feel if I travel abroad I will be able to make some money to assist my siblings. ...The woman saw our condition and said he wants to help to take me to abroad to work and make money to support my family... {HTP01/03-victim}*

The irony of this, according to one of the interviewed NGO officials, is when the girl is rescued from the cartels and brought home, the same family members consider her as failure and make life more miserable and traumatic for her as mentioned earlier.

## *Chapter Eight*

### **8.0. Findings: Nature, Contextual Dynamics, Push and Pull Factors of Sex Trafficking in South-south Nigeria**

In this section, the focus is on findings regarding the background, inherent contextual dynamics, push and pull factors underlay sex trafficking from South-south Nigeria to Europe.

#### **8.1. Findings on Nature and Contextual Dynamics of Sex Trafficking in the Region**

Under this sub-section the findings regarding contextual dynamics and characteristics of sex trafficking in the region are presented.

##### *Sex trafficking as a Common Practice in the Area*

Many of the victims from the area as discovered are trafficked for the purposes of sex work in Europe. Some are lured away from their homes by the traffickers through deceit and other manipulative tactics (HTP07, NGO 1). Some others were found to have paid smugglers to take them to Europe but become victims of trafficking for sex work on their way or at the destination. Many others embark on the journey on their own and are taken into custody and forced into prostitution by cartels on their way (HTP01/01/03-victim; HTP05-government official; Lee, 2007). In recent years, only a few are taken to their destination countries by air while many go through the Sahara Dessert and the Mediterranean Sea as discovered. The cartels, as learnt, often take advantage of the illegal immigration status of the victims to exploit them because illegal migrants are usually insecure and vulnerable (Adepoju, et al, 2009). Many women and girls in the region, as found, are prone to being smuggled illegally and exposed to sex trafficking in Europe.

*“When you go to Europe and see our girls en... particularly, countries like Italy, Belgium, Spain, you see our girls at work there. There is no such sex work going on here {in Nigeria} ...”* (HTP07, NGO1).

The meeting point between sex trafficking and migrant smuggling was highlighted in some of the field responses. It became evident, that many of those recently trafficked into sex

work in Europe were those originally smuggled by migrant smugglers contracted to help the victims reach their destinations. In such situations, before leaving home the victim as discovered consents to travelling to Europe. The girls agree to cross the border illegally and in some cases pay for the journey before departure, in other cases they agree to pay when they arrive at the destination and start working (HTP01/04). Many have to save for this, some borrow while others rely on proceeds from sold family property as deposit (HTP09/32-inhabitant). But the point at which they become a trafficking victim is when, on arrival, the smuggler starts applying physical and psychological coercion to enslave the female migrant and ensure she does sex work for the cartel (HTP07-NGO1). These findings link earlier assertions as argued in the literature review which states that human smuggling in many cases precedes human trafficking (Aronowitz, 2001; Salt 2000).

### *Recruitment of Victims*

The recruitment pattern of victims in the region, from my findings, is diverse . Sometimes they reach the victims by direct contact, at other times through friends and relatives (HTP08-NGO1). Sometimes it is through what could be called decoy (i.e recruiting girls for a particular job offer after advertising a vacancy e.g. in a gas station, where as they are actually for sex work abroad). As noted earlier, sometimes they take advantage of the illegal immigration status of desperate migrants to coerce them while on their way to Europe.

When the traffickers go through parents and they agree to the proposal to traffic their daughter or ward, the parents have to convince the victim, especially if she was originally adverse to the idea (HTP07-NGO1). When they meet the girl and convince her she is the one that in turn convinces her parents of her readiness to travel to Europe for the interest of the whole family (ibid). Some of the girls, it was found, do not inform their parents or guardians but just innocently follow the traffickers.

One interesting context of the practice in the area, as found, is that some of the victims are known to be local prostitutes before they were smuggled out and become trafficked for exploitative sex work in Europe.

*Ummmm... most of those trafficked start the prostitution first locally here, then they go state-wide, then national before going abroad... A girl child who is already exposed to sex early in life and the parents don't care for her...at any material appeal, she will jump and be ready to agree to be trafficked anywhere... {HTP09/20 – inhabitant}.*

Many of the victims during recruitment are made to swear to an oath before departure (HTP07-NGO1). In such processes the victim's nails, pubic hair, panties and sometimes blood drops are deposited at the shrine where they take the oath (Eghafona, 2016). This is to instill fear in the victims and ensures loyalty to the cartels and commitment to pay whatever she is asked to pay back. Some of those who take oath before departure know they are being smuggled abroad for sex work even though they are not often aware of the nature of the sex work (HTP07-NGO1). It is possible that these may also be unaware they will be exploited and abused by the cartel at destination. It is also likely some do not know the actual reason for their journey and the oath taking. They may just feel it is to ensure they repay the cost of service to the person about to smuggle them.

#### ***Europe as Major Destination of Victims from the Area***

European countries, especially Italy, are the major destinations of victims trafficked from the area (HTP07-NGO1; HTP08-NGO2; Carling 2006). Other usual European destinations countries are the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, the United Kingdom, France, Austria etc. Just like in the case of this participant. *I was trafficked to Italy. I was staying with my madam...Soo... I went to the street... before then he didn't tell me that I was going to work on the street. {HTP01/01 –victim}.*

Victims of sex trafficking from this area, as found, are also trafficked to other regions of the world like Eastern Europe, the Middle East, the US and Asia, especially Malaysia, but this is in very few cases. The reason European countries appear to be the choice destination for the traffickers and their victims from this area is mostly because that is where the traffickers operating in the area have the networks and connections for supplying women to the sex industry (HTP 07-NGO1).

*If you go to countries like France and Belgium...while our girls are on the street doing sex work... the Ghanaian girls are in the home doing domestic work. Why... because the traffickers who operate in their region, that is where they have their link. Domestic sector. Ours have their link in the sex industry (HTP07-NGO1).*

Similarly, traffickers operating in the area belong to a global network of syndicates who are specialists in forcing helpless migrants and vulnerable young girls and women into prostitution in Europe especially in Italy (HTP07-NGO1).

The above response seems to agree with the arguments by Aghatise (2004) and Oluwa-Baye (2012) that European nations, especially Italy, are the preferred destination for sex traffickers due to the legalization of sex work which creates a vibrant sex industry in those countries. This is likewise seen as one of the primary reasons for the widespread nature of this particular type of trafficking in the area and not in other areas of the country, though human trafficking is generally practised across Nigeria (Nnadi, 2013).

#### ***Trafficking of Young People and Focus on Females for Sex Work***

Large number of those trafficked from the area, as found, are teenagers who were still in the secondary school {grammar school}. Some of the victims who participated in the field work mentioned that they were trafficked between age 15 and 22. This was confirmed by (HTP08-NGO2) who said sometimes victims are as young as 15 or 16 when they are trafficked. This victim, referred to below, was 17 when she was lured away by the traffickers.

*... We met somebody that promised to take us to abroad... A man. We were teenagers my friend and I both of us were staying together...I was 17 years then...{...} {HTP01/02/02}.*

Generally, it is a common knowledge among the people in the area that trafficking of older women was a trend of the early period of the trafficking business but the trafficking of young girls in their teens and very early 20s is what is now common. The reason given for this is the growing demand and preference for youngsters ahead of the much older women in the

sex industry in some European countries where they are normally trafficked to (Aghatise, 2004).

Focus on the trafficking of women and young girls for sex work abroad appears to be the most common in the area. Though there were opposing views from some field participants that the trafficking of men and women for other reasons is also just as common, but many of them, in agreement with Okojie et al (2003) and Nnadi (2013), confirmed that trafficking of women for commercial sex is what the area is known for.

*...We have found that traffickers focus on the girls...and lure the girls that they can support them to get this visa, ...to get into these countries, and that they only need to register...en... bring only so little for the process... and that they will give them work in Europe so that they will pay them when they arrive... That is very attractive... {HTP07, NGO 1}.*

The above participant explains that there is also the factor of the need to make wide profit and avoid risk in investment which also aligns with Campana's (2016) assertions. From what could be interpreted, the traffickers seem to understand that the business of trafficking women for sex work is more lucrative and profitable than trafficking males or even women for other purposes.

*...And when we ask, why not boy? they say that when you do that to boys, when they get to Europe they find their way {that the boys will escape}, and you would have lost all your investment... But for the girls, en, they give them accommodation,...and the girls then pay them all that 45,000,... 50,000 Euro that they have to pay back over a period of time... {HTP07, NGO1}.*

### ***Women as Dominant Actors in the Trafficking Cartel***

Contrary to popular opinion, especially in the West, women and not the men are mostly the key sex traffickers of women and young girls from the region as was discovered (HTP01/06-victim). They are the ones at the helm of affairs in the cartel chain of many sex trafficking teams (HTP07, NGO 1; Mancuso, 2013). They are usually called the “madam”, as referred

to earlier in this chapter. Almost all the victims that were interviewed during the field work mentioned that they were trafficked by a “madam”.

*....women, ehh... especially women, they are the ones even doing the connection, women they are the ones doing the connection because their daughters or sisters {who are the main traffickers}... they are there... {HTP01/06-victim}.*

It is however possible that this reference by the girls to their madam could be their perception of who their boss is, given that the madam is their main contact and controller once in Europe. This does not necessarily mean the madam is the individual in charge of the business. However, Mancuso (2013) seems to have cleared this misunderstanding following the assertion that the madams are often in charge. Mancuso proposes that there is the madam that finances the trip/business and there is the one that controls the girls. This explanation does not however diminish the complexities inherent in this aspect of the trafficking business as to who is at the helm.

Meanwhile, from the field work, the women were reported to work mostly with men who escort the victims from the source country to Europe (HTP01/02/02-victim, life history). Such men are called a “trolley” {a male pimp who helps to scout for prospective victims to be trafficked for sex work abroad and escort them to the destination}. It was also found that at the destination the madam keeps a number of men who help beat up the girls whenever they flout her orders. The madam normally resides at the destination country from where she funds and coordinates the smuggling of the victims over to meet her.

### *Use of Voodoo*

Prospective victims, as found, take an oath administered by a voodoo priest before embarking on the journey with traffickers as confirmed by this victim: *...After seeing the woman she did my passport... Then they took me to a shrine to swear to an oath. From there I went to Lagos where I finally left {...} {HTP 01/04 – victim}*. Common among the people in the area is the thinking that events of one’s life are largely beyond one’s control but instead are

determined by some super natural forces. This is a socio-psycho-religious characteristic of the people wherein sex trafficking is partly embedded in the area.

The use of voodoo and oath taking, as illustrated by the above participant, is a potent psychological tool in the hands of the traffickers in securing loyalty and instilling fear in the victims. The victims believe that the voodoo or deity behind the oath has the potency to determine what will become of them so they are scared to do anything contrary to its dictates. Reluctant prospective victims are also usually compelled by relatives through the assistance of witch doctors believed to possess super-natural powers (see Oseghale, 2001).

Apart from that, victims and relatives, it was found, turn to spiritual support to get a 'sponsorer' (madam) willing to assist in the smuggling process, to arrive safely at the destination, to remain safe at the destination and to make money quickly. Some make ritual sacrifices to idols seeking intervention while others go to churches for spiritual intercession as reflected in this participant's response: *...It is so bad. People go to church to pray and fast to get a sponsor...* (HTP06/04). Another participant said parents even go to church to give thanks giving when they hear that their daughter has crossed to Europe (HTP03 – GovtAgency1).

## **8.2. Findings on Contributory Push and Pull Factors**

In this part, findings concerning the push and pull factors of sex trafficking in south-south Nigeria are presented.

Generally, a number of push and pull factors contributing to the wide spread of sex trafficking in south-south Nigeria was found from the fieldwork. Apart from primary and secondary issues embedded in economic, social and political structural conditions, participants' responses suggest the importance of the roles of all stake holders – victims, relatives, the government, agencies, trafficking syndicates and others. This seems to depart from the usual practice highlighted which blames traffickers alone as key engineers of the trafficking activities as seen in various existing works like in Bales (1999), Lee (2007), Stiles (2012) and others. Basically, much was revealed by respondents about factors like poverty, location, and activity of traffickers, desperation, deception, illiteracy, patriarchy,

perceptions, values, preferences, corruption, double coincidence of wants and others as will be seen in the ensuing narratives.

### ***Location and Activity of Traffickers***

Location and activity of traffickers was found to explain why sex trafficking is common in the region and not in other regions of the country. The area of specialisation of the network of traffickers in a particular region or area determines what kind of trafficking will be common in the area. Human trafficking is a national problem. But South-south Nigeria especially Edo and Delta states have a large number of traffickers who specialise in trafficking young girls to Europe for sex work. One participant said:

*...And in Nigeria...en... where you are trafficked to, and for what you are trafficked, (pause)... is dependent on where you live in Nigeria. If you live in the South-south, most probably in Edo and Delta states, you are likely to become a victim of human trafficking to Europe for the purpose of sex work...  
...So human trafficking is a national problem. It is not as if it is an Edo problem...{HTP07, NGO1 }*

As illustrated in the above response, the northern part of the country, for instance, has a lot of traffickers involved in trafficking young girls to Saudi Arabia, mostly for domestic servitude. The propensity for the girls here to be trafficked to the Middle East could link the fact that they naturally have a cultural and religious system that align with Arab societies in the Middle East including Saudi Arabia. For this reason, the traffickers here are different from the ones in the South-south who are specialists in taking women to Europe for sex work.

This appears to also explain why sex trafficking is not prevalent in other regions of the country as much as it is in south-south region. This revelation seems significant in view of the thesis research questions and aims, as it helps to justify why, out of all types of human trafficking, it is only sex trafficking to Europe that is most associated with the region and in major proportion. This also helped to establish that, beyond poverty (as identified in the

research background), other issues can be critical contributory factors. More contextual light is thrown on this in the participant's response below.

*Sometimes people say, ... is Edo state the only poor state?, other states are poor, why is trafficking not prevalent? They say so because they don't know other forms of trafficking are prevalent in those states. Go to quarries and see people breaking stones... {HTP07-NGO 1}.*

Again, many of the women traffickers here were once trafficked for sex work abroad (HTTP:07-NGO1; Ribando Seekle, 2010). This situation is seen as also helping to reinforce the sex trafficking business in the area. It is like a vicious cycle. A trafficked victim who survived the experience becomes ambitious and wants to ascend to the position of a *madam* so that she can exploit others the way she was exploited. She starts thinking of how to traffic a young girl or even an older woman that will become her victim. Her victim could even be her sibling, an extended family relation or a neighbour's daughter (also see, Akor 2011; Oyekanmi and Okunola 2017).

### ***Poverty and Vulnerability of Victims***

Meanings embedded in responses from victims and other interviewees reflect that poverty is not just a driving force behind sex trafficking, but a common factor in the vulnerability of many women of the region. The response below reflects this.

*...Poverty is a major driving force...yes. Poverty reduces the options that are available to you, you then end up in doings like allowing your child to become trafficked... Poverty has been identified as a common factor in the vulnerabilities of the women we support...their experience of poverty has limited their life chances often rendering them susceptible to traffickers... {HTP07-NGO1}.*

As illustrated above, because, poverty could reduce options available to an individual, it is believed to have the potential of leading many to make uninformed choices like following traffickers abroad which is dangerous. Many of the returnees who participated during the

field work made it clear that that unbearable poor economic condition was basically the reason they agreed to leaving their home for Europe in the first place. *It is because of poverty and the background about your family...things not going well... for your family... that is why women always decide to go to abroad...* {HTP 10/10 - victim}. Another victim said:

*In Nigerian Pidgin English*

*Like me now... wetin make me commont be say..., I reason am say... I dey stay Nigeria, to even eat self na problem... so naim make me say make I travel out, naim I still go... {...} {HTP01/08 – victim}.*

*In correct English*

*Like me now...what made me to travel is ...I thought about my living condition in Nigeria...to even eat is a problem, so ...that was what made me to go {...} {HTP01/08-victim}*

Notions from field interactions indicate that because poverty limits the people's life chances, indigent families are sometimes helpless as they personally arrange for their children's trafficking. Poor families, as found, have sometimes been complicit in the trafficking of their children and have encouraged them to leave Nigeria with the prospect of better lives elsewhere". That is, the usual irrational decisions by victims and parents leading to sex trafficking could be a product of the humiliating impact of poverty as further suggested in the response below.

*Poverty dehumanises, you are no longer a rational human being... you can make decisions that will further dehumanise you... {HTP07 – NGO1}.*

The above participant had also given an account of violent parents and women during a campaign and sensitisation visit to a popular market in the area called 'Okah market' on the danger of sex trafficking by her and her team. A woman had asked them: "*Is it your business that I have made the choice to sacrifice one for the betterment of others?*" (HTP07-NGO1). The participant concluded that the woman's response was a reflection of how poverty has

wrongly shaped the thinking of most parents in the area regarding how they view sex trafficking issues.

The “Okah market” mentioned above is believed to be the busiest market in Ikpoba-Okha the field area. The immediate communities surrounding the market are seen as the hub of sex trafficking in the whole of south-south Nigeria (HTP10-FGD1). Almost everyone living here understands how the sex trafficking business operates in the area. To the people here, human trafficking or sex trafficking is a normal everyday thing. As discovered, they have become used to the practice and accept it as part of their daily life to the extent that anyone trying to campaign against it will meet strong resistance. That was the situation the participant referred to above, and her team found themselves, when they visited and were attacked. The people’s poor condition, as attested to by the above participant, has altered their perception about what is acceptable or not. In essence, following the serious condition of poverty the need for economic survival makes distinctions, between ‘freely chosen’ and exploited rather irrelevant and academic. (Much of this is reported under the sub-heading *perception and decision making of victims and families*). However, many of these poor people could actually be victims of widespread social inequality in the region leading to the mass movement of young girls in into becoming victim of sexual exploitation abroad (HTP09/18-inhabitant).

### ***Deception and Manipulation of the Poor***

Many of the victims of sex trafficking here are said to be deceived into the trade. With no other option of realising their desire to migrate abroad for better life chances, girls and women in the area tend to use the services of people around them whom they never suspected could deceive and traffic them for a purpose as risky as sex trade. The traffickers operating here appear to latch onto the vulnerability from the victims’ poor conditions and desire for a better life abroad to lure them with deception.

*...a situation where you have a family of say six and they are not being able to at least feed or {...} and somebody just come and say I want to help you... take this your girl child abroad with promises of good education, good job over there, ... I think the family will just fall for it... And may be after the first two*

*or three months, just send to the parents that the girl is doing well,...meanwhile she is currently doing prostitution...{HTP08-NGO2}.*

Also, this victim (quoted below), who was anxious to help her poor family, confirmed the use of deception by the cartels.

*...There was no money to feed... different things. They told me...en... it is tomatoes i am going to pick in Italy. That was why I travelled. I was not told I was going for prostitution...{HTP 01/01- victim}.*

As can be seen, the use of deception is helpful to the traffickers in staying in business in the region. But the argument is that if many of the victims were in a good economic state it would not be easy for the traffickers. Despite recent campaigns about traffickers' deceptive approach, victims and parents in the area, as found, still get deceived especially with the heightening economic hardship.

*As at 2013, 2014, the rate went down with awareness and campaigns, laws prohibiting it. As at that period...en... those that would have normally be deceived were now informed of the deception involved. They were now aware that the traffickers were not taking them for factory jobs but for prostitution... But now because people are desperate to escape the bad economy that is now prevailing, people now prefer to travel abroad to do anything ... just to make money...{HTP09/10, inhabitants}.*

The above response further suggests that, checking the practice is beyond mere sensitization and awareness campaigns about traffickers' deceit, but requires focusing on poverty induced vulnerability.

Another reason the women still get deceived despite increased awareness of traffickers' deceptive method, as found, is the myth among many people from the area that money can be picked on the streets of Europe, or that money can be made with little or no effort while there (HTP 06/34, Inhabitant). So they believe whatever any trafficker tells them. The high unawareness rate among the people could also be seen as responsible for why the traffickers still succeed with their deception. Ikpoba-okha for instance, is a partly rural and partly

urban area. In fact, most victims of sex trafficking in the area are believed to come from the rural section. Many of those living in the urban part of the area are outcome of rural-urban migration. Most of the rural people in Nigeria (like in this area) are not only poor but uneducated and unaware of occurrences in the cosmopolitan settings (Saheed, 2010; Ugiagbe and Osunde, 2015). More on educational level of the people as a factor contributing to sex trafficking in the area will be reported in subsequent sections of this chapter.

### ***Realities of Poverty and Desperation in the Area***

In South-south Nigeria, the quest for survival is perceptible in the desperation of young people who are from a poor background in the area. Many young people risk everything in order to get to the rich countries of the West. “...*What pushed me was that een... I wanted to help my mother because there was nothing in our home. There was no money to feed. Different things...*” {HTP01/01, victim}. While trying to migrate through legitimate channels, the women are stopped by immigration barriers as they are often denied visas, as a result unable to secure the legal document to make the journey abroad. At this point they become more desperate and seek for alternatives.

*...The process is so tight that people lose courage, confronting the migration process themselves. So they seek out intermediaries...and unfortunately these intermediaries are traffickers and their agents... {HTP 07 - NGO 1}.*

As found, desperation could becloud rational thoughts that those seeking to migrate foreclose any possible deceit or risk in what they are about to get into. The idea of desperation induced poverty preceding vulnerability to trafficking has also been asserted by some human trafficking scholars (see Okojie 2003; Okonofua 2004, and Dokpesi 2015) as seen in the literature review. It indicates how poverty could be potent in contributing to sex trafficking when it interplays with socio-psychological dispositions like desperation. Poor individuals naturally seek ways to survive as survival is important. They could then become desperate and ready to take chances even if it involves taking illegal and dangerous route to their destinations or getting involved in whatever will fetch them money in the case of those in the trafficking business.

Another discovery from the field however indicates exceptional cases where the sort of desperation that causes many to travel with migrant smugglers does not necessarily come from poor conditions. A few of those who are smuggled especially into Europe and become victims of sex trafficking were not from poor homes but were desperate to reach Europe out of sheer high material aspiration (HTP03-GovtAgency1). This agrees with Salt (2000) that many desperate migrants who become trafficked are not poor. One participant said.

*...Even though some people might decide to take a trip {travel abroad} but they are not from poor family... because there are some people that...ennn... not poor that are been trafficked just because they want to explore. There is one...one of the girls that we really battling with. ...she is from a very rich home...HTP03-GovtAgency1}.*

Even though desperation among those who are trafficked is not always caused by poverty, it was clear that desperation precedes victims consenting to travel with smugglers-turned-traffickers illegally across borders. This is seen in the migrants' resilience to immigration challenges as they often look for possible ways to cross the border, whether legal or not to enter their country of destination. Meanwhile, in many of the cases noticed, it is a case of poor girls and women becoming desperate to run away to somewhere they assume holds better prospect for them.

### ***Unstable Homes and Large Families***

Many of the victims were found to often come from broken and unstable homes as suggested by this participant: *...Broken home is another cause...Although, that one still boils down to poverty* (HTP06-GovtAgency4). Broken and unstable home situations are a commonplace in the region. This also could be linked to widespread poverty here. Many of the children, especially in seriously affected communities in Ikpoba-okha, are brought up by a single parent. Some live with distant relatives or strangers while others live on their own (living a street life) because their parents are no longer together 'in union'. Such children struggle to survive the harsh realities of the society without the support of a stable family base. They become socially deprived in many ways. In many cases these children are said to be usually maltreated by their guardians exposing them to unsafe options. Some responses reflect this.

*.... I will say broken home and poverty are really responsible in the South-south here. And eeeeh I want to be like my mate {HTP05-GovtAgency3}.*

*...My mother was no longer with my father even before my father died. We were very small... when we were very small. I don't know how she... living her life... {HTP01/02/03-victim}.*

*...That is the only thing I am shouting for. I know that I am the step-father. The mother is with me in my house. Even the woman that left here is my wife and she is the mother... {HTP02/01-relative}.*

Some of the victims, especially the older ones, are from failed marriages as wives who have divorced their husband or ran away from home and become trafficked as noted by this participant. *... So I got married and my husband frustrated me so I returned to my parents' house with my baby...umm... For me to sit down and start waiting for my parents to provide for everything... me and my baby need... I decided to travel {to follow traffickers} (HTP01/05 –victim).* Some others are impregnated by men who abandon them while some do not know the father of their children at all. The effect of this is a situation where their poor condition is worsened as they have to cater for their children alone. One participant noted:

*...It was because of the situation at home. I have a baby. After secondary school, I learnt fashion design... The father of my child was maltreating me.... My parents were the ones catering for me and my child. That was why I decided to travel again to Europe...HTP01/02-victim}.*

Many of the families in this area are large with some having up to ten children and more. Polygamy is common with some men marrying as many as three to four wives and each of these wives can give birth to as much as six children. Many couples, as discovered, do not see family planning or keeping a small size family as ideal. For them, it is a thing of pride and a status symbol to have many wives and many children. The consequent fragile economic condition makes most of their children fend for themselves as early as their teenage years. This appears to have constrained many, to take the option of travelling abroad for economic survival.

*... Am from... Polygamous home umm...My father has four wives, my mother is the senior of the wives in the house. Am the senior daughter of the family and my father is late... My mother has nine children then it remains five. ...My early life...(laugh)... me I have not enjoyed anything in this life ooo. {HTP01/02/03 – Victim}*

Many of the victims, especially those from polygamous homes and large families become exposed to serious economic difficulty when they lose their parent(s) as seen in the above quote. Due to the nature of the social system and the economic situation in the country they normally will not have any form of social support. The young women among them are likely to be trafficked as discovered. This victim, who was 17 when she left for Europe with migrant smugglers/traffickers, said she lost both parents while she was still a teenager.

*...I don't have father I don't have mother...My father died before my mother. Let me say my mother died 15 or 17 years while my father died 12 years ago... {she was not too sure of the exact year} My parents were farmers before they died. They were both sick before they died ... {HTP 01/02/02-victim}.*

Young parents are said to die more often in the last few years in the country than before. The average life expectancy in Nigeria according to a World Health Organisation (WHO) 2015 report is put at 54.5 and the country was ranked number 171 among the countries of the world. Some of the reasons explaining the low life expectancy rate in the nation are political failures and economic crisis in the country (Okpaka, 2011) leading to socio-economic insecurity.

### ***Unemployment and Low Wages***

Another factor found during the field research was unemployment, with many people living in poverty partly because of lack of jobs. Many school leavers, university graduates, skilled trainees and others are unemployed and struggle to survive.

*Things are really hard here in Nigeria...Survival is difficult. There is no electric power supply, so you cannot do business successfully. There are no enough job opportunities here... That is why a lot of them are vulnerable to*

*trafficking. According to the account given by most of them... they seek for greener pasture ... {HTP 06/38-Inhabitant}.*

*There is lack of employment opportunities, even for the unskilled and skilled persons. Lack of infrastructure to be self-employed... because a lot of people would have been eehen... engaged in a lot of things but the infrastructure like especially power, and eeh... access to market of the product and services ... (HTP04 – GovtAgency2).*

*...you see a...a ... lot of young girls are really going through hard times. Some leave the university, no job. Some that didn't even go to school at all, they have no body to fall back on...(HTP05- GovtAgency3).*

The victim quoted below, also mentioned that a lack of work to do after leaving school is one of the reasons why she left her home for the journey.

*... When someone came to me and told me there is opportunity that is why I agreed. That everything that place is good. They have work, there, so that is why I agreed. Because when I am in Nigeria I have nothing doing... I came out from school, no money, no work, so that is the reason... HTP01/07-victim}.*

The dearth of infrastructure in Nigeria generally, especially the absence of power and energy, has made the unemployment situation worse. With employment challenges, many in the area, especially women who are often disadvantaged when it comes to employers' preference, are left with no option than travelling out of the country by any means as found. The few available job opportunities are usually said to be poorly paid. *Wages are low, no money to spend,...um... so even when you have a business, patronage is always low. You will be forced to close your shop and prefer to travel abroad ... where you will make quick money...* (HTP06/3-inhabitant). The worker or business owner is unable meet with the increasing cost of living associated with the country's poor economic situation. Young women and men who learnt skills, as was discovered, are often easily discouraged as they are unable to start up on their own with lack of capital to acquire tools, or rent a space for their business. As noted by this

participant, *the skill acquisition centres are usually not well organised... Getting the capital to start off on your own after training is another challenge...* (HTP06/03-inhabitant). Another participant corroborated and added:

*No better alternatives here. Some work for government but don't receive salaries for months. Some don't even get the job to do... This expose many to trafficking... {HTP 06/40}.*

As indicated in the above responses, unemployment and underemployment rates in the country grow over the years even up till now (Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics 2017). Some of the young people in the area are, however, found to be unwilling to take up any meaningful job. From what was found, such young people have formed a pool of willing girls and boys from which scouting traffickers posing as migrant smugglers recruit their victims.

*The...{...} should work hard and stop travelling abroad...Parents should be enlightened especially the mothers...parents should try train their children so that they are not exposed to traffickers and bad ideas like trafficking abroad for commercial sex... {HTP06/25, inhabitant}.*

### ***Poor Economy and Devaluation of the Nigeria Naira***

From the field interactions, devaluation of the Nigeria naira arising from its continuing low economic performance since the early 80s could be seen as a push condition for increased out-migration and sex-trafficking in the region. This may have engendered an economic situation that saw the continued worsening of the people's economic condition and gradually depleted their purchasing power. It has also caused many to seek a better economic life abroad and hoping to repatriate money with high value in the process. As recounted by this respondent, *"the devaluation of the country's money, made European money, ...the Pound, the dollar... to now have more value than previously... People became interested in going abroad, not only for schooling, but also for the purposes of work"* (HTP07- NGO1). After 1986, with the IMF conditionality of the Structural Adjustment Programme, the participant referred above further said:

*“we had like a boom, like an increase, in people concluding that things are too hard here, and the movement started...there was some abating, at least we were succeeding in our campaign in telling people, ... we can make it here...but in the last four years, it has not been easy. People whom we set up businesses for as an alternative so they don't go...You do your business, one year, two years, business is folding up... they start thinking again...”*  
(HTP07-NGO1).

For this participant, there appears to be no hope in sight for stopping out-migration and sex trafficking from the region with the worsening economic situation leading to further devaluation of the country's currency (ibid).

The implication of the above responses by HTP07-NGO1 on sex trafficking in South-south Nigeria appears to be two-fold. One is the weak economic power of the masses that comes with the devaluation of a country's currency and forces them to migrate abroad for greener pasture. Secondly, the stronger the currencies of destination countries of the West, the more likelihood for people in source countries to be pushed out to those countries. The logic is that when migrants get to such countries and are able to repatriate a little money home, such money will translate to huge values which could be used to achieve so much back home. Strengthening this line of thought, another participant added:

*...Like today if you compare a dollar to naira, about 450, 480 there about...  
So by chance, this woman or this girl is trafficked abroad, and she sends home a hundred or two hundred dollars, look at the exchange rate, a lot of money has come... {HTP08-NGO2}.*

With the devaluation of the Nigerian naira against values of currencies of developed countries of the West including European countries, people want to leave the country, not necessarily only to escape economic hardship but also to go and work and repatriate funds home at high exchange rates. In the same vein, traffickers normally increase their scouting activities hoping to make a huge profit in return for their investment as trafficked victims pay back in hard currency which, when repatriated, will mean a huge profit for them. In essence, the devaluation of a country's local currency within the contemporary global social-

economic relationship promotes dysfunctional migratory patterns like human smuggling and human trafficking. Achebe (2004) also identified some form of relationship between the propensity for more people from the area wanting to travel abroad yearly and Nigeria's enduring dwindling economic situation and weak fiscal policies (Ogbeide & Agu 2015).

### ***Failing Educational System and Low Educational Level of Targeted Groups***

The spread of the practice in the area could possibly be linked to the increasing number of young girls who have left school for one reason or the other. As found, many families appear discouraged investing in their children's education concluding it is no longer rewarding. Many of those who are trafficked are school dropouts with some merely completing their primary or secondary school education. This participant corroborated:

*...we observed that a number of these children were being taken out of school to travel...the children drop out of school in primary 6, in JSS 3 {Junior Secondary School 3}... in short go to Europe, 70% of our children there, did not achieve SSS3 {senior secondary school}...They did not... {HTP07-NGO 1}.*

The respondent quoted above added: *"...before you could see an NCE {National Certificate in Education} holder or a degree holder that is a victim of trafficking..., you have already counted seven others who don't have up to that number of years of schooling"* (HTP07-NGO1). This means the longer you stay in school, the less vulnerable you are to making dangerous journeys leading to sex trafficking. As found, many people here have given up on going to school, not necessarily because of an inability to finance their studies, but the fact that getting education no longer guarantees economic success in the country. According to HTP07-NGO1, the school system they went through did not teach them to be independent. It taught them to do white collar jobs that are scarce.

The emanating idea is that the failure of the educational system of the country to the extent that it cannot guarantee the citizens socio-economic progress is a critical factor. The conclusion is if school-leavers can be able to be self-sustaining with their training, independently of government or other employers, they would see education as key rather

than seeking greener pastures abroad. Respondents also throw up thoughts that the educational pattern is not helping young graduates to impact the country's economy believing this largely contributes to the failures in the economy.

Many of the people here are seen as largely unaware and of low education with the national illiteracy rate recently estimated to be all time high (NBS, 2016). This in a way partly explains why campaigns and education about the risk of embarking on journeys abroad through illegal processes may have amounted to nothing. As discovered, this is also one of the reasons why many of them become easily hoodwinked and lured into debt bondage and enduring exploitation. According to HTP08-NGO2, "the victims, are usually not aware of the degree of risk they are taking because nobody can consent to be a slave, agreeing to be trafficked is consenting to be a slave". However, many of the victims are believed to have lacked access to basic education for economic reasons. Some attest to their low level education as they said their parents could not afford to fund them in school hence the reason why they have to travel abroad for a better life.

As earlier reported, many of the victims of sex trafficking are those who chose to travel with migrant smugglers who turned out to be their 'exploiters'. This is often possible because many of these migrants-turned-victims are usually not educated enough to know and do not always have correct information regarding their journey. Some of them who are already involved in prostitution locally in the area are often not aware of the nature of the prostitution they are going for. They may be aware that they are being smuggled abroad to continue prostituting and make better money. But they are not normally aware that the kind of prostitution they are going for is not the type they are used to and that they will be subjected to sexual exploitation. This victim confirmed this.

*... After reaching there, he said I will work in the street. He gave me condom, tissue paper to go to the street. As am working am paying for the road that I am standing, paying for the house am staying... working for her...everyday I balance money. {HTP01/01, - victim}.*

### ***Corruption and Failure of Government***

Corruption, especially among the political elites and public office holders is a known challenge in the country mentioned by a number of respondents which appears to have also contributed to sex trafficking from the region. This situation was lamented by one of the victims who believed the leaders are the ones making things difficult for the people:

*... We should just work hard here, Nigeria has money, is just that...it is just the leaders, they are the ones eating all the money... {HTP01/06 – victim}.*

Corruption is argued to account for the difference between the huge revenue from the abundant natural resources (especially oil) in the country and the poor economic conditions of majority of the large population (Ngwube, and Okoli 2013). This also underscores the widespread social inequality in the region and the country at large. The poor living condition in the South-south region also known as the Niger/Delta is more ironic as this region bears the mineral resources - the crude oil that is the main stay of the country's economy. Political leaders and public office holders have been blamed. This seemingly deliberate impoverishment of the people is believed to be causing many to migrate for survival as reflected by this victim. *Why I agree to travel was because of the Nigeria environment and because things are not easy here for me. ...That is why I agree to leave Nigeria to go to Europe country...* {HTP01/10 – victim}. The situation in Nigeria is that of hunger in the midst of plenty owing mainly to corruption. Nigeria is the largest producer of oil in Africa and the sixth in the world yet ranks among the poorest countries (Adebanjoko and Uguoke 2014).

Apart from mismanaging public funds, the leaders are also believed to have shown policy and administrative ineptitude as they have failed in making the right laws for the smooth running of the country (HTP09/06-inhabitant; HTP08-NGO 2). There is a visible absence of laws in the area protecting women. One participant believes this can also be seen as the reason many young girls become often exposed to the manipulations of trafficking syndicates.

*We don't have a law in Nigeria per se...like in abroad they have policies at least put in place for single mothers. We don't have it... Because since you*

*don't have such policies that is favourable to women, it makes them to go into sex trafficking... {HTP04-GovtAgency4}.*

It is believed that the women who are considered, along with children, as the most vulnerable in the society are left to compete for survival on their own and not catered for by political institutions as they are in developed societies. The participant referred to above believes that when women are specifically taken into consideration in public policy formulations they will be less vulnerable. *When decision is been taken as per the local government level, this people should be put into consideration... {HTP04-GovtAgency4}.*

### ***Globalisation, Westernization and the Disadvantaged Nations***

For most countries especially those in Africa, globalisation and Westernisation are formidable forces that have left socio-economic life completely altered. Globalisation involves the intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant locations in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring miles away and vice versa (Giddens, 1990). Cultural globalisation has affected the traditional ways of lives of many especially in assumed less sophisticated societies, making them desire the culture of distant lands seen in the mass media. Most countries have fallen under the influence of spreading Western culture (Westernisation) making them exchange their local ways of life for the lifestyle and culture of the West. This situation is considered to be a factor while most young women and men for instance migrate in droves to the developed Western world. They wish to have a real taste of what they see via the media. Some interviewees corroborated this. *Blame the influence of Western culture, it is part of globalisation, the cultural aspect of globalisation... (HTP04-GovtAgency2).* Another participant stressed:

*It is our exposure... because we have embraced the white man's culture and everybody wants to be like the white man. And we have seen how a lot of these is been done via maybe television and others. Our exposure to maybe the modern world, and everybody wants to go there and see how it is being done.... You can call it westernisation... {HTP08-NGO 2}.*

The degree of exposure to Western culture and civilisation seem to be quite high particularly in South-south Nigeria and perhaps partly explains the reason international sex trafficking is commonplace in the area unlike in other parts of the country, as also reinforced by this respondent.

*... like they always say, human trafficking is prevalent in the South-south ... Because we are open to social interactions, social activities, you watch films, you see girls wear bump-short, we do things like that... and that expose you to things like that here. That is why it looks more here...{HTP 03-GovtAgency1}*

From the above, globalisation and westernisation are sort of agents creating pull effect. They throw up attractive life styles leaving young people here with the burning desire to travel abroad especially to Europe and United States where they feel they can make a living in a beautiful and exciting society as they see on internets, cable television and others.

Looking at globalisation as a whole, a core view of it is liberalisation. As liberation "globalization" means a process of removing state-imposed restrictions on movements between countries in order to create an "open", "borderless" world economically, immigration and otherwise. But ironically, as it is today, this seems to be for selected countries, especially when it comes to access to visas to enter certain countries. As reflected earlier, many migrants from most developing countries, especially from Africa, are denied visas to the developed nations of the world. This creates difficulty for those who are desirous of going to these developed countries from the third world. Those who suffer the most in this case are the poor people in these developing countries from what was found. Unlike the poor people the rich ones among them are often able to meet the visa requirements for their trip to those richer countries. This scenario precedes dreaming young women falling into the wrong hands, many of whom are sex trafficking cartels posing to help facilitate their journeys. More of this situation is captured in the following section.

### *Western Immigration Restrictions and Failed Migration*

As indicated earlier, human trafficking, including sex trafficking, is a migratory variation. One field participant believes there is nothing wrong with migration that it is the type of migration involved in human trafficking that is undesirable. According to the respondent: *... , migration is positive... But, human trafficking is migration gone sour...* {HTP07 - NGO 1}. Migrants, as found, become victims of human trafficking because of the growing difficulty for mostly economically disadvantaged people to migrate.

*...People don't desire to be trafficked, they desire to migrate. But in the migratory process they become victims,... sometimes they become victims of human trafficking. They become victims of human trafficking because it has become very difficult to migrate...* {HTP07 -, NGO 1}.

Generally, diplomatic, political and socio-economic interests of nations have helped to create tighter boundaries. This has led to scarcity of safe routes everywhere (HTP07-NGO 1). This scarcity of routes for safe migration usually predisposes many victims to setting on the journey through unsafe routes leading them to exploitative syndicates in sex trade abroad. Sex traffickers disguise themselves as agents who mean well and ready to help migrants to their destinations when safe routes become scarce.

*...We have the reality of the difficulty of procuring visa leading to the need for intermediary...who are the existing intermediaries as traffickers...* {HTP07-NGO1}.

This thinking is in line with existing ideas that tighter border control, like the use of border forces at many European borders to repel migrants, results in the use of more dangerous and more costly routes to avoid detection (Ribando Seelke, 2010). With the persisting immigration barriers, tendencies are that there will be a continuous use of unsafe illegal routes by migrants many of whom are running away from perceived unbearable situations back home.

### ***Perceptions and Decision Making of Individuals and Families***

As was discovered, perception and decision making of individuals and families can also be an important variable in explaining sex trafficking from the region. The issue considered here is the perception of victims and their parents regarding the appropriateness of sending a girl-child abroad with a madam against the thinking of the larger community concerning the phenomenon. As found, because many parents and victims perceive that trafficking is the way to economic freedom they reach decisions that their girl child should follow strangers abroad thinking it is the best decision. The complication is that, as put by this respondent: “...Families and victims do not sufficiently know the difference between migration and trafficking to make informed choice...that is part of the reasons for the prevalence...” (HTP07- NGO 1). The above participant further explains:

*... At the early period, it wasn't a family decision that leads to that, it is just the children that make such uninformed decisions... They on their own come in contact with traffickers or smugglers who lure them out and force them into prostitution only for the parents to hear that they have gone. But now the practice is that the families hold meetings and tell the children,...we have decided, Osaretin, should come and travel, so that our family situation can improve... (HTP07- NGO1).*

The issue of perception and decision making of victims and parents could be seen as a product of poor educational level and lack of awareness. This is made worse by the visible lack of effective public sensitisation and awareness creation by the relevant institutions coupled with, systemic failure which has impoverished the people both mentally and materially (Okpaka, 2011). This situation arguably forms an integral part of the constraining social structure leading to sex trafficking in the area.

### ***Pressure from Parents, Peers and Traffickers***

Parents, peers and traffickers in the area pressure young girls and even women into travelling abroad in order to make money with the victims not knowing what their destination holds for them. As mentioned earlier in the preceding section, some parents of

victims are quite involved collaborating with traffickers to pressure their daughters as also suggested by this respondent.

*...Sometimes, you could see, it is even the parents that the so called sponsors of traffickers would approach first... So it is the decision of the parents now that will determine, and say, "yes I have a girl child that I can give to you".... {HTP08-NGO2}.*

Some parents as found, take such decisions in order to be able to measure up in terms of social prestige with neighbours within their community. *It becomes a form of competition, they argue among themselves, how many girls do you have abroad? ... Undermining what they go there to do... they are not bothered... {HTP03-Govt Agency1}*. Some parents are bent on seeing their daughter travel with migrant smugglers/traffickers using all forms of means including threatening to disown her if she resists. Some resort to spiritual threat to coerce her to travel with the traffickers. Some stop their daughters from going to school in order to follow madams.

*...My parents don't have money to help me further my education. They promised me that I will further my education when I get there. That was why I followed them, ... {HTP01/04- victim}.*

Some parents ask their daughters to copy their mates who went abroad and were lucky enough to return with money to buy big houses and big cars for their parents and to show off (HTP05-Govt Agency 3).

Similarly, many of the victims of sex trade abroad from the area were not only influenced by their peers but were introduced to the traffickers/agents by their friends as suggested by this respondent's account.

*...One day when I was coming back from the school one of my girl friend told me that one of the aunties in Libya need someone to help her as a sales girl. So, that was how I travelled out... {HTP01/11-victim}.*

Another participant interviewed believes this is a usual practice among peers in the area encouraging each other to travel with madams.

*Yes...when you keep wrong companies that advise you... that is what you get. What we see these days is some girls telling others “travel abroad for prostitution and make quick money...,” you see girls really following what their friends advised them and travelling... {HTP09/15, inhabitant}.*

In some cases, the girls are said to be enticed by the flashy looks they see in their returnee peers (who may be living a false life). Another participant interviewed said: *for example if out of five friends four have gone...I mean trafficked and there are good changes in their lives, the fifth one would like to copy the rest by volunteering to be trafficked {to follow migrant smuggler/madam}... {HTP09/19, inhabitant}.*

Traffickers often enlist close friends and others around a potential victim to pressurise her into agreeing to travel abroad (HTP06/37, inhabitants). They will normally assure the girl that within a short while she would have paid off the cost of taking her abroad and she will become rich and help her family out of poverty. Many traffickers also normally use their relatives as agents to persuade and get women and young girls from the area to be trafficked. Some of the victims mentioned that they were recruited either by sister, niece or mother of the madam who directs the process including funding of trip from abroad. This victim made mention of her friend who helps her aunty - a madam in Europe.

*...That my friend also helped her aunty to look for other girls... {HTP01/11-victim}.*

Traffickers' family members' involvement in helping to look for victims makes it easier to recruit as many as possible. It then becomes a family business for the trafficker and his or her family members. Family members become part of the network. Motivation from the financial gains propels the family members to ensure the business runs well and spreads as they depend on it as a good source of income. The reality of pressure from parents, peers and traffickers represents a key aspect of influencers of sex trafficking in South-south

Nigeria. Many of those interviewed were generally of the opinion that pressure from parents, peers and traffickers is a factor.

### ***Values and Materiality***

From the finding the issue of wrong value and wild material craving was noted. Many people in the area careless about the means to material acquisition provided an individual possesses a good measure of it to show off (HTP04-Govt Agency 2). Field Participants took exception to this seemingly common value among the people and concluded this could be part of the reasons while the people are quick to travelling abroad to make money and the women becoming victims of trafficking in the process. This respondent said:

*...Our style of living. ...we respect...money and material things than abilities or the dignity of man. ...From thee... the village setting... in our ostentatious life...during ceremonies... when you come home, a lot is expected of you. However way you get what you bring, is nobody's business...so long as you can bring something home for your people. That is when your people can be proud of you... {HTP10 – GovtAgency 2}.*

In other words, one of the possible reasons that prospective victims from the area are desperate to migrate to richer western nations is the anticipation to make quick money and return to show off their wealth to earn admiration and respect from the community. In this process, they often do not envisage they may end up as sex slaves in the hands of traffickers which usually becomes their fate.

Similarly, common among the people here is the value attached to owning one's personal house. As mentioned by this participant... *the typical Bini man looks forward to moving out of his father's house to his own house, not to be a tenant...the tenants were the foreigners around...* {HTP07-NGO 1}. From what was discovered, a Bini man who continues to stay in a rented apartment for a long time without owning his personal house is deemed to have failed. The inability of a man, as the head of a family, to possess his house where he will be buried when he dies may also be seen as failure or curse. Children are said to be proud before peers when they live in their own family personal house and not a rented apartment. For this,

indigent parents and children see going abroad as a sure way to get money to own their personal house. ... *they see their children abroad as a way to have that roof over themselves...* {HTP07-NGO 1}.

As suggested by the above response, this practice is seen as encouraging sex trafficking in the area. Hence, the first thing that many prospective victims of sex trafficking often think of is the opportunity to build a house for her family. This makes them agree to travel with migrant smugglers who turn out to be traffickers. Because this value is a strong part of the culture of the people here it has the potential to help the spread of the means of achieving the product of the value which is having to travel abroad.

### ***Nature of Child Up-bringing***

Participant during the field work tend to blame parents for their failure in ensuring proper upbringing of the children as they connect this with reasons for the spread of the practice in the region. According to a participant, *when the girl child is not properly brought up and is not well taken care of, there is the tendency for them to go out. If anybody can even buy them chewing gum they go for it* (HTP04-Govt Agency 4). Many victims are believed to come from homes lacking moral trainings where children are brought up without parental control. Some participants believed that young girls from such background could decide to mingle with any manner of persons, take decisions that suites them and even travel abroad for any reason without recourse to the feelings and choices of their parents or guardians. Following interactions with some returnee victims' relatives it was found that many left their homes for the journey and it only came to the knowledge of their parents after they had gone. This relative said:

*(In Nigerian broken English)...Because when e wan comont dem nor hear... I nor know wetin carry am. Naim... Even though say poverty wan carry am travel, when you discuss am with your parents, if dem say nor go you nor go go... but if dem ask you to go, enn...you can go. She did not discuss it with anybody, she left her... on her own...*

*(In correct English translation)...Because when he was leaving nobody knew...I don't know what made her to travel...Even if it is poverty that that is behind the reason you want to travel, when you discuss it with your parents, if they say don't go, you should not go... but if they ask you to go enn... you can go. She did not discuss it with anybody, she left... on her own...  
{HTP02/07-sister}*

One inhabitant of the area interviewed believed that if children are well trained with the right values and instilled with good morals they will not contemplate travelling abroad with migrant smugglers for a reason as disapproving as prostitution (HTP09/06-inhabitant). This, in a way, links to the issues of parental pressure mentioned earlier as many of the parents themselves are the ones that socialise their daughters with the wrong values and pressurise those who have refused to follow their decisions. However, this idea, as suggested by the participants, did not come without some conceptual implications. Apart from highlighting issues bordering on victim-blaming (which many of the non-victim participants have done in their responses) it also indicates some form of contradictory contexts. It questions existing beliefs that the Bini people of the area are a people who are very traditional and known for strict discipline and good morals in bringing up their children not the other way round as they are now being portrayed. On the issue of victim blaming, pinning the reason for trafficking of the girls on the fact that they lack good home grooming translates to further victimising them and exonerating the more vital structural factors.

### ***Existing tradition of Travelling Abroad by the People - Coincidence in History***

It was also discovered the people here have a common habit of travelling abroad. Something like a way of life. This partially makes travelling into sex trafficking a practice known to every home in the area, as found. Almost every house in the area has at least a person who has either travelled abroad or preparing to travel abroad (HTP08-NGO2). Also, almost every home in the area is said to currently have a sex trafficking victim or someone that knows a trafficker (HTP07-NGO1; Okonofua et al, 2004). Another participants noted:

*.... It is what we have accepted. It becomes a way of life. And till tomorrow, even with all the sensitisation and advocacy,... theeeee illiterate parents still*

*see travelling out of the country for whatever reason as a big achievement...{HTP04- Government Agency2}*

The collective habit of sending a child abroad is so entrenched to the extent that the families here see it as a life time achievement (HTP07-NGO1;HTP04- Government Agency2). People in the area, as was found, are usually proud of the number of men, women and young girls families have abroad, whether trafficked or not (HTP07-NGO; Dokpesi, 2015, Okojie, et, al, 2003). *The people feel those involved in trafficking are the ones making Edo to develop* {HTP03-GovtAgency1}. This is especially the case when the people do not often know the difference between trafficking and just going abroad.

As learnt, because of this tradition of travelling abroad, the people (especially those who are aware of the risk victims go through) only celebrate and talk highly of the few lucky ones who returned maybe with some visible improvement on their economic condition. They hardly talk about the thousands who lost their lives in the dessert and Mediterranean and those who are still in slavery under cartels in Europe and elsewhere {HTP07-NGO1}. The irony is that the people in the area seem to either be unaware or deliberately remain indifferent to this development while they keep celebrating the practice.

What looks like coincidence in history, as found, could also explain the spread of sex trafficking in the area. Bini people in the area have had a history of travelling abroad for educational pursuits in the time past, sometime around the 60s and 70s just as they are known today to have the habit of wanting to travel abroad for economic reasons. This could be termed a “Coincidence in History” as reflected below in a participant’s response.

*...There are some coincidences in history, when we did our studies, we found that in the 60s, 70s, the people of this region, where people who love education, and many of them travelled out for further education... they travelled out, but not for the purpose of work, but for the purpose of getting educated. And, when they got their education they came back home... Their parents paid their fees from here. Errr...but as poverty started to increase, we found a situation where, when they come home, they don't have work. So some started to stay there to work...{...} by the time our children there now started working, unlike*

*previously when money was going from here there to pay their fees, money started to come home from there...(HTP 07-NGO1).*

As expressed in the above narration, in recent times, the Bini people in the area now have the habit of travelling abroad as previously mentioned in the preceding session. A link is drawn between the habit of travelling abroad in time past for educational purpose and today's inclination to travelling abroad for economic reasons. The people in the past addressed their yearnings for better education by travelling abroad. In the same vein, the people now seem to be replicating that by seeking for greener pastures abroad in the quest for better economic opportunities. The importance of these is that the people have an historical antecedent of running abroad to address their socio-economic yearnings. It takes us to the fact that at any point in time the people do not seem to trust the socio-political institutions that are supposed to provide for them as they are quick to seek for alternatives outside the country more than the people of any other region of the country would do. The early mass movement abroad for education of 60s, and 70s leaves a precedent for the common practice today. This coincidence is not only relevant when it comes to investigating enduring existing migratory tendencies among the people but also relevant with regards to understanding the seemingly intractable state of sex trafficking practices in the area.

### ***Socio-cultural Practices (Patriarchy)***

The disposability of women as an item in the culture of the people of the area speaks volume. Unlike their male counterparts the women in the area are held with little or no regard as they are seen as not relevant in the socio-cultural life of the people. According to a participant: *...In Edo state, the women are not considered as an equal of the man. She is considered as disposable... Her degree of that sense of self-worth is dependent on how useful she is to the men in her life... {HTP07, NGO1}*. The participant further noted that girls are not generally socialised like the males. The boy is said to be brought up to believe he is a leader, while the girl is taught to believe she is a follower (HTP07-NGO1).

This patriarchal tendency is seen as a cultural reality in the area predisposing women to becoming targets for the expansive sex trade in Europe. The inequality of sexes is seen as a

platform that propels the booming of the trafficking business in the area which has become a key source region in sub-Saharan Africa. Society here is claimed to see women as individuals that can be dispensed for the men in their life, hence the ease they are led into sex trade outside their country with the men waiting to receive the money that she will send back home. This cultural pattern is also reflected in a situation where educating a woman is considered as a waste and not necessary. They believe educating a woman leads to nowhere meaningful. Consequently, many of the young girls in this area are not enrolled in school thereby exposing them to poaching by traffickers as found.

*...There is a common saying, that if you educate a girl child, it is a waste...so base on this, some persons really don't see it as a necessity to educate a girl child. And if a girl child is not educated and she is left at home and somebody just come...en... and say I have a tomatoes farm in Italy...{...} and said I should help them recruit worker... or they are looking for nannies... so the girl child is there to just go into it... (HTP08-NGO2).*

Though this practice of not sending female children to school is now gradually changing but still appears a normal disposition among many in the region. The outlook here is when you go to most houses in the area, the boys are usually the ones that you will find at home, *while the girls are slaving it out on the street of Europe...* (HTP07-NGO, GPI). The parents usually expect money to be sent home by the trafficked daughters to pay the fees for the boys, if they are in school or to set up businesses for the boys if they are interested in businesses, or to marry wives for the boys, to feed the boys and their families (HTP07-NGO, GPI). In the same vein, because the women are said to be excluded from the inheritance of property and wealth of parents they are left with no option other than fending for themselves which respondents believe makes them sometimes follow traffickers abroad in search of wealth.

*... Our culture of inheritance that the woman has no right in the parent's house or whatever, is also a fact. They are left to fend for themselves. So when such opportunity presents itself to them, they grab it with both hands to be in competition with the men... that is another reason why a lot of them go...{HTP08-NGO2}.*

Field participants especially NGO workers at the focused group discussion session, generally consider sex trafficking as one of the products of institutionalised patriarchal practices in the country and in the area of study. This seems to have a universal version (see, Warden, 2013) as most sex trafficking endemic areas around the world have strong culture of gender inequality. Apart from its direct role in the practice of sex trafficking as illustrated above, gender inequality has also been considered as contributory to some undesirable social-economic conditions including poverty in the area (Ugiagbe et al, 2011).

## *Chapter Nine*

### **9.0. Findings: Responses and Challenges in South-South Nigeria**

This sub section looks at the emerging themes from the field exploration regarding general policy and practice response and challenges with particular focus on south-south Nigeria.

#### **9.1. NAPTIP, NGOs and Nature of Responses in South-south Nigeria**

NAPTIP, the main official response organ of government in the country, as discovered, demonstrated it has a number of programmes in its response to the challenge. What was understood during the field interactions is that, the organisation's response includes prevention, post experience support, rescue and protection of victims. They also do campaigns and sensitisation of local communities in the area. They do counseling of returnee victims, shelter them, train them in skills and settle them into community life as part of ways to prevent re-trafficking and solve the problem. It was learnt that the main agency takes charge of the returnee victims when they are rescued and sent to the Benin zone (Benin zone is one of the various zones of NAPTIP across Nigeria, and covers the south-south region). They are then sent to the head of Counseling and Rehabilitation (C&R) unit in the zonal Command. The unit has counseling sessions, temporary medical provision, recreation activities, and training facilities where it trains returnees on tailoring, hair dressing, computer or ICT as the case may be (HTP03- GovtAgency1). The agency, it was found also does arrest and prosecution of offenders as ways to check traffickers' activities. They believe they have done well considerably in this respect especially as they claim they have many convictions and are still doing more with their investigation and legal department (HTP03- GovtAgency1).

#### ***NAPTIP, NGOs Collaborating to Rehabilitate and Reintegrate Victims into Normal Community Life***

NAPTIP collaborates with local NGOs particularly in the rehabilitation and reintegration of returnee victims (HTP03-GovtAgency1). Though returnees are usually officially put under the care and support of NAPTIP as the country's main government anti-trafficking agency, to cope with the enormity of the task, of rehabilitation and reintegration support for them,

NAPTIP relies on local NGOs especially in the region (HTP03-GovtAgency1; HTP07-NGO1).

To reintegrate the returnee victims into normal economically-viable life, NAPTIP and the NGOs emphasise on skills building - training the returnee victims on skills and crafts as well as other personal empowerment programmes. Though NAPTIP does some of this training in their own facility, they do more of it in resort centres owned privately by the NGOs. *We have this youth resort centre that caters for skills acquisition. ...we worked with NAPTIP, UNODC. We train them to acquire skills... catering and hotel management, hair dressing... {HTP08-NGO2}*. Post training, returnees are set up on a small scale in their respective areas of specialty with tools to practice and earn a meaningful living.

Reuniting victims with families is another vital aspect of the support the response bodies give to the returnee victims according to what was found. Though reuniting returnees with families appears to be a herculean task for the response bodies (HP03-GovtAgency1; HTP08-NGO2), they insist that this step is critical and basic in the process of reintegrating the victims into normal community life. As the victims arrive back in the country, the response organisations embark on what they call the Meet and Greet Services (MGS). *We meet them at the Airport, to welcome them, greet them and to receive them (HTP8-NGO2)*. After receiving the victims they do what they call 'family tracing' in order to take them to their families. *We liaise with them to get their families to be less hostile to them... Families are usually hostile to girls who decide to give up sex work to return home... (HTP07-NGO1)*.

As reflected by the participant referred to above, many families are often unwilling to accept the returnees back. They are said to be unhappy that the girl was returned. This is normally the case when the family may have been partly instrumental to the trafficking of the victim, seeing it as an investment to lift them out of poverty (HTP08-NGO 2). Consequently, after meeting and greeting the returnees, a lot of them will not want to return to their family (HTP08-NGO2). Many others are rejected by their parents especially if they had left for the journey without their consent or stole their money to embark on the trip (ibid). Such girls are either taken to the NAPTIP rehabilitation home for them to stay or they work with outfits with a shelter like Committee for the Support of the Dignity of Women

(COSUDOW) (ibid). The challenge for response organisations in their rehabilitation and reintegration efforts is the increasing difficulty in getting donors to assist in recent times (HTP08-NGO2). (More on response organisations' challenges will be presented in subsequent sub-sections).

#### *Attending to the Psychological, Mental and Social Rehabilitation of Returnees*

On what other steps NAPTIP and the local NGOs take to ensure effective reintegration of the returnee victims into normal community life, it was found that the response bodies, especially the local NGOs, undertake a psychological, mental and social rehabilitation of the returnee victims. The response bodies talk with the significant others around the returnee victims for them to be accepted without stigmatisation. They also spend time to educate the victims on the prospect of building a new life and making a better living in their country if they work hard. *And those who have been able to make that effort...we succeed with them* (HTP07-NGO1). Because being a returnee comes with a lot of stigma, the response bodies, especially the NGOs put in so much efforts to support them. *So, we try to build their sense of self-esteem {...} some who have not been damaged by drugs are traumatised by their experiences...their experiences in the hands of their madam. It takes so much mending... {HTP07-NGO 1}*.

#### *Monitoring Rehabilitated Victims*

Monitoring of returnee victims set up in business to ensure they stay engaged is another aspect of support effort for the returnees by the local response organisations (HTP07-NGO 1). This was found to be important because of the temptation for many returnees to return to Europe having lived there and probably unable to cope with the persisting harsh socio-economic situation at home. From field interactions, the NGOs particularly, do this for the girls under them and the ones under NAPTIP's watch. From what was found, when the girls have been trained and established by NAPTIP they often cede the monitoring to the local NGOs.

Because of the tendency to want to go back by some returnees, the NGOs tend to offer to assist only victims who voluntarily returned and not those forced against their wish. *We*

*have found out that when they are voluntary returnees... they made their decision in Europe to come back, they cooperate to make a success of whatever they are doing here {HTP07-NGO1}*. But where they were picked up from the street and returned forcefully, the returnees were said to be looking for the next opportunity to leave. On this issue, one could argue two-fold possibilities. First, it could be unlikely that many will be prone to re-trafficking having grown past the age of 18 and become wiser, especially having seen the exploitative and abusive conditions they found themselves while trafficked in Europe. Secondly, it could also be debated in the context of absolute poverty and constrained choices which many of them return to, in some ways, that they might make this choice to return irrespective of what their experience may have been in Europe. In essence, such returnees could still be considered, in effect, as victims of circumstances.

#### *Emphasis on Prevention*

Response organisations in the area seem to subscribe to the axiom that ‘prevention is better than cure’. They emphasise more on preventing young girls from becoming victims of sex trafficking to avoid the more challenging task of rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration (HTP09-FGD1).

*From research we have found out that...if you are able to prevent her going it is easier for you than when she is there and she is back, you are now trying to prevent her from going back. Because when she is gone and she is back she may...if she doesn't have eemm...much follow-up counseling, she may feel, "eeh what do I have to lose? Am already damaged goods" or something... "so I don't have anything to lose I might as well go back"... (HTP10-FGD1).*

As illustrated above, emphasis on preventive measures in their responses is also to avoid re-trafficking (HTP09-FGD1), as they believe that without trafficking there cannot be a case of re-trafficking which is considered as more devastating than first-time trafficking. Also, as found, it is in preventing re-trafficking that the response organisations emphasise proper rehabilitation and reintegration of the returnee victims.

As discovered, the response organisations disseminate information on sex trafficking to those they consider as vulnerable and the general public as part of their preventive measures. Such information they say are usually the outcome of research which they either carry out themselves or is done by others. The information they provide include issues like, what prompts travelling by young girls? What are those things the sponsors have over the girls? and others (HTP08-NGO2; HTP09-FGD2).

The local response groups also try to work with children as a preventive measure because, according to the participants, helping children to build their sense of self-worth is fundamental to stopping the practice. *When a child has a sense of who she is, who she wants to be, can dream, can have goals, vision, then by the time you are telling the child, come and go abroad, the child already has her plans, and she is able to tell you mummy wait, let me graduate first...*(HTP07-NGO1).

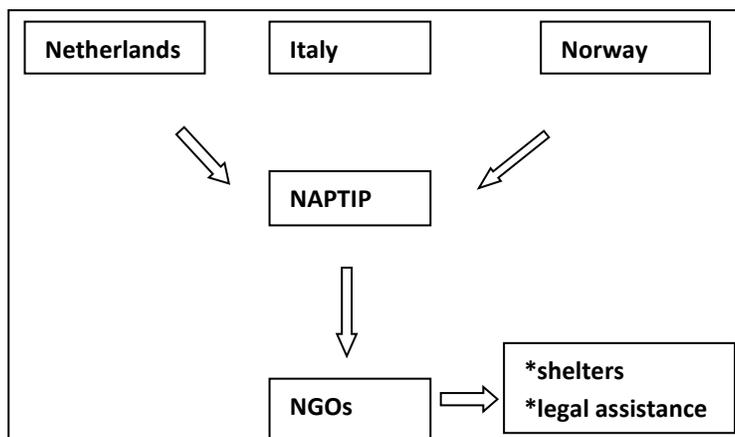
#### ***NAPTIP and NGOs Partnering with International Bodies to Rehabilitate Returnees***

As discovered, there exists collaboration between NAPTIP and local NGOs on the one side and international bodies like UNODC, IOM, EU, foreign governments and others who are main donors and partners. This is especially the case in carrying out the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims. As discovered, in many cases the international partners initiate the rehabilitation and reintegration projects. *If any of them comes to their notice and they want to rehabilitate them in Nigeria, they get in touch with us and we work with them, such that by the time the girl is returned, there is already a discussion ongoing* (HTP07-NGO 1). In other words, the role that the NGOs play in this case is that of supervision. Also, as found, collaboration for the rehabilitation of a victim is done in such a way that the victim's consent and cooperation is involved as many of them may not cooperate when forced (ibid).

Apart from funding support, the international bodies, as discovered, also work with the local agencies, technically and in other ways (HTP03-GovtAgency 1). Many of the existing response programmes of the main agency and the local NGOs are not only funded by the international bodies and governments, but monitored and sometimes sustained by them, as found. It was however discovered that the international bodies prefer dealing with the local NGOs more than with government agencies. This was found to be because they think that

this will ensure better results, perhaps due to the poor way government activities are conducted in the country. Meanwhile, in some cases it was found that the international governments often return rescued victims to be rehabilitated first to the main official agency who then refer them to the NGOs for specialised assistants and supervision.

**Figure 6. Diagram showing the working relationship between international authorities, NAPTIP and Local NGOs.**



The above illustration was reproduced from the NAPTIP project handbook (2011). The handbook published in conjunction with the government of the Netherlands contains NAPTIP's activity in collaboration with other response authorities including international government and local NGOs in the region.

As found, apart from collaborating with NAPTIP at the local level, the local NGOs particularly seem to strengthen their response efforts through interdependence among themselves. Whenever funds are available from any of their donors for rehabilitation of a certain number of returnees, the particular recipient NGO informs its counterparts, and sometimes NAPTIP, and those who have such girls, would refer them (HTP07- NGO1). There are occasions where NAPTIP may have trained returnee victims, but lack the funds to set up their business. They can refer such victims to any of the NGOs if at that point in time funds are available to them (HTP07-NGO1).

### *Demonstrating Understanding of Contributing factors in Response by NAPTIP and NGOs*

The response bodies also try to demonstrate their understanding of contributing factors in their responses. One of the participating NGO officials had confirmed this: *We believe that education is a solution to poverty. We encourage our girls to go to school. We also facilitate access to scholarships for girls* (HTP07-NGO1). This, from what was found, is based upon the understanding by them that the more the girl child stays out of school the more she is susceptible to sex trafficking.

It was also discovered that the response bodies act in the areas of strengthening families of vulnerable girls economically. *We have programmes where, when you are identified as vulnerable we focus on your family and try to do household economic strengthening services that will help your family to reduce your vulnerability... We are into getting government to meet their responsibility...* {HTP07-NGO1}. Emphasis is said to also be placed by them on discouraging gender inequality which they believed is a major factor in promoting the practice. Because of this, some of the NGOs in the area, like GPI, have focused on reversing gender inequality as one of their main preoccupations (HTP09-FGD1). Their realization that girls are not being brought up to be leaders like the boys, leads them to work with young girls in the region to believe they can be leaders and succeed like the males. Mention was also made of campaigns by both NAPTIP and the NGOs against keeping young girls out of school simply because they are girls (HTP07-NGO1). The response organisations' understanding that unemployment is also a factor explaining the reason for spread of sex trafficking in the area has also prompted calls on government to create employment opportunities. According to HTP08-NGO2, if youths are gainfully employed they will not be willing to go to Europe.

Despite these efforts, sex trafficking seems to be on the increase in the area with more and more girls and women trafficked into sexual exploitation daily as confirmed by one returnee victim who said: *Even the woman that introduced us to the woman we went to meet over there abroad, she is still carrying girls there. They are still doing it. It is a continuous work...* (HTP01/07-victim). From the field interaction successful response is seen to have been hampered by many factors including funding, government attitude, traffickers' resistance (HTP07-NGO1; HTP 08-NGO2), and many others which will be presented in the following subsections.

## 9.2. Response Barriers and Limitations in the Region

From previous sections, it is certain, government and non-governmental organisations prosecute some form of response measures in order to reduce or eliminate sex trafficking in Nigeria and the south-south region particularly. But these efforts face some challenges and limitations. The narrative of the characteristics of, contributors and responses to sex trafficking in the region cannot be complete without considering this. This part is presented with an attempt to tell the story of the responses along with the attendant problems as reflected in participants' accounts.

Returnee victims of sex trafficking in this area have difficulty resettling and reintegrating into their local communities and living a normal life from what was found (HTP02/06-relative; HTP01/02/01). Those who were returned to Edo state through the help of the International Office for Migration (IOM) and the Nigerian government between December 2017 and January 2018, for example, have been complaining of difficulty surviving (Adekunle, 2018; Freeman 2018). As confirmed by the victim quoted below even many of the returnees rescued and returned to the country many years ago, are yet to be fully helped to be resettled and reintegrated into the larger society after many years.

*...I did not settle...Since I came to Nigeria, nothing. I have not received any support from anywhere... {HTP01/02/03-victim}.*

Some of the victims said that they are struggling on their own to resettle into the system and do not know what the future holds for them and even contemplating returning to Europe (HTP01/02/03 – victim).

The start-up funds promised to some after skills training by NAP TIP are yet to be redeemed many years past, as was found. One relative of a victim revealed *...she told me... that NAP TIP wants to open a shop for her. That she can be doing what she learnt. She was trained in catering. She was trained between 2004 and 2006...umm... She has not started the business because no money to establish her own. ...* (HTP02/06-relative). The implication of the complaints of some of the returnees like the one above is that the rehabilitation and reintegration process is often half-heartedly carried out by those supporting the victims.

Victims who could not wait for too long for unredeemed promises of support from government and its agencies in the face of economic hardship in the country have become victims of re-trafficking, as found. According to HTP07-NGO1, the continuing economic hardship in the country has made rehabilitation of the victims more difficult with many set up in business and other personal empowerment ventures yet run away from the country. *We have a number of people we have supported to stay here who have packed up their bags and gone back. ...And i can assure that, with this present economic, uhummm... we have been complaining of human trafficking, uhummm... we may just be seeing the beginning* {HTP07-NGO1}. This situation, it was found, further encourages traffickers in the business as their client-base increases daily.

### ***9.3. The Plights of Response Agency and NGOs***

NAPTIP and NGOs as found face response hindrances. Apart from contending with attitudes of government in terms of funding and other discouraging political disposition, they also face uncooperative behaviours from victims, relatives, and people in the local communities. Also, NAPTIP and local NGOs report that they lack in many other aspects.

Many of the victims were unwilling to be supported and helped (HTP03-GovtAgency1). There were cases where agencies had trained returnees on skills and set them up with equipment and tools and yet the victims had abandoned the business and traveled back abroad, quite possibly to be re-trafficked (HTP06/27-inhabitant; HTP7-NGO1).

Some victims do not report to the main agency when they are back in the country as a case of trafficking (HTP03-GovtAgency1). This makes support efforts difficult for the agencies and NGOs. Also, relatives especially some parents of rescued returnee victims, always want to find ways to re-send their daughters to Europe (HTP07-NGO1). This category of families, as referred to by HTP07-NGO1, are those “*who have given up on the country*”, Nigeria and see no prospect of surviving without sending their children abroad even if they are to be exploited over there. This thinking, as found, generally makes reintegration challenging for response organisations who contend with this seemingly resistant disposition.

It takes a long period of counseling and persuasion before most parents will want to accept their daughter back when repatriated against their consent (HTP07-NGO1). As discovered, many of such returnee victims do not often want to return to their homes because their parents will be hostile to them while at home. This adds to worsening returnee victims' mental health conditions and troubles making rehabilitation work more frustrating for response officials.

*We even receive insult from parents... When I go to say to prepare the parents, you know... to put them in a good position to receive their child, it is a battle for me... "So, you are the one wanting to return my child, you don't want my child to make it { 'make it' means to become rich } over there." So they see you as an enemy... (HTP09-FGD 1).*

Also, response field officials on prevention programmes like public sensitisation against community support for trafficking of girls often encounter barriers. *"We have challenges doing our work of prevention of trafficking and re-trafficking because of the mind-set of the generality of the people (HTP07-NGO 1)".* This mind-set of the people in the larger society arguably bears overarching negative implication on the spread of sex trafficking across the region.

### ***Uncooperative Local Community***

The issue of the lack of cooperation from local communities (victims, relatives and people in the communities), is a serious matter in response attempts by the main agency and NGOS here. Particularly with returnee victims often unwilling to petition the main response agency for arrest and prosecution of offenders the fight against the phenomenon faces some degree of set-backs, as found. This is considered as a serious limitation by the response agencies because arrest and prosecution of traffickers will be difficult without a victim or relative of a victim coming up with a complaint or petition (HTP03- GovtAgency1). Also, when the main agency and other law enforcement agencies make an arrest based on third party complaints, the victims are in many cases reluctant to testify (HTP03-GovtAgency1). Proceeding on prosecution in such a situation, as found, becomes difficult for the response body.

Many victims and their families are found to hesitate from petitioning against offenders for reasons which include the fact that those responsible for their trafficking could either be a close relative, a distant relative or a close friend. At this point, the victim or the family tries to avoid being blamed for the jailing of the trafficker as a relative or a close friend (HTP03-GovtAgency1). This situation regarding victims' relationship with traffickers often poses a major challenge to response authorities especially in terms of the prosecution of the offenders. As found, this is the case in many instances in the region as the trafficking of many victims usually involve the connivance of family members, siblings, aunties, nieces, cousins, close family friends and other close relations (HTP03-GovtAgency1; Okojie et al., 2003).

Victims and families often opt for a sort of non-formal settlement and resolution of the skirmish that may emerge from trafficking issues, from what was found (HTP03-GovtAgency1). Even when the victim dies the family is likely going to settle for informal resolution of the issue and probably accept some form of financial compensation for the loss believing the 'dead is already dead', jailing the trafficker (culprit) will not bring her back to life (HTP03-GovtAgency1; Igbinomwanhia, field note, 2016-2017). With this traffickers operate freely knowing full well they face no serious threat of a successful official arrest and prosecution.

### *Defiance of Cartels*

As found, because traffickers are unyielding and resistant to fighting the practice in the area response agents face difficulty in stopping the spread of the practice. Broad networking of traffickers and their defiance, despite official condemnation, is seen in the trafficking activity in the area. The trafficking cartel seems to be deeply entrenched in the social network system of the region, the country and internationally. The network is so widespread that the traffickers operate from different locations within and outside the region.

*... It is still going on till tomorrow. They are calling people from one corner or the other. ... They have many link, many places where they are getting people from. {...} they have people everywhere that they are using as an agent to*

*bring people into this prostitution...eehen.. to traffic people with things that are not true... {HTP 01/05 – victim}*

Some traffickers are said to resist arrest and prosecution. Others operate with boldness not minding the implications of their action against the law as illustrated by this relative of two victims that were trafficked by a couple without their knowledge. ...*Then I told the man that I came here this morning look at the way your wife reacted I don't like it... enn...Then I told the man that I gave you guys two days to bring my sisters back... the man said I should do my worst that I am mad. So I left... {HTP 02/03-relative}*. Some of the traffickers are reported to have links with highly influential and power wielding individuals in the region and in the country. Certain individuals in the sex trafficking practice in the region are considered as the “untouchables” (HTP08-NGO2). Similar to this is the inability of the political, community and religious leaders of the area to publicly speak against the practice as indicated by this participant.

*I think it is the encouragement they are getting from the government... {...}  
Let me be specific, the government of the place has not really come out...  
condemn trafficking in strong terms...Ummm...If you watch the recent  
campaign for the last election, none of the parties mentioned it as their area of  
focus... (HTP03-GovtAgency1).*

As hinted above, it was found that the political class does not honestly fight the challenge for some reasons. The politicians believed the activity of traffickers make the area boom economically (HTP03-Govtagency1). The politicians may also be afraid that condemning the practice may affect their electoral fortunes (ibid).

### ***Lack of Political will and Inadequate Funding by Government***

The negative attitudes of national and regional government regarding partnering with the NAPTIP and NGOs in perfecting response measures is an issue discovered as a challenge to responses in the area. Suggestions and ways that response practice programmes, including in areas of rehabilitation and reintegration, can be effective by the agencies have been discountenanced by government from what was found. This has left the response organisations often demoralised. One participant noted that it is their duty to initiate a

roadmap for response programmes but that it is the government's duty to take it from there (HTP07-NGO1). The absence of this synergy limits their capacity to replicate ideas and projects capable of helping to check the spread of sex trafficking in the area (HTP07-NGO1).

As also found, the government appears unable to deal decisively with the challenge of human and sex trafficking in the region due to lack of political will and failing political leadership in the country. This is partly manifested in the unsupportive disposition of government towards helping the official response agency and supportive organisations in the fight against the problem. This likewise informs their approach to funding and managing whatever response organ (e.g. NAPTIP) they may have established in the country. As discovered, they do not only starve such organisation of funds, they refuse to work with it for honest solutions to identified problems. Research findings documents have been forwarded in the past to the Federal government on the need to alleviate poverty if trafficking was to be checked (HTP03-GovtAgency1). ...*Our public affairs department has also always drew government attention to the need to create employment for the teeming youth to reduce the growing rate of human trafficking in the country...*(HTP03-GovtAgency1). But, from what was found, nothing has come out of this.

The political elites seem to deliberately avoid the facts concerning the reasons why the people migrate into exploitation. The government approach, from field findings, indicates that the fight against trafficking is targeted at the level of its symptoms, leaving the fundamental contributory factors. This also connects the misconstruing of contributory factors regarding human and sex trafficking by political authorities in the area. The consequence of this is the implementation of resolutions which might not be ideal for effective response (Brunovskis and Surtees 2008).

Like the main response agency, other organisations also helping to respond to sex trafficking find it hard to fund their activities (HTP03-GovtAgency1; HTP08-NGO2; HTP07-NGO1). Apart from in the area of rehabilitation and reintegration of returnee victims, there is the need to fund campaigns and awareness creation. This is considered as vital as both a preventive and reduction measure. For an effective awareness raising activity, the process is

said to run continuously so that as the younger girls grow up they will constantly be informed about the activities of sex trafficking and protected against the deceit of the cartels (HTP07- NGO1). Also, though the government is supposed to build on whatever template response agencies may have produced for them (ibid), the case is to the contrary.

It was found the main agency cannot get electricity for their offices in some of the commands, and unable to fuel the few vehicles they have for the purpose of carrying out activities like going for arrest of offenders, following up cases, going for campaigns and sensitisation and others. Also, response organisations find it difficult to afford recent information technology facilities to ensure up to date strategy and programming towards checking the activities of traffickers.

*...You know the technology does a lot in disseminating information and producing information material ...producing this information and getting to reach the people in all forms of technology that is available is still a very big challenge. The advocacies are still done very crudely...{HTP04-GovtAgency2).*

The overarching advantage of the use of information technology and other technological innovations around the world, which the sex trafficking cartels latched on to advance their activity (US TIP 2016; Hamilton-Smith, 2013), has also, in a way, seen international counter-responses tailored along the application of technological innovations. But the issue with responses at the local south-south Nigeria level and in the entire country (as illustrated above) is that the main government agency and the NGOs are lagging behind as they cannot afford even common basic technological gadgets and human resources required to counter trafficking syndicates.

Another response challenge discovered is the lack of enough well-organised rehabilitation schemes and facilities like skills development programmes, interest free loans, vocation centres, and jobs (HTP03-GovtAgency1), needed to engage the returnees. Revelations from the field work show that only one major vocational centre is operated by the government of Edo state (which covers the studied area) (HTP08-NGO2). The outfit like many other government infrastructures is not well maintained (HTP08-NGO2). NAPTIP and NGOs, as

found, rely on their limited facility and that of some faith-based organisations for the purpose of rehabilitating the returnees.

NAPTIP, manage with a mini shelter where they house the returnees while waiting to reunite them with their families. They usually rely on a few privately-run centres for long term rehabilitation shelter as indicated by HTP08-NGO. *We work with a sister firm...called COSUDOW... they have a hostel facility. {...} ...It is a catholic outfit run by sisters... Like those fifteen that we trained, they were housed in that shelter because, we have already donated our shelter to NAPTIP...{HTP08-NGO2}*. Despite relying on additional shelters from private bodies, housing facilities available to NAPTIP are usually not sufficient as they are meant for a very limited number of persons, (HTP03-GovtAgency1). With this situation, it becomes more difficult for the response organisations generally to handle the responsibility of keeping them for effective counseling and rehabilitation purposes.

NAPTIP operations in the south-south region, specifically, appears to face basic challenges ranging from inadequate funding, logistics, manpower training, economic conditions, to lack of technological facilities (information technology support) etc.

*...We need good economy...we need good facilities, we need cars. We need trainings, they should employ more hands, train them, empower them, and make the offices habitable. We need steady power {...}... The bus we have cannot go beyond Edo and Delta. Above all we need to create awareness. Even some relevant other government organisations that are supposed to collaborate with us don't even know what we stand for... {HTP03-GovtAgency1}*.

In essence, just like the critical role it plays in explaining the spread of trafficking, the country's poor economic situation wakens response efforts in the region.

#### **9.4. Inadequacy of Anti-trafficking Policies and Legislations against the Practice in the Region**

Although international human and sex trafficking activities had been on in Nigeria since the early 80s until around 2000 there was no known definite laws against the practice (HTP07-NGO1; HTP08-NGO2; Carling, 2006; Olujuwon 2008). The recent enactment of anti-trafficking laws in the country appears to be the aftermath of pressure from various

international, local organisations and activist groups as well as adoption of the Palermo protocol in 2000 (HTP07-NGO1; HTP08-NGO2). This necessitated the coming into operation of NAPTIP as the main response organ. The country's unserious disposition towards pursuing laws and action against trafficking activities had attracted sanctions from the US TIP (US TIP yearly reports). My findings revealed that NGOs in the state also helped in pushing for legislations against trafficking during the early days of the surge of the practice in the area. *Idia Renaissance was the first to lobby with the Edo state house of Assembly for an anti-trafficking bill to be passed in the state which was eventually passed on September 2000. This make it illegal for people to be trafficked abroad* (HTP08-NGO2).

According to findings, the government, both at the national and state levels, have in place some anti-trafficking and other gender-based laws in Nigeria (HTP04-Govt Agency 4; HTP05-Govt Agency 5). As noted in the previous paragraph, some of them date back to 2000, but were not effective (HTP03-NGO2). Legislative assemblies of states in the south-south region, particularly in Edo state as discovered, recently attempted a consolidation of such laws. Some of the laws in Edo state, as found, were adapted and localised from existing federal laws prohibiting trafficking in persons (HTP03-GovtAgency1). The Federal government, as found, has such laws to protect women, like laws against genital mutilations, trafficking of women for commercial sex, inhuman treatment of women etc. Edo state has also, on their own passed bills against trafficking and other gender issues. According to one of the participants: *the state ministry for women affairs, initiated some laws against human trafficking, genital mutilation. Even the child right law and law against inhuman treatment of women, they were all initiated by my ministry to protect women* (HTP05-GovtAgency).

Despite these laws, it was discovered there is lack of awareness of their existence and ineffective application on the part of authorities. This calls into question the viability of the laws as they appear inexistent. Some participants expressed a lack of faith and trust in the strength of the laws and their enforcement to help solve the problem (HTP07-NGO1; HTP08-NGO2; HTP10-38-inhabitants). As found, citizens and mostly sex trafficking victims and their relatives who hope to seek for redress and protection against traffickers do not know what to do in many cases. Follow-ups to the legislation are lacking as the enforcement agencies themselves are handicapped (HTP03-GovtAgency1) and, as a result,

become complacent at some point. From revelations, until recently, following the Libya sales of humans in the open market which drew global attention, the government in the area was seen to be indifferent to the practice and fails to honestly invoke these existing laws against offenders (HTP03-GovtAgency1).

As confirmed, prior the enactment of specific anti-trafficking laws and the establishment of NAP TIP in the country, the police and immigration service handled issues relating to human trafficking as a criminal conduct and immigration violation. There was also the challenge of corruption among the police and the immigration system. The police officers are known to have compromised cases (HTP10/26-inhabitant). The country's police are seen to be generally corrupt with 'bribery and corruption usually associated with the institution (Nwaguma, 2019). Many of them collect bribes and work with the cartels, from what was found, as the cartel members are never prosecuted when arrested. This could also be a function of the condition of economic hardship in the country which has also been linked to wide spread of corruption among the people in the literature review.

Many of the immigration officers on their own were also found to have become part of the cartel network. Many of them were responsible for helping the syndicates to produce fake travelling document with which many, especially the early victims, were transported to their destination by air (Okojie et al, 2003). Immigration officials who are part of the syndicate are often responsible for preparing victims travelling document (HTP 01/4 –victim). The victim referred above mentioned a lady who works with the immigration zonal office in the state and helps produce travelling documents on behalf of the traffickers. They also help the syndicates pass victims at local Airport check-points on their way to their destination (ibid).

## **9.5. Summary**

The findings section captured the emerging findings concerning sex trafficking victims' experience, push and pull factors and responses to the problem. Participants' accounts revealed the abusive, exploitative and fatal experiences of the victims. The section also reported on the multifaceted nature of the contributing factors to the spread of the practice in the region. Emphasis was placed on structural and broader socio-economic issues. From the accounts given by participants, in terms of tackling the practice in the region, operating

NGOs work with the country's main response agency and both collaborate with international organisations to respond to the problem but not without some challenges. Also, it was clear that response legislations and measures exist at national and local government levels but there is the challenge of implementation. Most importantly it was noticed that there is a misconstruing of core factors leading to the problem; or seemingly a lack of understanding of the basic root causes of prevalence of the practice. This is seen to have seriously affected the effective response to the challenge. This makes prevalence to persist and even assumes a disturbing dimension despite efforts to stop the practice. There is also the weak synergy between governments at destination and source countries making partnership efforts uncoordinated and ineffective in response programming.

## **Chapter Ten**

### **10.0. Discussion**

The research sought to explore the relationship between poverty and sex trafficking of women from south-south Nigeria to European countries; to examine other contributory factors; and finally, to consider the extent to which key explanatory factors are reflected in official understandings and responses to the problem. From my findings, it was uncertain if policy makers are sufficiently aware of the underlying factors contributing to trafficking practices in the region, and, if aware, whether they apply these to understanding and responses. The results of the research are discussed here mainly under four broad headings which link the findings to the arguments presented in the conceptual frame work in chapter five.

### **10.1. Criminalisation of Trafficking versus Socio-economic Realities and Social Structural Conditions**

The conceptual frame work firstly indicates whether sex trafficking is primarily driven by criminal motivations and inducements (as frequently emphasised by most Western Governments and officialdom e.g US TIP 2016, UNODC, 2005) or whether it is primarily a consequences of socio-economic and structural conditions experienced in source countries (see, Akor, 2011; Okonofua et al, 2004; Oyekanmi and Okunola, 2017). Whilst criminality certainly had a role to play in the phenomenon, in this work, the basic forces underlining the extent and spread of the phenomenon appeared to be structural and critical social economic conditions at source countries. This also takes precedence against the dominant argument built around criminality and modern slavery as seen in the literature review sometimes advanced by some Western political authorities, activists and researchers like Bales (2005), Venkatrama (2003) and others. On the other hand findings in this respect appear to corroborate the position of researchers like O'Connell Davidson (2015, 2016, 2017), Kempadoo (2016), Malloch and Rigby (2016) and a few others (referenced in the literature review) whose arguments noted the significant impact of economic and structural conditions at source country. From what was explored, a number of socio-economic and structural challenges (i.e. poverty, unemployment, patriarchy etc) are making many seek

alternative ways to survive even with knowledge of the inherent risk in such channels. Some of these issues are discussed under the following thematic headings.

### *Poor Economic Conditions*

The wide-spread prevalent poor economic condition (poverty) in the region (also see, Hardley, 2001; Hughes, et al 2005; Olayemi 1995), as seen, is a precursor of many basic precedent unfavourable conditions. The pattern of trafficking across the world, just as it is seen in the region under investigation, is one in which the less prosperous nations appear as sources while the more prosperous countries like Western European countries are destinations. And global patterns of sex trafficking are argued to often involve the recruitment of victims from desperate, impoverished locations (Farr, 2005; Lee, 2007). As common to my findings, apart from creating a lack of means, poverty alters the perception and decision-making ability of individuals in the region leading many to decisions that can further impoverish them.

Unemployment is a key push factor occasioning poverty and contributing to trafficking as was consistent with the field findings. Though this aligns with some scholars' perspectives (see, Okonofua et al, 2004; Ogbeide, 2004). Policy makers in Nigeria and in many Western nations do not seem to appreciate the enormity of unemployment as a contributing factor, with Dokpesi (2015) arguing that its influence is particularly central to experiences in Nigeria. This links argument in earlier work in former USSR, with women in higher education trafficked because they faced an acute lack of opportunity relative to their skills and qualification and were particularly desperate to go abroad.

Unemployment in Nigeria is linked both to a decline in rural employment and also to stunted opportunities for growing alternative industries. The dearth of infrastructures and lack of energy (electricity) to power large, small and medium scales factories in Nigeria, makes the unemployment situation in the south-south region severe (see, Dokpesi and Igbinomwanhia 2010; Okonta and Douglas 2001). More importantly, rural-urban drift is unabatedly worsening the unemployment problem, reinforcing regional and national poverty in Nigeria. As suggested by my findings, many young people are refusing to take to farming leaving the rural area for the city hoping to get scarce white collar jobs, hence the

problem of trafficking. The shrinking of arable land due to population explosion has been linked partly to growing rural-urban migration and the abandonment of farming by many. This has led to overpopulated urban cities which are now havens of poverty (Inman, 2019). There is also the increasing global-warming which has grossly affected farming activities generally (Apata et al, 2009; Deressa et al, 2008). Another issue is the rapid advancement in farm mechanisation globally which has rendered much physical labour unnecessary (Oyewole and Oyewole, 2016; Schmitz and Moss, 2015).

On a larger scale, growing rural-urban migration does not only lead to worsening food insecurity and urban unemployment in the country, it creates surge in problems like armed robbery, local prostitution and international sex trafficking (HTP09/24-inhabitant; also see, Oyekanmi and Okunola, 2017). This evidences that the situation could be a vicious circle with economic and structural conditions constraining many to take to criminality in a few cases leading to vices including trafficking activities by emerging criminal groups who then exploit a much wider region demand for routes out of poverty.

Apart from Bales (2005) assertions earlier referred some other scholarly views appear to negate the suggested poverty factor justifying the dominant Western perspectives as contested in the conceptual framework. Some of the victims as argued are not from a poor economic background with some choosing to migrate for the envisaged profit from international prostitution; and because of the exciting image of Western societies they have (see, Adomako-Akpofo, 1997; Anita 2000; Attor 2009; Ejimabo 2013; Hughes 2005). This implies that even if sex trafficking does connects with poverty, it should be viewed with caution as there could be other factors which weigh more in explaining the spread of the practice in the area.

### ***Patriarchy, Gender Inequality, Social Exclusion and Gender Poverty***

Western societies vocally denounce abhorrent practices relating to social exclusion, patriarchy and gender inequality and claim knowledge of these as common practices in Africa, but they appear to have a conceptual preference regarding sex trafficking that says little of this. Authorities in the source country (Nigeria) have also paid little or no attention to this factor when addressing sex trafficking, especially in south-south Nigeria. My findings

indicates the issues of gender inequality and patriarchy leading to social exclusion and economic hardship amongst women of the region is a key factor in explaining out migration (which precedes sex trafficking) in the area. Patriarchal values, including paying of bride price, polygamy, male child preference and desertion, entrenched (among the Bini) in the region represent women as marketable commodities (also see, Olaniyi, 2011).

If women are empowered by the male dominated society they may not easily be led to meet sex traffickers (also see, Oshadare 2004). Much of the female population here live in poverty because of the marginalisation, limitations and cultural obstacles put on them (see, Aina, et al., 2008; Anyaji and Akporaro, 2008; Hughes 2005). Generally, the practice of gender inequality and social exclusion of women is reinforced by the hegemonic patriarchal national society as argued in the literature review. Women's empowerment initiatives are invariably superficial and often failed. Outside South-south Nigeria, patriarchy, and other gender based socio-cultural practices are argued as universal in explaining exploitative practices like sex trafficking from regions across the majority world (Warden, 2013).

Meanwhile, though out-migration is not a sure panacea for women's empowerment, researchers point to some form of gains in the process (see, Pesser, 2005). Pesser mentioned cases in Latin America, where migrant women have been able to garner economic improvement which allowed them some control over household decision making and household expenditure (ibid). Similarly, in the case of south-south Nigeria as indicated by my findings fortunate returnee female traffickers and victims leverage on their remittances to assume some level of equality with the men especially within their family and immediate community. These returnees sometimes become the bread-winners of their family or even become influential regarding community decision making process. They rely on the financial gains that comes with it (see, Campana, 2015), to make up for their socially deprived economic power.

A counter debate to the patriarchy factor, however, is that gender inequality is widespread globally, yet it does not lead to sex trafficking or related out-migration in many other regions of the world (see, Akor 2011). Yes, patriarchy may not necessarily lead to out migration in all cases but where it is established that it co-exists with poor economic

conditions it is most likely going to lead to various kinds of exploitation, including sexual exploitation. Again, following the feminisation of migration with women needed for all manner of jobs across the world (Castle et al 2014), those who are socially excluded or discriminated against socio-economically at home may be given the push to migrate to destinations where they feel things will look better for them, but in the process may become exploited or even become traffickers themselves.

### *Trafficking Business as Economic Options for Socially Excluded Women*

'Madams' or 'Mamas', were found to be the main traffickers of young girls from the area for commercial sex in Europe. Just as the migration of victims into sexual exploitation is linked to social exclusion in the source country (as discussed above), there appears a correlation between patriarchy and the emergence of women traffickers in the region. Though the leading role of women in the business of sex trafficking particularly from Nigeria has previously been mentioned as seen in the literature review (see, Oyekanmi and Okunola 2017; Carling 2005; Mancuso 2013; Prina, 2003), none connected it with existing patriarchy in the region. Nigerian women who arrived early as economic migrants in Europe (Carling, 2005), apparently seeking for ways to escape social exclusion and economic hardship back home may have given women a sort of head start and sustained the business. Many women who became traffickers recently in the area could be those seeking ways to beat institutionalised cultural barriers especially as it relates to material aspiration. This is the reason identified traffickers in the area are quick to acquire choice properties, expensive cars for themselves and families, and indulge in public show of wealth once they thrive in the business as my findings reflect. Some are now able to compete with wealthy politicians and economic elites who are mainly males by sending their children to schools reserved exclusively for the rich. Outside the issue of social exclusion and gender poverty, however, other explanations exist why women seem entrenched in the business of sex trafficking from Nigeria. For example, females are unlikely to be easily detected as perpetrators by law enforcement agents unlike their male counterpart (Campana 2015, Salt, 2000).

That women have a role as perpetrators in the trafficking business does not however mean cultural concept of male dominance in many source countries should be overlooked while trying to understand trafficking dynamics. Arguments canvassed the idea that it is all about

male dominance and male dominated (see, Bolos 2004). This position indicates that, the concept of sex trafficking and sex work represent a cultural phenomenon deep seated in the masculine and feminine images held firmly by society. The writer's perspective arguably sees the business as a lucrative market which focuses on marketing men's pleasure, or their image of pleasure through supplying physical intimacy with women. In agreement with Bolos, blaming the men may be justified especially when they are the known end users of the product of sex work. Though Bolos (2004) view appears credible, it would be unfair not to appreciate the clear leading roles of fellow women responsible for directing the business, particularly in the case of trafficking from south-south Nigeria to Europe as common to my finding. Again, emphasis must be placed on the fact that this does not diminish the role of patriarchy as underpinning the business, nor does it lessen the impact on the majority of female victims who will not go on to graduate to a position as a madam.

## **10.2. Exploitation by Syndicates versus Desperation of Victims and Families**

Another contention presented in the conceptual framework is that which highlights 'exploitation by trafficking syndicates against desperation by victims and families'. This was also significantly reflected by the result of the field exploration. As common to my findings there was a substantial evidence indicating that many who become trafficked abroad were (with the support of their families in many cases) desperate to reach Europe. There were however also pointers that many were not aware of exploitation at destination but were often taken advantage of because of their desperation and exploited by syndicates. This could be discussed further under the following thematic headings.

### ***Normalisation of Sex Trafficking in South-south Nigeria***

People in the area are in a situation that normalises the practice of sex trafficking as common to my finding. This indicates that in many cases those who become exploited sexually abroad are sometimes people who have seen travelling abroad as the best or normal thing to do even under uncertain circumstance at destination. This underscores the possibility of 'desperation' among the people, to reach Europe by any means. From the literature review, this appears not to have been given serious consideration especially by the dominant Western perspectives, policy makers and scholars as a key issue in understanding

the increase of incidences of trafficking in the region. This general perception of trafficking being “a normal thing” makes the people more accepting of the negative impacts of the practice like exploitation when they get to Europe. The fact that parents and families of victims are apparently indifferent to the danger and exploitation their trafficked girls face could be due to the societal endorsement the practice has come to enjoy among the region’s people.

Another situation in the region that evidences legitimisation and “desperation” is when non-victim participants hold the view that but for trafficking, “people in the area would have been dead from starvation”, and that if given the opportunity they themselves would embark on the journey (see, chapter 8). This also reveals ‘desperation’ among the people to reach Europe as a preferred place to be, even if they are exploited. In this case, sex trafficking is seen as a lesser evil and as a continuation of suffering for the victim and her relatives who consider existing conditions at home as not better-off. In practice, parents often tell NGO workers that it is not their business “if they decide to sacrifice one of their daughters for the rest of the family” (HTP09-FGD1). Normalisation of sex trafficking in the region is so evident that parents find it convenient to consider a girl child sent to Europe for sex work as a ‘sacrificial lamb’ for the family.

Competition among families as to who has more (females) children in Europe is normal in the region as common to my finding. This is also a reflection of normalisation of trafficking and illegal migration abroad leading to “desperation” among the people in the area. Social prestige in the area is determined by the number of daughters or children they have abroad with people proud of the activity of traffickers (Okojie, et, al, 2003; University of Benin (UNIBEN) observatory, 2011). Government, religious heads, community leaders and others (particularly in Edo state) unknowingly contribute to normalising sex trafficking activities when they view it as socio-economic ‘boost’ (Dokpesi, 2015).

Another precedent to the normalisation of sex trafficking and ‘desperation’ in the area is that the people have a culture of travelling abroad predating recent times as indicated in my finding. This follows a long history of cultural contacts with the West (Dokpesi, 2015). People from the area appear to leverage on this early social contact with European

missionaries and traders when they started travelling to Western countries in the wake of economic crises in the country in the early 1980s (Akor, 2011; Ediagbonya, 2015).

### *Remittances and Community Perception*

The contributing effect of remittances from sex trafficking practitioners and a few successful returnees to the local source region economy is an important facilitator of the practice noted in the finding. Also reinforcing contexts like victims-turned-madams becoming sources of financial remittances to the area strengthen the normalisation of trafficking activities among the people. Those who return to live ostentatiously and display wealth to the envy of others (Gupta 2003; Oloruntimehim, 2001), are sources of motivation to local people to see the practice as ideal and normal. With so many local people attempting to reach Europe, this conviction is reinforced, with families who cannot afford the journey relying on ‘sponsors’ who are traffickers (Dokpesi 2015; HTP09-FGD1).

Many people here are convinced their survival is dependent on remittances mostly from siblings, daughters and female relations abroad. Monies repatriated home by those who have travelled to Europe sway many parents making them indifferent to warnings of the risks that are involved in travelling with madams abroad (i.e. exploitation, abuse, death). Families who set their eyes on remittances to own their personal property (house) for example, like their neighbours who have taken the risk of sending their daughters abroad under a madam, may appear ‘desperate’ and often do not weigh the severity of the danger involved.

In fact, emergence of new and modern buildings in communities in the area could be linked to remittances from people of the region involved in trafficking and migration generally abroad. Remittances and investments by migrants (including illegal emigrants) back home may improve living standards, cause economic development and create employment (Castles et al 2014; Oloruntemenhim 2001). But this can be dangerous as it creates a migration-obsessed community (Castles et al 2014). This can also fuel inflation associated with a remittance-dependent economy (ibid) which appears to also be true of the region. The complication here is that the resulting inflation is capable of causing economically

induced vulnerability that can in turn lead to more out-migration and possibly sex trafficking cases.

As a corollary, the persisting disparity between the Nigerian local currency (the naira) and the currencies of Western countries seems to make the lure of remittances very potent in promoting the spread of trafficking in the region. Aside that, certain other factors like the value system of the region which encourages hero-worshiping has also made worse the situation. Usually the “have-nots” hero-worship the “haves” excessively admiring them in a manner leading to “desperation” to attain same position. Individuals and families with people (whether as victim of trafficking or trafficker or successful economic migrants) abroad are hero-worshipped as they are seen to be those with access to sources of hard currencies in form of remitted money from Europe (HTP03-Govt Agency1). This makes many in the area embrace whatever may elevate them to the same status as their so called heroes (e.g going abroad by all means).

Remittances made possible by trafficking activities have also altered some aspects of social patterns among the people of (Edo state) South-south Nigeria. Owing to remittances, people who returned from Europe and other Western countries appear to earn more social respect than others in the local communities as common to my findings. Relatives abroad are now often more respected in terms of decision taking and opinions regarding important family affairs than educated members who live and work within the country (HTP07-NGO). This generally has spurred conviction among many girls who became victims and their parents that trafficking abroad with a madam is a viable means of elevating an individual and family’s socio-economic status. Consequently, they become sort of ‘desperate’ to go abroad not minding the possibility of exploitation by their supposed benefactors (who may help facilitate their journey) at destination. This critical issue has not been taken into consideration especially by the dominant Western standpoint that rather just focuses on issues of criminal exploitation and modern slavery surrounding sex trafficking practice in the region. Discussions on the place of remittances as source of motivation for illegal migration and trafficking may not be new (see, Castle, 2014), but this as it appears is often discountenanced by many Western government and agencies like the US TIP and others.

Though the data presented above supports the characterisation of trafficking as fueled by desperation motivated by the lure of remittances and other contexts, the findings also affirm the fact that victims could actually be exploited at destination (which supports Western dominant argument as seen in the conceptual frame work and the literature review). Meanwhile, further ideas emanating from the field data indicates that ironically victims who were ‘rescued’ were the effective losers on return to Nigeria, (being poorly supported towards viable alternative careers), while the women who return with money (remittances) ‘un-rescued’ are the winners.

### *Existing Culture of Exploitation*

Victims of trafficking from the area were ordinarily encircled by a web of exploitation. Generally, sex trafficking appears to be a direct continuation of the complex economic exploitation and mismanagement of human resources within and without many source countries. The same goes for the situation in South-south Nigeria indicating that victims are often exploited justifying the claim in Western dominant argument (as mentioned in the conceptual frame work and argued in the literature review). The new angle to this following my findings is that exploitation is not just only carried out at destination (in Europe) but also at home (in Nigeria) before victims were trafficked. Many in the area were already exposed to the experience of being exploited even by people around them that they look up to for support (see, HTP01/02/02- victim life story). This corroborates the argument which explained that there is an existing practice in the region of placing children under the care of relatives using them as money making machines and for cheap labour (see, Akor 2011). Aside that, local labour laws appear to encourage the exploitation of desperate job seekers both by the public and private sectors as common to my finding. So, home and abroad, victims are exploited.

At the destination, most Western societies, as a matter of economic policies and employment laws, are seen to be condoning labour conditions that encourage exploitation in subtle form (also see, Hamilton-Smith 2012). For instance, many agricultural migrants still work in Italy’s rural farm areas in a sort of illegal employment system in which labourers are exploited (Oddone, 2018). The case is that some Western immigration laws create rooms for exploitation of women when sponsors are required to legitimise their

immigration status as residents of such countries (see, Kempadoo, 2017). Some respondents confirmed their belief that Western immigration policies encouraged the use of intermediaries by desperate migrants which expose them to exploitation (HTP0-NGO). Sexual exploitation of migrants at the destination European countries is also situated within this existing abusive anti-migrants and exploitative system which cartels may have found to be supportive of their business. The point is that the dominant Western perspectives (which campaigns against trafficking as a practice involving exploitation and modern slavery as seen in the literature review), has often glossed over the fact that they (some Western countries) are also culpable. They refused to acknowledge that they are also guilty of promoting the exploitation of trafficking victims (migrants) through certain immigration laws and actions. As a matter of fact the border actions by some Western countries produce violence against migrants under the guise of fighting trafficking (see, Kempadoo, 2016). This in itself could be worse than the issue of coercion (violence) and force which the dominant Western perspectives claim victims are exposed to in the hands of traffickers.

Historically, most Western political and socio-economic elites are known to have supported slavery, colonialism and era of labour exploitation in the past (Fanon 1961; Gunder Frank, 1967; Kay 1975; Webster, 1990). Many cities in the USA and the UK specifically Glasgow and Edinburgh were argued to be built by the labour exploitation of slaves (Liquerman, 2016). Early industrialisation of the West was partly sustained by exploited labour of various Western colonies in third world countries (Bernstein, et al, 1990), including Nigeria. Gunder Frank (1967) neo-Marxian Dependency theory also underscores the contemporary realities of neo-colonialism and the exploitation of weaker nations. Meanwhile it could be summarised that the issue under this line of contention, like the previously discussed one is complex. It cannot be too certain that the Western dominant perspective is entirely wrong or that the local source country commentators' views are completely wrong (regarding their arguments as presented in the conceptual framework). This is because the case of desperation and that of exploitation were evidently established in my data and yet debatable especially with the complex nature of the concept of exploitation as highlighted in the literature review.

### **10.3. Coercion by Syndicates versus Consent by Victims**

There is also the contention in the conceptual framework that migrants who are trafficked and exploited at destination were often coerced and forced into prostitution. But a counter argument which the frame work also presented is that, there is also the argument that many of them who are trafficked especially from West Africa (south-south Nigeria) grant their consent to syndicates to take them abroad. Although there are often arguments that nobody wishes to be sold into slavery but the evidences common to my findings indicate that many consented to being trafficked even when they do not know how severe their pains may be when they get to Europe. Further discussion under this line of contention in the conceptual framework is seen in subsequent paragraphs.

### *Family Dynamics and Coercion of Victims*

The practice of coercion from families on in-school and out-of-school young girls was identified in the area and this could also be considered as contributing factor to sex trafficking among the people. This indicates the common practice of coercion of innocent young girls to embark on trip to exploitation in the area. This also partly addresses the contention in the conceptual framework, whether victims are coerced or they consent to be trafficked for sexual exploitation. It demonstrates that coercion of potential victims is often occasioned through the collaboration of families of victims and the syndicates and not just the syndicates alone as often portrayed by many Western political elites. My findings confirm the overwhelming power of control wielded by parents over their children and wards as a cultural characteristic of the area (especially in Edo state) (Oyekanmi and Okunola, 2017). Unlike in Western societies, families, especially parents, determine the decisions and choices of their children in Nigeria and in many African countries even when they are past 18 years of age. Many of the victims found to have been coerced into the trade by their parents could not resist their decision. They had no choice because turning down their parents' wishes whether good or bad means disobedience and violations which society severely frowns at. In many cases when the girl protests following madam to Europe, the parents resort to the use of voodoo and other forms of threat to coerce her.

The findings suggest that parental coercion of victims is much more common among large families. With parents unable to cater for many children they resort to having “sponsors”

(madams) to smuggle their daughter to Europe for prostitution. Here, the perception and decision making of victims and families for example can be seen as an important variable in explaining prevalence of sex trafficking from the area as common to my finding. That is, the world view of the victims and their parents, the way they perceive the ideals of going abroad for sex work by a girl child in relation to trends in their environment is significant. Many of such large families coerce their girls to travel with madam with the conviction it is the best decision even when they do not sufficiently know the difference between migration and trafficking enough to make an informed choice.

Tied to the issue of family coercion of victims, is the impact of the realities of what could be termed fatalism and religious practices of local people within the wider sphere of trafficking activities in the region. This gives strength to the practice were the victims go through oath taking in voodoo shrines before embarking on the journey abroad (see, Harop, 2012; Ogunyemi, 2000; Okojie et al 2003; Oseghale, 2001; Ralston, et al., 1998; Siddarth 2016) as also noted in the literature review. Apart from helping parents to coerce their daughters to agree to travel with traffickers, in many cases, voodoo use is capable of also ensuring self-policing and self-coercion of the victims once they are taken to destination for sex work. They are often scared of repercussions, having sworn to an oath at the voodoo shrine, of disobeying the instructions of their traffickers as they fear for their life and for their family (Okojie et al 2003; Okonofua et al 2004). This makes the cartels thrive with little or no business risk or loss of profit.

Juju is deeply rooted into the society in Edo and almost everyone believes in it (Van der Watt and Kruger 2016; Ikeora, 2016). Juju practice is encouraged by the fact that the society in the region (particularly in Edo) is built on a belief in the powers of fetish and ritual practices which draws from their profession to animism (Oyekanmi and Okunola, 2017). Animism is a common practice among the Bini people of Edo state and the Yoruba people of western Nigeria which is part of their age long African Traditional Religion (ATR) (Aghatise, 2015; Ikeora, 2016; Kruger, 2016; van der Watt). Unlike the Eurocentric meaning according to Van der Watt and Kruger (2016) 'witchcraft', (which is associated with ATR) practitioners in African societies use magic or supernatural powers for either evil

or beneficial purposes. Though these religious practices among a people have benefits (Franklin et al 2014) this situation, which seems to encourage practices like sex trafficking, could be seen as the odd side.

The peculiarity of this finding regarding voodoo practice is seen in the fact that the area appears to be the only place renowned for sex trafficking around the world that is associated with such quasi-religious practice to coerce victims and secure their loyalty. With juju use, response efforts are often more challenging (Van der Watts and Kruger 2016) in the region. For example victims are unlikely to volunteer needed information that could help for rehabilitation and resettlement purposes due to perceived repercussions from oath taken in religious shrines. Despite recent issuance of curse by the Oba of Benin (the paramount monarch of the Edo people) to revoke all juju spells victims are put under by traffickers as a way of checking sex trafficking in the region (US Department of State, 2018), the practice does not seem to have stopped. This finding aligns with anticipations from the research questions as to the role issues of cultural and traditional practices play in the entrenchment of sex trafficking in the region.

What could be understood from this finding is that many victims who are trafficked from this region are coerced to consent to be trafficked. This makes the issue of consent to either be voluntary consent (which some of them may give), or forced consent in many cases. In linking this to the contention in the conceptual frame work regarding whether victims are trafficked with their consent or often coerced, it could be argued that in some cases those trafficked for sexual exploitation from the south-south Nigeria, consent to trafficking while in few cases they do not. Further thoughts here is that 'consent' itself is a rather simplistic term. Some victims consent but under family pressure and self-coercion propped up by obligations (and sometimes by voodoo practices as indicated earlier). So there are shades of consent. This also addresses the issue of coercion that featured prominently in the Western political elites' championed dominant perspective as presented in the literature review.

### *Trafficking as an Active Migratory Choice for Out-of-School Young People*

Many out-of-school young people see trafficking as an active migratory choice, as common to my findings. This shows the granting of consent by some migrants who become victims of exploitation when trafficked. Policy makers hardly see this as an important contributing factor to sex trafficking in the region. Many of those who are trafficked left school (with some merely completing their primary or secondary school education) and made to travel with madams to Europe by their parents. Many young girls are out of school in the area (HTP07-NGO1; Hussaini, 2017; Offorma, 2009; Toyoaka, et al, 2014). By 2014 Nigeria had the highest rate of out-of-school children in Africa with the figure put at 9 million (Toyoaka, et al, 2014). With the proliferation of scouting traffickers in the region these out-of-school girls are easily targeted and trafficked abroad. The longer you stay in school, the less vulnerable you are to becoming trafficked. This connects with the existing international evidence regarding the general risk of being out of school (see, Graham and Bowling, 1995; Mccann and Kirk, 2018).

The increase in the number of out-of-school young girls in the region especially in Edo state may partly tie with the patriarchal practices and the culture of female marginalisation in the area (HTP07-NGO1; Olaniyi, 2011). This also links to the disinterests among families in the area in investing in their daughters' education when they can perceive no reward for doing so within the context of broader socio-economic exclusion for women as noted earlier. The high number of uneducated parents in the region can also promote this development (Okonofua, et al., 2004). This category of parents sees travelling out of the country as a big achievement and a preferred migratory choice. Since the parents are often not educated enough, traffickers and smugglers find it easy to manipulate and convince them to consent to sending their daughter abroad. The case here is that consent sometimes comes before trafficking for exploitation even though such consent may have been forced by structural issues and not voluntary. Another argument emanating from this is whether those who travel with traffickers abroad with or without consent have prior knowledge of what awaits them at destination. As common to my finding some have the pre knowledge that they are going for sex work but do not usually understand the severity of the exploitation they may face.

Examining the issue of whether travelling with traffickers is the choice of victims or not; could be located within the frame-work of agency versus structure. This could generally be situated in the contention between the classical and the sociological positivism schools (man as a rational self-seeking being acting out of free will (Baccaria (1764), versus man as a being constrained by external social structures (Beirne, 1987). Beirne (1987) argued in line with the sociological positivism perspective that, anti-social behaviour (as the case may be) could be viewed as a product of dysfunctions in social, economic and political conditions. Though human trafficking is often cast as the offender acting with free will and malice and the victim acting without free will, but as common to my findings, victims and to some extent, offenders, are basically not to be blamed. In South-south Nigeria, victims and offenders alike act with limited rationality within the context of significant structural constraints.

The constraining situations within society (patriarchy, institutionalized poverty, and other existing conditions, as noted earlier) as common to my findings, are critical. Many writers like Warden (2013) take a pro-liberal position in the debate over this. In their views the victims do not share in the blame over their being trafficked. Victim blaming (Palermo protocol 2000) amounts to further victimizing and traumatizing her in a world that is seen to have been unfair to her prior, during and post trafficking. The argument often generally presented by writers like Warden and others is that structure rather than agency should be examined while contemplating blame over issues of sex trafficking.

#### **10.4. Global Socio-economic Inequality, Colonialism and Neo-colonialism versus Internal Socio-political and Economic Mismanagement at Source Country**

The final point of contention which was captured in the conceptual frame work is the argument regarding global socio-economic inequality, colonialism and neo-colonialism versus internal socio-political and economic mismanagement at source country. This places the position of dominant Western perspectives which argues that local conditions are caused by internal forces against focus on local challenges being the aftermath of the activities of external (neo-colonial) forces. This age long debate is significant to the recent dynamics surrounding human trafficking. It is relevant to consider the implications inherent in this contention if the root of the local underlining conditions contributing to trafficking in the

region is to be understood. It is also important to discuss this in view of the indications from the research exploration. The issue is further discussed under the following thematic headings as common to my findings.

### *National Economic Recovery Options and the Role of Global Financial Agencies*

National economic recovery options, the role of global financial agencies and impoverishment of the people could be issues for consideration while examining the background to economic hardship in the source (developing) countries like Nigeria. This may however be within the realm of serious debate. But some participants reflected on this factor and expressed its importance regarding local situations at the source country. This however was not noted as a factor, especially by the dominant Western authorities as seen in the literature review. Some authors however talked about aftermath of globalization which remotely indicates this.

Attention is however hardly focused on economic recovery measures adopted as a critical factor contributing to adverse socio-economic challenges. The findings suggest this has led to many adopting survival options including out migration leading to trafficking of girls from the country to Europe (also see Ejimabo, 2013). Recently, IMF (often arguably seen as a Western controlled agent of neo imperialism by proponents of underdevelopment theories (Frank Gunder 1967; Dos Santos 1970) endorsed financial and economic policies are leading many sub-Sahara Africa countries to pass austerity budgets. This involves subtly strangling households and businesses with a combination of higher taxation and lower state spending to keep debt payment in check making life more unbearable for the masses (Inman, 2019).

The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) (arguably a neo-liberal financial control instrument according to underdevelopment theories) of 1996 have become economically problematic (also see Babawale 2006; Taran and Demaret 2006; Ejimabo, 2013). For Nigeria, SAP which encompasses policy rationalisation of jobs, removal of subsidies on social amenities, and low-capacity utilisation of industries, worsen human conditions (see, Attoh, 2009; Lipede, 2007). Also, the accompanying devaluation of the country's currency played its own role. Many consequently moved to the more prosperous Western countries

with high currency values while others become traffickers with the intension to repatriate huge funds which will be of much value back home. The impact of these was often canvassed by participants. But this is rarely acknowledged by the dominant Western perspective and authors. Generally, despite emerging issues regarding Western political elites' entrenched dominance and underdevelopment tactics of developing countries, indication from my findings also show that the local politician and elites are considerably responsible for the hardship the people face. This is further discussed in the next section.

### *Corruption, Inequality and Poverty at Source Countries*

There seems to be a crisis of governance in Nigeria culminating in the co-existence of corruption, inequality and poverty. Field participants often referred to corruption among the political class as the reason inequality and hardship persists among the people. This they perceive worsens living conditions and leading to the desire to migrate even through illegal routes exposing many to sex trafficking. This supports the argument by the dominant Western perspective (as reflected in the conceptual frame work) that the poverty in most local source country economy could be caused by internal factors arising from corruption and mismanagement by the political class. Corruption and economic inequality have been reinforced by the successive regime of exploitation perpetuated by the country's corrupt elites (Agbu, 2003). Right from Nigeria's Independence the country has lost tremendously a large portion of her national treasury to corruption (as hinted in the literature review). These are in the area of over invoicing, of government purchases and supplies, money laundering, embezzlement, diversion of budgetary allocation and others (Uduka 2011).

Participants' responses regarding corrupt leadership corroborates some arguments in the literature review (see, Okonofua et al 2004). The contention is that corruption leads to poverty when it impacts economic growth factors which in turn impacts poverty levels (Chetwynd 2003). Authors' arguments have also drawn a direct connection between certain criminal practices (including sex trafficking) and the impact of corruption on society (Chgbo, 2011). In addition corruption globally is credited with the propensity to contribute to the underdevelopment of a nation's people, government and economy (Ellis, 2015). The wide gap between the rich and the poor in the south-south region, and the entire country which is largely due to corruption is a major issue for consideration (also see, Adebooye,

2019; Akor, 2011; Booth, 1975). Recently, insecurity of lives and property is now a serious matter in Nigeria (Eweka, and Oluwakorede, 2014; Omolume and Audu, 2014) partly due to the corruption of the ruling class.

### *Western Capitalist Elites' Support for Source Nations' Corrupt Local Elites*

Western capitalist elites' support for developing (source) country's local elites to perpetuate corruption was stressed by Gunder Frank (1967) and other underdevelopment theorists (see chapter five in the literature review). The socio-political system that thrives in corruption created by the colonial policies and arrangement preceding the political independence of Nigeria for instance was questionable (Achebe, 2012; Okonofua, 2013), as argued in the literature review. This debated under development tendencies of the colonial era is further entrenched in the neo-colonial forms (Dos Santos 1970) as noted under the theoretical viewpoint section (see chapter five). Poverty in the region has also been argued to be aftermath of the global divide between unequal regions of the world (the global north versus global south) (Berton, 2000; Gunder Frank, 1967). Western policy makers (as seen in the literature review) do not appear to consider the weight of this prevailing fundamental circumstance on the spread of sex trafficking practices especially in severely affected regions in West Africa (South-south Nigeria) with no demonstrable panacea in this respect.

### **10.5. Implication of Emerging Findings for Practice and Policy Response**

This research partly aimed to consider the extent to which key explanatory factors are reflected in official understandings and responses to the problem. The implication of official understanding for practice and policy response was noticeable in the findings as reflected in the subsequent discussions.

The response to sex trafficking from the South-south region of Nigeria to Europe, from findings, appears to be negatively impacted by conceptual misconceptions and the misconstruing of contributory factors by authorities. This highlights arguments regarding understanding what contributing factors are. In Nigeria effective responses are arguably hindered by what could be termed nonchalance and lack of political will among the political class to address the problem. This could partially be situated within the administrative tradition of improper investigation of underlying causes of social problems and fully

implementing preventive and remedial interventions in developing societies like Nigeria (Makinde 2005).

Politicians in the region are sometimes deliberately silent about the challenges of trafficking because of their expectation of political and electoral patronage from the people whom they see as having embraced the practice, as common to my findings. When the Government takes steps, they usually proceed half-heartedly thereby making their response ineffective. Politicians also hide behind the notion that the activity of sex traffickers is helping to ensure the area booms economically (see findings chapter 8) which is a problem. These indications vary from what was largely argued by many of the literatures reflected in the literature review regarding responses in the local area. Although, scholars did sparsely mention the lack of understanding by authorities which impacts negatively on response (see, Brunovskis and Surtees 2008; Okonofua et al 2004, Osakue 2005; Oyekanmi and Okunola 2017), Weitzer 2012).

#### *Limitations of Legislation and Oversimplification of the Problem and Responses in Nigeria*

Aside the challenge regarding misconstruing of contributory factors, efforts to address trafficking by response agencies and NGOs in the area, appear constrained by weak legislation and oversimplification of the problem as suggested by findings. Against Agbaegbu (2008) and Onuoha's (2011) assertions, recent laws in Edo state do not seem to have the ingredient to make a meaningful impact in fighting the problem. The latest called "Edo state Trafficking in Persons Prohibition Law 2018" (Edo state Government laws, 2018) which sentence, has an option of fine of one million naira (about 2,000 pounds) for trafficking offences, for instance appears inadequate. Such sentences can easily be paid off by the (often rich) cartels when convicted hence they will generally be unable to deter offenders.

Compared to anti-trafficking laws in Western countries local anti-trafficking laws sentencing in Nigeria is often too low and of no strong effect. The EU Directive on Trafficking in Human Beings for instance stipulates that Member States should have as a maximum penalty, a sentence of at least 10 years for trafficking offences committed (Report on internal review of human trafficking legislation in the UK, 2012). The UK law on human trafficking

can impose a maximum sentence of 14 years for trafficking offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Act 2004 (ibid). So when put side by side sanctions in the West, one will find that the Nigeria and Edo state sentences are quite inadequate in view of the seriousness of the offence. This also goes to show that the source country does not only have a poor understanding and perception of the problem of trafficking but also its impact on society.

Existing laws in the country are not only weak but lack proper communication to the people making them fail. These findings link canvassed views in the literature review (see, Oyekanmi and Okunola 2017; Osakue 2005; Sharapov 2016; Weitzer 2012). Sharapov (2016) particularly noted the challenge with response when trafficking laws are not properly communicated to the people. Citizens hoping to seek redress and protection against traffickers do not often know what to do. Another problem with existing laws in Nigeria, as common to my findings, is the lack of follow-ups and full executions on the part of the government. Consequently, there is a considerable lack of faith and trust in the strength of laws and enforcement organisations to help solve the problem. This seems to be the same with most laws in the country.

However the emphasis on the relevance of criminal laws in this preceding discussion is not intended to justify the criminalization of trafficking practices as often focused by the dominant Western perspectives as seen in the literature review. It is meant to x-ray what impact the promulgation of adequate laws and its absence could ordinarily have on effective response in view of the current situation on ground concerning the dynamics of policy and practice.

#### *Oversimplification of the Problem*

Combined with the issue of normalisation of the practice by the people discussed earlier, oversimplification of the problem by authorities in the region and country has also negatively impacted effective response. The discountenancing by government of pilot initiative created by agencies and NGOs on best approach to tackle trafficking (HTP03-GovtAgency1), could be partially due to oversimplification of the impact of the problem on

the people. With this reality, response efforts become daunting and frustrating for the main government response agency and other organisations. This emerging understanding was not canvassed in arguments presented in the literature review as no researcher has before now mentioned this.

Oversimplification of the problem may also connect to poor funding of response agencies and NGOs in the source country (Nigeria), particularly in the south-south region. Poor funding as suggested by my data is a serious issue that has implication for practice response. This kind of response challenge could however be considered universal with statutory bodies responding to organised crimes often constrained by funding austerity (Hamilton et al 2013). But it could also be established that the situation is often worse in developing countries known for poor funding of its projects and abandonment of national programmes (Makinde, 2005; Tijani et al, 2016).

#### ***Rehabilitation and Reintegration Challenges and its Implication for Responses***

The challenge of rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees into their local communities for normal life is another vital issue (see, chapter 9). Edward (2012) and Oyekanmi and Okunola (2017) particularly debated the criticality of this in global response in order to avoid re-trafficking (in the literature review). Restoration of individuals to a productive normal life is key in the rehabilitation of returnees. But there seems to be an absence of adequate processes and programmes in this respect for victims in the area. Many of the returnees brought back to Nigeria many years ago, are yet to be resettled and reintegrated into the larger society (see chapter 8). Returnee African migrants are known to have problems with rehabilitation and resettlement (Freeman, 2018). Consequently, many wish to return to Europe while some have been re-trafficked (see chapter 8). Response bodies faced handicaps including contending with family members of returnees who sometimes refuse to cooperate with field officials on rehabilitation and reintegration projects. The ineffective rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees in South-south Nigeria could also be linked partly to the lack of seriousness by government to honestly confront the problem.

The government has not adequately invested in facilities where returnees can be trained in the skills needed for a productive life and gainful employment. The government has also

failed generally in its basic statutory roles of provision of services (see, chapter 8), which would have made for effective rehabilitation of the returnees. In particular, returnees needing medical care appear neglected and left to cope with their ill health conditions. This lack of support can possibly contribute to further encourage re-trafficking while discouraging voluntary returnees from Europe.

### ***Stigmatisation and the Burden of Response***

It is clear from the data that returnees are often stigmatised as they are labeled returnee international sex workers. Subjecting returnee victims to stigmatisation could be a challenge to effective response to sex trafficking in the area. Many returnees are not going to openly identify themselves as victims for the purpose of rehabilitation and reintegration by agencies because of the fear of being stigmatised and maybe exposed to secondary victimisation. Such unidentified victims end up being more vulnerable to re-trafficked as a result.

When the returnees stigmatise themselves, they carve an image of worthlessness of themselves and expect people around to view them as such being returnee victims of sex trafficking. This makes them struggle with a feeling of low self-esteem. Response groups will often face difficulty dealing with this as they find it hard convincing the victims that they can still become better individuals in their community (see chapter 9). The issue of stigmatisation remains a serious matter that should be at the core of effective practice response, though as it is currently in South-south Nigeria not much has been done to manage it. It could be argued that there is no definite mention of the stigmatisation factor as a challenge to response in existing literature on trafficking on the study area.

Due to the fact that the Bini people of the area under investigation are typically associated with trafficking for sex work abroad in the country, there is a form of group stigmatisation amongst the ethnic group. Members of stigmatised groups are likely to suffer from prejudice and react to it in different ways (see, Leyens, 2001). In what therefore, may be a form of preservation of self-image, victims of sex trafficking from the area may tend to avoid this sort of group stigma by remaining unidentified when returned, which in turn creates more challenges for responding agencies.

The realities of stigmatisation of individual victims of sex trafficking, especially among the Bini ethnic group, could also be linked to the pattern of social interaction in existence among them. As was noted in the findings section, because of the spread of the activity in the area, everybody seems to know who has been trafficked. When a known victim is rescued and returned without signs of financial achievement then stigmatisation becomes strong for her especially by members of the immediate community who see the practice as shameful. However, according to Osakue (2004), it ceases to be a stigma, as long as money comes with it. In fact they are respected if they come back with money, but If they return without money, they are stigmatised and disrespected as sex workers (ibid), and call them “ashewo” or “italo” (meaning prostitute or prostitute from Italy). Though, returnees with plenty of money are also sometimes called “italo”, but not as in such an undignified manner as the ones who returned with no money as found.

### ***Conflict in Conception and Understandings and Response Options***

The perceived conflict in perceptions and understanding between most local and Western destination countries authorities regarding sex trafficking also seems to be affecting the conceptions of explanatory factors and effective collective practice and policy responses. This has not been considered by the dominant Western perspectives. For example, the approach of some European countries in keeping stranded illegal migrants at migrant camps within their countries was viewed by some Nigerian authorities, in line with my findings, as inhibiting effective responses and indeed was seen as potentially promoting the practice of sex trafficking. The argument advanced by the Nigerian anti-trafficking agency is that female migrants are likely to be exposed to sex trafficking if not returned home upon arrival at destination borders as illegal migrants (HTP03-GovtAgency1). This corroborates assertions in the literature review as stressed by Okonofua et al (2004) that migrants who become sexually exploited are encouraged to travel by the reception they get at destination and see this as a major challenge to effective response. Nadeau (2018) had similarly argued this possibility even though it cannot be said to be a popular viewpoint especially among most global agencies responding to trafficking.

This Nigerian position appears contrary to the working principles of the UN, IOM, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and International Maritime Organisation (IMO). These international bodies expect migrants, especially girls and children, who are exposed to exploitation to be assisted to live a safe life (at least temporarily) in destination countries (see, Banki-moon, 2013; IMO Annex 34 containing RESOLUTION MSC. 167(78) (adopted on 20 May, 2004)). Specifically, the Refugee Convention's prohibition of expulsion or return "refoulement" contained in Article 33.1 prohibits Contracting States from expelling or returning a refugee to the frontiers of territories where his or her life or freedom is endangered {...}.

Meanwhile, this does not mean that sex trafficking cannot also benefit from compassionate policies towards victims or migrants (see, Salt, 2002) as argued by HTP03-GovtAgency1. Accommodated rescued migrants in destination countries have sometimes either disappeared or become exploited even while in supported accommodation (Nadeau, 2018). Many of those rescued off the Mediterranean and put in camps are subsequently lured by criminal gangs (traffickers) into Italian cities for prostitution (ibid). In this case, the Western option of not immediately returning migrants to their country as suggested by the Nigerian authorities during the field work may be considered the ideal. This is especially in cases of those escaping conflicts, famine, abuse and other life threatening conditions. The only challenge probable here is differentiating genuinely distressed migrants from those being smuggled by syndicates for sex work and other forms of trafficking.

Another area of difference in perception and focus is that most governments in the Western destination countries seem to acknowledge the risk and post traumatic conditions victims face more than (source country) Nigeria's. Destination countries appear to demonstrate this committing more in terms of funds, programmes and attention to the rehabilitation and reintegration of the returnee victims in south-south Nigeria than the Nigerian government does. This was evidenced in returnee victims' complaints about lack of effective support on return to Nigeria, whilst they acknowledged some financial aid and limited resettlement assistance often from international government and agencies. This fact was also attested to by some of the agencies' responses during the field work. This perhaps shows Nigerian authorities do not seem to genuinely appreciate the enormity of the inherent dangers, ill-

health and adverse post experience conditions returnee victims go through (Okojie et al, 2003; Okonofua et al, 2004). The implication of this for response, as common to my findings, is costly as it could inhibit proper reintegration of returnees leading to further challenges like worsening post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), minor medical conditions, poor economic conditions and possibly the re-trafficking of victims.

Apart from the tendency to cause negative post-trafficking challenges for the victim, and possibly re-trafficking, this attitude of source countries (like Nigeria) can deter destination countries' efforts towards supporting returnees, as it requires the cooperation of both parties to accomplish a meaningful rescue and resettlement programme. Response partners are likely to withhold their partnership when their counterparts renege on their responsibility. These uncomplimentary rehabilitation and resettlement efforts in origin countries like (South-south) Nigeria could also be debated as the reason many of the Western countries hold the view that it is better for victims to be kept and protected in the destination countries.

Broadly, the general focus from most Western perspectives of viewing human trafficking as an immigration issue noted in the literature review (see, chapter two) does not seem to help the reduction of sex trafficking from source countries (like Nigeria) to Europe. This position of many Western policy makers is considered flawed as it has serious negative implications for global policy and programmes towards responses to trafficking (Edward, 2016; O'Connell Davidson, 2015; Malloch et al, 2016). This can be considered as a biased viewpoint as the Western response policy standpoint is inclined towards immigration control and removal rather than understanding the context, root causes, forms of control and rights of the survivor. Though this tough approach by the Western authorities is what was recommended by the Nigerian anti-trafficking authorities mentioned earlier as ideal to stave off illegal migrants who do become victims, the difference is that this Western approach hardly achieves anything. Apart from that, restrictive immigration rule application sends wrong signals and could be counter-productive especially when it is viewed against honest response to human trafficking. In some cases it is seen as breaching human right laws and rights entitlement of migrants thereby constituting impediment to genuine response to trafficking (also see Kempadoo (2016), as noted in the literature review).

## 10.6. Summary

The discussion section evaluated field data which indicates that, against most Western elites' conceptions of sex trafficking as being primarily a products of criminal tendencies (as seen in the conceptual frame work), socio-political, socio-economic and cultural conditions and practices (patriarchy, normalisation of practice, economic crises, immigration policies, economic policies, unemployment etc) within and outside the south-south Nigeria are key explanatory factors for the practice. This aligns with arguments in Kempadoo (2016) regarding how the dominant discourse on human trafficking obfuscates the real underpinning structural and economic problems that are the principle drivers of the problem. Though there were indications of criminal behaviour but these are more likely aftermath of structural economic conditions embedded within the region (south-south Nigeria). The discussion, also specifically throw up the argument against the issue of poverty related factors, suggesting the need for further exploration for other possible drivers of sex trafficking. Generally, issues of contention regarding dynamics of trafficking e.g. coercion versus consent; desperation versus exploitation; and external factors versus internal factors as explanation for local conditions, basically formed the fundamental basis for discussion.

The section discussed broadly that findings throw up significant issues particularly affecting response. Misunderstanding and misconstruing of core factors contributing to the problem at the level of most Western authorities and a lack of political will on the part of many local source country politicians to deal with the problem was established. This, it was made succinct, often affects effective practice response. The question of loose synergy between governments at the destination and source countries, and how this makes partnership efforts ineffective was also explored.

The tradition of inadequacy in response approach to social problems in the country within which the sex trafficking response debacle was situated was also noted. Specifically, politicians and socio-economic elites in the region especially in Edo state are reported to tacitly endorse the practice in exchange for political patronage. Discussion here also examined that apart from weak legislation, rehabilitation and reintegration of returning

victims are shabbily handled by authorities in Nigeria and in the South-south region, potentially leading to re-trafficking.

## Chapter 11

### 11.0. Conclusion

This chapter deals with the conclusion of the thesis. The section starts with a summary of the findings highlighting the salience of emerging thematic categories from the data analysis in respect of the five research questions. It then considers the prospects for further research arising from the study as well as considering the strengths and limitations of the current work. Finally, the chapter presents some tentative recommendations and suggestions for effective policy and practice response to address sex trafficking and human trafficking generally in south-south region and the whole of Nigeria.

### 11.1. Answering the Research Questions; Key Findings/Contribution to Knowledge

#### Question 1 – what is it that leads to sex trafficking in South-south Nigeria?

In response to this question, the findings indicated that certain factors are key contributing factors to sex trafficking in the region. Firstly, it was confirmed that poverty is a critical factor in the spread of the practice in the region with inequality helping to make the situation more severe. It was also identified that the availability of illegal trafficking routes made possible by the large population of indigenes who are specialised in supplying girls and women into the sex industries in Europe has also contributed immensely. The fact that these traffickers called ‘madams’ are linked to a wider cartel within the prostitution market in Europe makes the situation a serious one in the region.

Another key factor is the vulnerability of young girls to family pressure which made it very easy for traffickers and parents in many cases to facilitate the trafficking of the girls under a kind of mutual arrangement. Similar to this factor, is the issue concerning the use of voodoo and rituals which largely aid families and traffickers in coercing the victims into becoming trafficked for sex work in Europe. The factor of the use of rituals and voodoo is often given potency by the realities of the African Traditional Religious practices which is prevalent in the region. There is also the factor of the high rate of young people especially girls leaving school in the area. This has made available a large population of potential victims of sex trafficking who are eventually trafficked. Lastly there is also the key factor of official

corruption and abdication of official duties by state actors leading to neglect of the huge youth population. This has seriously worsened living conditions for many in the region which has not helped, but contributed to vulnerability.

Question 2 – what role does poverty play in sustaining sex trafficking in South-south Nigeria?

Regarding this question, aside that poverty reduces their choices, poverty affects perceptions and decision making of victims and their families in the region. Another key finding was that when poverty creates vulnerability it gives potency to parental pressure, peer pressure and other secondary factors to help to promote practices in the area. It was also found that with poverty, people in the region become desperate for survival.

The key contribution here is that poverty appears to be a basic collaborative factor that creates the enabling space not only for vulnerability of individual victim but also for sustainability of the practice in communities in the region. Thus, the role poverty plays in increasing the incidence of sex trafficking in the region is basically that of incentivising other factors. When people are poor the choices they can make are narrowed and such choices can further impoverish them or even endanger their lives. Also, when people are poor they can easily become desperate and can also in the process be exposed to deception as is usually the case when victims are deceived by the trafficking cartels. The poor condition which the majority of the people in the region face can be said to have created a situation where many of them now see sex trafficking as an alternative migratory choice.

Question 3 – what role do socio-cultural practices play in facilitating sex trafficking in South-south Nigeria?

For this research question, key findings include a culture of patriarchy, social exclusion of women and gender inequality in the area. Also, the reality of the religious tradition of animism and voodoo belief among the people is a key finding in the area.

Most importantly, the constraints of patriarchy arguably help to push many women into embarking on unsafe migratory journeys in search of the means to remedy their disadvantage statuses. In another sense these practices which also support the exploitation of the women often lead them to be sexually exploited at home and as migrants outside their

country. This practice is entrenched in both the traditional society in the region and in the national socio-political system in the country with women disallowed socio-economic and political opportunities based on their gender (also see, Makama, 2013; Salaam, 2003; Ugiagbe et al, 2011).

Secondly, the role of voodoo use by traffickers to tie their victims to a bond was found to be encouraged by the general practice of animism. The belief system which has faith in witchcraft, sorcery and powers in both animals and non-living things is part of the African Traditional Religion (ATR) which the people in the area profess. This gives rise to the use of voodoo and other fatalistic practices that traffickers use as a means of manipulating and controlling the victims. With this the sex trafficking practice is sustained as the business becomes self-coercing and self-policing with victims unable to default or escape for fear of the repercussion that may come following the voodoo-backed-oath.

Question 4 – what informs global and local official understanding and conception of the cause of human and sex trafficking in south-south Nigeria? & Question 5 – How does official understanding in turn shape practice responses?

Key factors here are that most government and international agencies do not have adequate knowledge of the root cause and as such effective responses are elusive. There are also misconceptions about the nature and cause of the practice in the region which affect responses. Outside that, global and local authorities have divergent views regarding the nature, causes, and possible solutions to human trafficking. Response activities are therefore not based on a clear agreement as to what evidence recommends. Nor, as this research found, are response activities adequately funded.

Misconceptions, incoherence, and superficiality were also seen in response approach by most Western authorities. This is in view of the fact that response options like preferred immigration policies and other international diplomatic postures of the many Western countries, especially as they relate to developing countries, turn out to further contribute to the problem of human trafficking. Western restrictive immigration laws are largely creating more opportunities for traffickers who are intermediaries helping to smuggle desperate migrants many who are distressed and looking for ways to enter Europe (Akor, 2004; Salt, 2000). Also, there are some elements of contradiction when the most Western countries

shows so much interest in the issues of sex trafficking arising from international migration yet does not demonstrate the same measure of concern for apparent economic issues and conflicts in developing countries that arguably lead to sex trafficking in the first place.

As was noted in the findings, politicians in the South-south region of Nigeria sometimes appear to deliberately fail to tackle the challenge as a socio-economic problem; this is because of their expectation of political support from the very people whom they see as having embraced and profited from the practice. Government laws and programmes to check the practices lack elements of honesty and commitment in implementation making anti-trafficking approaches ineffective (also see, Oyekanmi and Okunola 2017). Even when it is apparent that socio-economic challenges are capable of making desperate youth seek out dangerous migratory journeys (Attor, 2009), the government does not seem to do anything tangible about it.

## **11.2. Review of Field Study**

It could be said that the field research exploration addressed some of the key issues raised in the various research questions. As noted above, the field exploration produced findings that could be considered as key contributions to the body of knowledge regarding sex trafficking and human trafficking in general. Apart from findings that confirmed existing notions like the apparent role poverty plays in strengthening other contributory factors; and patriarchy and social exclusion of females; there were those like coincidences in history and culture of travelling abroad among the Bini people, which were previously unknown factors. There was also the ‘coincidence of want’ - which helps explain the practice of sex trafficking from the point of view of the consequence of mutual cooperation between parents of victims and traffickers. Though a few of these particular findings may have been touched in some existing academic work, they were not specifically highlighted as contributory factors or key explanatory factors to prevalence in the region or hindrances to successful intervention by practice responses.

Preceding the field study, the thesis’ conceptual framework establishing the divergence in conceptualisation of sex trafficking between most Western authorities and local source countries’ commentators as well the issue of existing global socio-economic inequality was

emphasised. Also, the relevance of some explanatory theories for this research were highlighted. The dependency theory (Gunder Frank 1967) on the one hand was effectively employed to justify issues of economic exploitation by the rich countries of the West of the developing countries in the third world (source countries) which emphasises the movement of resources including human resources to the West in an exploitative manner. As established, this fundamentally explains the continuing exploitative practice of vulnerable migrants. The second theory - the feminisation of migration developed by Castle & Miller (1998) and Donato & Gabaccia (2016) was also captured in the thesis concluding the recent increased number of female migrants justifies the surge in female sexual exploitation as trafficked victims.

### **11.3. Prospects for further Research**

As noted earlier, one fact emanating from the study is the insufficient understanding of the actual basic contributors to sex trafficking in the region and in the entire country which fundamentally affect the proffering of the right solutions to the challenge. This misconstruction of solutions and the misdirection of policy practice should be seen as area worth further research in particular exploring how to harmonise development policies with anti-human trafficking policies. A follow-up to this could be in the area of better aligning development and anti-human trafficking policies to explicitly address patriarchy. Other areas that should be of interest for further research might be, how to balance protecting and helping victims of human trafficking in a way that is compassionate and consistent with human rights obligations whilst seeking to avoid giving signals back to source countries that further encourage dangerous migratory choices.

There is the need to consider the extent that measures designed to facilitate economic recovery as recommended by world financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank are responsible in engendering human trafficking from developing countries (Nigeria) to European countries. Similarly, further research should be done to review the power of remittances to developing economies as a pull factor explaining the spread of the practice of sex trafficking and other forms of human trafficking. Lastly, further research can be conducted to examine the existing global culture of exploitation and the

ease at which international sexual exploitation and other forms of labour exploitation of trafficked persons are carried out especially in Western destinations.

#### **11.4. Strengths and Limitations of the Study**

The strength of the work is in the research design adopted. This includes talking with victims on return in the source country rather than in the destination. Some advantages of this include: opening up to give honest accounts of their experience during interview; not under any pressure or fear from traffickers hence talking freely; seeing it as an opportunity to report their experience to someone who they may perceive as genuinely interested in their story having returned from a dangerous journey. Secondly, the study emphasises the examination of anti-human trafficking policies mainly with source country NGOs and agencies in context. Thirdly, the study involves attempts to understand human trafficking in a specific social and cultural context through fieldwork with affected communities and families in a unique regional setting. The work is a study that is interested in understanding motives and experiences by people who have encountered the central phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, the use of semi-structured open-ended interviews, and other interview base technique like focus group discussion and life histories for data collection which helps in gathering robust data as participants could freely express themselves (Creswell, *ibid*), was a strength of this work. The thesis also derives strength from the use of the two female research assistants who helped in conducting the interviews with the female returnee victims during the fieldwork. This, as mentioned in the methodology section (see chapter 6), did not only help in dealing with ethical expectations of avoiding secondary victimisation but was also relevant in enhancing the quality of the data from the fieldwork.

A key weakness in the study is the difficulties experienced in getting access to the victims and families. Apart from that there were also the limitations that come with the tendencies for participants/respondents not to be sincere in some cases (though most of those who participated in my fieldwork were honest with their responses) with few likely to act up or not tell the entire truth. This is especially when researching into sensitive issues like sex trafficking and others that touch on violence, victimisation, stigmatisation and shame. Also, another limitation that would ordinarily have emerged in a qualitative research approach

like this is the possibility of losing some of the facts (i.e. hidden meanings and nuances) in a participant's response during transcription and translation. To avoid this, I took time to ensure thorough transcription making sure every word in responses was captured and documented verbatim. Also, as an indigene of the field area translation of both verbal and body languages was easy, this helped. Also, since it is not one of qualitative research aims to provide data for generalisation, a key limitation of this study is the issue of generalisability. The thesis cannot claim that the data collected reflect all cases of those who have encountered sex trafficking either as victim, trafficker, relatives, government officials or response agents. Also, possibilities are that the findings may likely be tainted by the bias of the researcher which is a form of limitation, though I was mindful of issues of positionality and reflexivity (Damsa, and Ugelvik, 2017). As noted in the method section, it is often advisable in qualitative studies to consider issues of power, positionality and reflexivity which relate not only to the relationship between researcher and respondent but reflect on how the position of the researcher might impact on findings (see, Manson-Bish, 2018).

### **11.5. Recommendations and Suggestions**

My recommendations and suggestions are set out in accordance with the model of prevention of crime and other social problems developed by Brantingham and Faust (1976). This is chosen because the model represents a classical approach to presenting ideal preventative responses to challenges like the one this thesis deals with. This perspective suggests prevention of social problems like sex trafficking should take the form of tertiary, secondary and primary steps. Preventive approach, under the tertiary category, deals with measures directed specifically at the victims (sex trafficking victims) and offenders (traffickers); the secondary level looks at the vulnerable population (say those exposed to the practice in the south-south Nigeria) and what should be done to forestall the emergence of new cases of sex trafficking; while the primary considers what needs to be done at the country and international community level to address the phenomenon (ibid).

#### ***Tertiary Level Recommendations and Suggestions***

Following from my findings, a strong and coordinated response to the problem of sex trafficking in south-south Nigeria is needed with special focus on the victims. The response

agencies should commit more time and strategy to proper rescuing, counseling, rehabilitation and reintegration of the victims into normal community life. This is important in view of findings that returnee victims are often neglected (see, chapter 9). Local response agents in the region need to also keep to global best practices ensuring transparency and credibility in their activities to avoid breach of trust both by international partners and victims.

Importantly, there is the need for practice response and the government in Nigeria to focus efforts on addressing the mechanisms (addressing poverty, culture of normalisation of the practice, patriarchy, economic problems and others) that promote trafficking in the region, as opposed to its superficial approach to the problem. More attention needs be paid to the emotional and psychological needs of victims in recovering from their experiences. Rescue and recovery responses need to be based on a much more realistic understanding of the motives that might lead to re-trafficking (e.g. stigma on return, ongoing family poverty, lack of meaningful economic opportunities, continued patriarchal pressures and disadvantage). In other words, response agencies and NGOs should ensure effective prevention of stigmatisation and any form of secondary victimisation of returnee victims while they are under their watch. Apart from posing further mental challenge to the victims, these can make their reintegration into normal community life difficult thereby predisposing them to re-trafficking (see chapter 9; Edward, 2012). Awareness campaigns by response groups should also incorporate education of the public and relatives to desist from stigmatisation and victimisation of returnee victims. This should be both in schools and in public centres like churches, and market places.

Against what is currently obtainable as seen from the findings, the government in Nigeria should empower and adequately fund its official response organ NAPTIP Government should also support non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and faith-based organisations (FBOs) as they commit to their complementary roles of responding to sex trafficking activities and victims in need. Government organisations, NGOs and FBOs need to intensify collaborations to complement each other in order to ensure a comprehensive practice response from the angle of the local source country. This will further enhance the

effective rehabilitation, monitoring and reintegration of returnee victims into normal community life, which presently lacks in the region (see chapter 9).

Authorities need to emphasise clearer messages in campaigns and advocacies about the harm and damage linked to trafficking that might need matching policies to ensure that offenders are held suitably culpable. Similarly, laws should be well communicated to all so that they will be well aware of their existence and effectiveness. This is because part of the reasons existing laws appeared weak is due to poor communication of the laws to the populace (also see, Oyekanmi and Okunola 2017; Sharapov, 2016; Weitzer 2012). The government should also work with all sectors of the society including religious leaders and traditional institutions to ensure a total fight against the challenge.

### ***Secondary Level Suggestion Recommendation***

Here, consideration is given to suggestions and recommendations to prevent socio-economic conditions capable of instigating the activities of sex trafficking in the region and country wide.

First, following the study findings concerning the issue of normalisation of sex trafficking practice response here needs to sustain advocacy and sensitisation activities against seeing the practice as normal and ideal. National and regional government should build into the country's school curriculum modules that could educate young people about trafficking and the risk inherent, emphasising ill-health implications like HIV Aids etc. This will further help to dissuade the people from the practice,

Since my field exploration suggests that out-of-school teenage girls are normally targets of traffickers and that they themselves see trafficking as migratory option (see, chapter 8), policy and practice response require honest public debate about the negative consequences of sex trafficking both in schools and public places. Also, provision should be made for adequate functional and quality education for the country's enormous youth population. This could include formal, technical and vocational education. This is in addition to making education free for girls from primary school to tertiary education level and at the level of technical education where they can acquire skills.

Added to this is the urgent need for a well-equipped and managed skill acquisition centres where youth who chose not to attend the formal school system can learn skills and be self-employed. This will make many to become job creators rather than job seekers. This will help shield risk populations (especially young girls) from becoming vulnerable to exploitation as uneducated and unskilled individuals are often susceptible to exploitation (see, chapter 8; Oyekanmi and Okunola 2017).

Reducing poverty is, key. This is because poverty, as confirmed by my findings, is a basic contributor to the spread of the practice in the region. The economy needs improvement at least to help strengthen the value of the local currency as this was found to be another major factor. Deliberate effort is needed to ensure a corruption free political and economic environment that will enthrone honest, people-oriented leadership and reduce inequality. Jobs should be provided for the growing youth population. Also, the growing rural-urban migration needs to be halt as it has not only adversely affected food production, but increased unemployment rate and caused rural poverty. Many of the victims of sex trafficking as found come from poor rural settlements.

Formal government, local traditional authorities, and general practice response need to discourage patriarchal practices that discriminate against women in the region and Nigeria. This can be in the form of consistent public campaigns in this respect. Opening up the socio-political environment to ensure the elimination of practices that undermine the participation of women in governance and certain economic activities is also important. This can help in redirecting many potential sex trafficking victims in the region into taking up meaningful engagement at home instead of travelling abroad. As it is in the UK (see, Alcock, et al 2007), there may be need for the establishment in the region and the country of a social exclusion department to help deal with issues relating to the exclusion of women from the main stream socio-economic system.

### *Primary Level Recommendations*

Here recommendations and suggestions regarding conditions of the physical and socio-environment within the entire country and international destination countries are given.

Honest synergy between government, agencies and NGOs in Nigeria and in destination Western nations is needed. This is important due to the perceived divergence in conceptualisation of the phenomenon by both destination and origin countries. Such synergy will help to effectively combat the challenge with focus on key explanatory factors. Most developed Western nations need to discontinue anti-migrant immigration policies, or at least debates more honestly the negative and unanticipated consequences of current approaches. This is vital in view of my exploration that most Western policy options focusing on strict immigration laws and border control further generate new cases of trafficking rather than checking the practice. Distressed migrants should be accepted into Western countries with the intention of helping to give them a safe life. Where the migrants are ascertained as undeserving of admittance into such destination Western countries, they should be returned to source countries immediately upon rescue. Keeping them at migrant camps further exposes them to conscription by trafficking cartels as evidenced by my findings. Though, as reflected in the field finding, there is tension between - the West (most western countries) offering refuge, often leading to women getting drawn into sex work in supported accommodation, - camping victims at border points in Libya (also at risk of trafficking) - or returning them quickly to origin to face stigma and disapproval for failing to succeed in Europe as a migrant.

Evidences have shown that the focus of the dominant Western perspectives on criminality, often obscures the role of broader socio-economic issues in contributing to the vulnerability of victims. Therefore, this needs to be discouraged. The need for a comprehensive and effective framework of human rights protections for victims of trafficking to facilitate best practice and secure justice for the victims at both source (Nigeria) and destination countries (Europe) is paramount. Generally, rather than focusing resources and effort on criminalising migration and funding greater border controls, Western governments could invest in human trafficking prevention work that integrates such work into the broader development of human resources and the eradication of poverty in Africa and Nigeria in particular.

Similarly, affected Western politicians need to undertake research into understanding structural conditions and post conflict economies in countries of origins, with a view to encouraging recovery, rather than simply reacting to the side-effects of these conditions (CATRis, 2019).

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### **Footnotes**

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## *Appendix*

### **Appendix A**

#### **INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT**

Human Trafficking and Poverty in South-south Nigeria

#### **Dear Potential Participant**

I wish to invite you to participate in a research thesis study. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between trafficking in women for commercial sex abroad and poverty in South-south Nigeria; and to also identify if there are other contributory factors to the prevalence of human trafficking in the area; as well as to consider to what extent these explanatory factors are reflected in the official understandings and responses to the problem.

#### **Information**

I will be doing interviews, life stories and focus group discussion (FGD) sessions with various people in Ikpoba-okha in South-south Nigeria including selected ex-victims of human trafficking, selected relatives of victims of human trafficking, selected people living in the area and local government council representative of the area. I will also be engaging officials of National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons of Nigeria (NAPTIP), as well as selected non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Edo state. Also, the second part of the fieldwork will be carried out in the United Kingdom (UK) where government and NGO representatives will be interviewed. I will use audio tape to record conversations at both the interviews, the life stories and focus group discussions, so that it can be written down later.

These research activities will be carried out from September 2016 to May 2017. The interview sessions will last not more than 90 minutes per session, per participants. The life story will take between 60 to 90 minutes per session per participant. The focus group discussion will also be for about 60 to 90 minutes per session per group.

## **BENEFITS**

The outcome will help in understanding the contributory factors to the prevalence of human trafficking in the area. It will also contribute to understanding the opposition between western institutions and local stakeholders at source countries regarding the causes and characteristics of human trafficking. It will add to the existing literature on human trafficking. The research outcome will aid policy makers in responding to the challenges of human trafficking and issues of poverty in developing countries. Finally this research study is of great benefit because it is focusing on an area of the world where the central phenomenon- human trafficking is prevalent yet with no research attention.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

With your permission, excerpts from audiotapes and pictures of the various sessions will be included in my final report. If you withdraw from the study, any tapes or pictures or written words from you will be destroyed and not used in the final report.

As a participant in this research study, your identity will be protected and your responses will be kept confidential at all times. Your name and address will be omitted if i use any quote from you. Details of your contributions will be used in my final thesis report unless you request otherwise. Any information you provide will be securely kept in a password protected electronic storage device (my personal computer), and all stored data will be anonymised so that participants cannot be identified. At the end of the study all audio tapes will be deleted. Only myself, and my supervisors at the University of Stirling will have access to provided information.

## **CONTACT**

If you have any questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact me- Osasere Greg Igbinomwanhia, at the Department of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Stirling, Colin Bell Building, FK9 4LA, Stirling Scotland, United Kingdom, Tel-07440454356, email [o.g.igbinomwanhia@stir.ac.uk](mailto:o.g.igbinomwanhia@stir.ac.uk)

If you have questions regarding the conduct of this study or about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of Faculty of Social Sciences Ethics Committee, at Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Stirling, Stirling, Scotland, United Kingdom, Colin Bell Building, FK9 4LA, Stirling, Tel- +44(0)1786467695, email- [facultyofsocialsciences@stir.ac.uk](mailto:facultyofsocialsciences@stir.ac.uk)

## **PARTICIPATION**

Your participation in this study is voluntary, that is, you may wish to decline from participating if you like. You are free to withdraw from participating whenever you wish.

## **CONSENT**

I have read and been informed of the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in the study. (Please tick the dotted lines below where appropriate)

-----**YES I agree**

-----**NO, I do not agree**

## **Appendix B**

### **INFORMATION SHEET**

Human trafficking and poverty in South-south Nigeria

Researcher: Osasere Greg Igbinomwanhia

Contact Details:

Mobil Number- 07440454356

--Researcher's Photo-

Email Address- [o.g.igbinomwanhia@stir.ac.uk](mailto:o.g.igbinomwanhia@stir.ac.uk)

### **The Research Study**

I am Osasere Greg Igbinomwanhia, a PhD research student at the University of Stirling in Scotland, United Kingdom. I am carrying out a research study to explore the relationship between human trafficking and poverty in South-south Nigeria. In the study i hope to find out if trafficking of women abroad for commercial sex has something to do with poverty. I also wish to examine other contributory factors to the prevalence of the problem in the area; and to consider to what extent the explanatory factors are reflected in official understandings and responses to the challenge.

### **What Role You Will Play**

I am hoping that you will take part in this field work, either through being interviewed, or through participating in a focus group discussion session or through being an assistant on the field or by helping to direct access to other participants. Interviews will be recorded with audio tapes in order to make sure i have an accurate account of your opinion, experiences and contributions. You are not under compulsion to participate in the research or to respond to any

question you do not wish to. You are at liberty to stop or withdraw from the study at any time. Interviews will be conducted at your convenience and at a safe mutually agreed location.

### **Assurances of Confidentiality**

As a participant in this research study, your identity will be protected and your responses will be kept confidential at all times. Your name and address will be omitted if i use any quote from you. Details of your contributions will be used in my final thesis report unless you request otherwise. Any information you provide will be securely kept in a password protected electronic storage device (my personal computer), and all stored data will be anonymised so that participants cannot be identified. At the end of the study all audio tapes will be deleted. Only myself, and my supervisors at the University of Stirling will have access to provided information.

### **Use of Volunteered Information**

Provided information will be included in my final PhD thesis. Findings may also be used in academic journal articles and in conference presentations. The researcher is however willing to disclose to the appropriate authority any information provided that may be needed for use for official or legal purposes.

### **Benefits**

It is however my hope that this study will lead to the development of better understanding and responses to the problem of human trafficking in Nigeria and other developing countries of the world where it is prevalent. Written up policy/practice oriented summary can be obtained to help you or your organisation in the course of your determination to help solve the problems of human trafficking and poverty.

## APPENDIX C

### Interview Questions

The following presents the sorts of broad thematic questions that will inform the more detailed questions that will be asked during my field work. They are not necessarily the exact questions that will be posed, as the interviews will be designed in a more informal, semi-structured and free flowing pattern.

#### 1. What is it that leads to human trafficking in South-south Nigeria?

- (a) What do you think can make one to become a trafficking victim South-south Nigeria?
- (b) Do you think that the prevalence of human trafficking in the area is caused by any particular situation or condition?
- (c) What do you have to say about trafficking of women abroad in this area?
- (d) Is trafficking of women abroad for prostitution still a common occurrence in this area?
- (e) Can you please tell me a little bit about your life and how you found yourself in the hands of traffickers? (a life story question)

*Questions here will be responded to by categories 1 and 3 participants*

#### 2. What role do socio-cultural practices play in facilitating human trafficking in South-south Nigeria?

- (a) (i) Do you feel that the position of women in local culture and society e.g. the tradition that women are not allowed to inherit property, facilitate human trafficking in this area?
- (b) What other cultural traditions in the area might promote or prevent human trafficking in the area?
- (c) Do you feel gender inequality can push one to become a victim of trafficking for commercial sex abroad?
- (d) Are there other socio-cultural conditions that you think make trafficking of women for commercial sex abroad a common thing in the area?

*Questions here will be responded to by categories 2 and 3 participants*

**3. What role does poverty play in sustaining human trafficking in South-south Nigeria?**

- (a) Do you think trafficking of women abroad for prostitution has something to do with poverty?
- (b) Can you please explain how poverty can possibly lead to trafficking of women abroad for prostitution in this area?
- (c) Can you say if those who are trafficked abroad from this area and their relatives do well and benefit economically upon return?
- (d) Do you think poverty can make an individual to be involved in anything no matter the implication and why do you think so?

*Questions here will be responded to by categories 1, 2 and 3 participants*

**4. What informs global and local official understanding and conception of the cause of human trafficking in South-south Nigeria?**

- (a) What informs your understanding of the cause of human trafficking
- (b) How does this affect your response to the challenge?
- (c) How are you responding to it officially?
- (d) What is the philosophy behind your official response to it?
- (e) Do you consider it as a criminal pattern or a mere consequence of social dislocation arising from the weakness of society?

*Questions here will be responded to by category 4 participants*

**5. How does official understanding in turn shape practice responses?**

- (a) How does this affect practice responses?
- (b) Do you reflect this in response plans?
- (c) To what extent does this determine what you consider as ideal and the nature of your response?
- (d) How does your understanding of the contributing factors impact on your choice of response measures and dealing with victims and offenders?

*Questions here will be responded to by category 4 participants*

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