



Human Trafficking and Socio-Economic Deprivation Amongst Victims in Imo State

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the problem of human trafficking and its implications on the socio-economic deprivation of victims and their families in Imo state. The study was conducted amongst 70 purposively selected trafficked victims, 6 purposively selected social workers, 4 police men and 140 family members of trafficked victims. The Questionnaire instrument was the primary method of data collection, and data were analyzed with frequency tables in simple percentages and chi square statistics for hypothesis testing. The study revealed that trafficked position of victims predisposes them to socio-economic deprivation in form of labour exploitation, loss of household man power, reduction in household income, poor health outcomes and inability to access basic services. More so, the test of hypothesis indicated a significant relationship between trafficking and victim's labour exploitation, loss of manpower in victim's households, reduction of victim's household income and poor health status of victims. The study recommends that while victims need to be rehabilitated to cater for their socio-economic and psychological needs, mass public sensitization campaign on the ills of trafficking should be up-scaled and economic empowerment and poverty reduction programmes should be strengthened especially in rural areas to dissuade unsuspecting victims from being trafficked.

Keywords: Human Trafficking, Socio-Economic Deprivation, Victims, Imo State.

INTRODUCTION

The heinous crime of trafficking in persons has continued to generate enormous attention from the public, scholars, media, law enforcement agencies and government around the globe. The nature and trends in human trafficking has evolved over the decades and some scholars have described the phenomenon as modern slavery (Bay, 2012). It involves not only the coerced exploitation of others against their will, but in some cases trade in humans for financial benefits. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2012) reported that over 20.9 million people estimated to be in forced labor or sex trafficking globally, and the highest concentrations of trafficked people are in the Asian-Pacific Rim region (56%) and Africa (18%), whereas the lowest is in the Middle Eastern countries (3%). In Nigeria, human trafficking is not a new phenomenon as incidences of trafficking in persons has gradually increased over the decades. According to section 82 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act, 2015, "*trafficking or traffic in persons means the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse of power of a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person or debt bondage for the purpose of placing or holding the person whether for or not in involuntary servitude (domestic, sexual or reproductive) in forced or bonded labour, or in slavery-like conditions, the removal of organs or generally for exploitative purposes*". Studies have shown that most victims of human trafficking in Nigeria are women and children

(Hassan, 2012; UNICEF, 2006; Adepoju, 2005; UNIFEM, 2002). Women and children are known to be trafficked within Nigeria and outside the shores of the country in search of a better life in neighboring African countries, Europe, and the Middle East. Most of the women trafficked from Nigeria are forced into prostitution in their destination countries, while men and children are trafficked into forced labour, servitude and all forms of slave-like conditions (UNODC, 2006). Existing studies have linked human trafficking in developing countries like Nigeria to poor socio-economic conditions, poverty, massive unemployment, quest for greener pastures in other countries (Synder, 2012; Wheaton, Edward, & Thomas, 2010; Bogue, 2010; UNICEF, 2006). According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2014) human traffickers prey on people who are poor, isolated and weak. Issues such as disempowerment, social exclusion and economic vulnerability are the result of policies and practices that marginalise entire groups of people and make them particularly vulnerable to being trafficked. Drawing from the foregoing, while existing empirical and theoretical evidence has established that socio-economic deprivation is a major driver of human trafficking, little has been researched on the socio-economic implications of human trafficking on victims and their families. It is in the need to fill this gap in knowledge that this study examines how human trafficking constitutes socio-economic deprivation for trafficked victims in Imo state, Nigeria.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted the sequential exploratory mixed method research design which constituted the triangulation of both qualitative and quantitative methods. This involved the adoption of an initial qualitative study which helped the researchers explore the phenomenon under investigation. The themes that emanated from the initial qualitative study was later quantified and utilized for the subsequent quantitative study. The issue of human trafficking is very sensitive and identifying trafficked victims was herculean, as a result the researcher adopted the non-probability sampling technique through the snow-balling approach to identify and select participants for the study. Through this approach, the study involved 70 trafficked victims, 6 social workers from the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) desk office in Imo state ministry of Gender and Social Development, 4 police officers attached to the Imo state police command (Anti-trafficking unit) and 140 family members of trafficked victims, thereby constituting a total of 220 participants as sample size. Data collection involved the application of Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) for the qualitative study and the administration of 220 Structured Questionnaire for the quantitative study. Data analysis involved the application of content and thematic analysis for the qualitative data and the use of frequency tables and simple percentages for quantitative data. The Chi Square (χ^2) statistic was employed to test the hypotheses raised in the study. The formula for the Chi-square is stated thus: $(\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(o-e)^2}{e})$ where: \sum = Summation; o = Observed Frequency and e = Expected frequency. The Decision Rule for the chi-square (χ^2) test states thus: Accept null hypothesis if calculated value is less than the table value and reject hypothesis if the calculated value is greater than table value.

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

There were 220 participants in the study including 70 victims (constituting 31.8% of the sample), 140 family members (constituting 63.7% of the sample), 6 social workers from the NAPTIP desk office in the Imo state ministry of Gender and Social Development (constituting 2.7% of the sample) and 4 police officers (constituting 1.8% of the sample). The six social workers consist of four (4) females and two (2) males aged between 36-45 years of age and the police officers consisted of two (2) females and two (2) males. More so, the 70 victims who participated in the study were all females aged between 12 and 35 years of age. This tends to show that more women are trafficked in the study area than men. This corroborates the position of NAPTIP in their annual report for 2017 that 95% out of the 65 victims rescued for that year are females.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

<i>Gender</i>		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
	<i>Male</i>	70	31.8%
	<i>Female</i>	150	68.2%
	<i>Total</i>	220	100
<hr/>			
<i>Age</i>			
	<i>12-25</i>	72	32.7%
	<i>26-35</i>	58	26.4%
	<i>36-45</i>	49	22.3%
	<i>46 and above</i>	41	18.6%
	<i>Total</i>	220	100
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<i>Respondent Categories</i>			
	<i>Trafficked Victims</i>	70	31.8%
	<i>Social Workers</i>	6	2.7%
	<i>Police</i>	4	1.8%
	<i>Victim's Family Members</i>	140	63.7%
	<i>Total</i>	220	100
<hr/>			
<i>Education</i>			
	<i>Primary</i>	68	30.9%
	<i>Secondary</i>	112	50.9%
	<i>Tertiary</i>	40	18.2%
	<i>Total</i>	220	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Also, the general gender distribution of the respondents reveals as indicated in table 4.1 show that while men constituted 31.8% of sample, women constituted 68.2% of the sample. More so, the gender distribution indicates that while 32.7% are between the age category of 12-25 years, 26.4% are aged between 26-35 years, 22.3% are aged between 36-45 years and 18.6% if the sample are above 46 years. In addition, analysis of the educational levels of the respondents reveals that while 18.2% of the respondents have attained tertiary education, 50.9% of them have attained secondary education, while 30.9% have attained primary education.

Human Trafficking and Socio-Economic Deprivation on Victims

The central objective of the study was to investigate how human trafficking constitutes socio-economic deprivation for victims and their families. The analysis of interviews with respondents produced four themes in this regard namely: *labour exploitation, loss of household manpower, loss in household income, and poor health outcomes*. These themes basically summarize the opinions of respondents on the effect of their trafficked conditions on their socio-economic wellbeing.

i. Labour Exploitation

The theme labour exploitation refers to all sorts of forced work and unpaid services respondents provided to their traffickers. Findings from the study revealed that forms of labour exploitation respondents identified include sexual, labour and caretaking exploitation and so on. Participants narratives indicates that they were been exploited in several ways unique to each individual, however a generic form of exploitation amongst the respondents was that most complained after providing sexual services, they were forced to do all kinds of domestic works which amounts to over labour and exhaustion. For instance, victim 25 recounting her ordeals has this to say:

“After providing sexual services to my clients, I would be asked to wash dishes, clean the house and do some domestic services without extra pay”(KII, 25).

More so, labour exploitation was also used to control the victims as they were seldom paid for their services. The study show that often times traffickers and pimps confiscate monies earned by victims leaving them with fewer resources thereby constituting socio-economic deprivation and reducing their chances to escape. Victim 56 recounting this situation posited thus:

“Most of the times I never get any money, they always check me to take monies that some clients paid to me directly, in fact because of this treatment I couldn’t go anywhere as I was largely dependent on them. Instead they always bring me drugs and if I refuse they curse and beat me” (KII, Victim 56).

The study shows that this strategy of exploitation increases the dependence of victims on their traffickers and pimps as they are always made to be indebted to their exploiters. Victim 5 describing this situation stated thus:

“While I was in Italy, my madam that brought me from Nigeria made me understand that I am to pay her a very huge sum of money about \$5,000 to cover for all the expenses she has incurred on me.. She forced me into prostitution in Italy and also turned me to a domestic slave in her home where I clean, cook and wash every day without any pay... That woman ripped off every single penny I worked for in Italy” (KII, Victim 5).

Drawing from the foregoing, the study revealed that labour exploitation of trafficked victims through unpaid sexual labour and domestic work constitutes a pervasive form of socio-economic deprivation.

ii. Loss Of Household Manpower

Another prominent theme that emanated from the study is victim’s perception of their trafficked situation as constituting a loss of manpower for their households/families. The findings show that most of the victims were trafficked from rural communities across Imo state and before they were trafficked they constituted a major source of man power for their families and households. Buttressing this point victim 12 has this to say:

“Before they took me from the village to Abuja, I was huge contributor to the domestic work force of our family. I helped my parents in their farm work and also help my mum sell her produce in the market” (KII, Victim 12).

In a similar vein, victim 9 recounted her contribution to her family before being trafficked with the following narrative:

“My mum had a small drinking bar in our town here in Owerri, I assisted her in running the bar, I go to market for her to prepare food, cook, wash and clean the bar on a daily basis. I was a great support for the family business” (KII, Victim 9).

In view of the foregoing, the respondents argue that being trafficked out of their homes and communities to be exploited elsewhere in other parts of the country and outside the shores of the country constituted economic deprivation for their families as their contributions to the well-being of their families have been abruptly halted by their slavery conditions. Describing this situation, victim 63 reported thus:

“Due to my trafficked situation, my contributions to my family was no longer forthcoming, I couldn’t help my parents in their livelihood activities as I used to before and the burden on them were increasingly much” (KII, Victim 63).

Similarly, victim 33 also observed that:

“I regret ever travelling to Lybia, I initially thought my traveling will provide me a good job so I can make money and take care of my ageing parents in the village. Instead I was forced into slavery, and the conditions of my poor parents worsened because I wasn’t available to help them do farm work and so on” (KII, 33).

These narratives were popular amongst the respondents and this tend to show that trafficking in persons constitutes socio-economic deprivation for especially poor rural households who loses their domestic workforce to the trafficking industry with little or no return or benefit accruable to the families.

iii. Loss in Household Income

Related to loss of household manpower is reduction in household income of households of trafficked victims. The finding from the study shows that trafficking has further worsened the socio-economic conditions of the victims and their households. This is largely as a result of low man power for household livelihood activities and unpaid labour exploitation victims are continually exposed to. Addressing this issue, most respondents are of the view that their trafficked situation instead of improving their household income level has actually constituted decline and poor socio-economic outcomes. Victim 29 narrating her experiences regarding this issue has this to say:

“Going to Lagos to hustle has not in any way either improved my socio-economic status or that of my family. In fact while I was back home helping my parents in their business, they made more money

than while I was absent. They had to even hire external labour to do the work I was supposed to do for them” (KII, 29).

More so, victim 65 summarized this situation in the following way:

“The money I made from my hustle while in Italy I could not even send any back home to my family, instead my madam took all of it from me... To make matters worse my parents kept complaining things are going worse in the village since I left... The truth is that the income drastically reduced for me and my family due to my condition as a trafficked victim” (KII, Victim 65).

Drawing from the foregoing, it becomes deducible that trafficking has constituted socio-economic deprivation for victims and their households due to the negative impact it has on household income thereby making it rather difficult for victims and their households to meet their basic socio-economic livelihood needs.

iv. Poor Health Outcome

Another theme that emanated from the study is the health outcomes of victims of trafficking and its effects on the socio-economic conditions of victims and their households. Findings from the study revealed that trafficking has severe impact on the health and well-being of the victims. The study shows that the prevalence of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse amongst victims negatively impacts their physical, reproductive, and mental health. More so, the coercion they face with the use of drugs and alcohol further diminish their socio-economic well-being and limits their access to health and other support services. This is evident in the post-trafficking physical and psychological problems most respondents are currently faced with. The findings show that most of the respondents reported to have sustained physical injuries and suffer from severe headaches, dizzy spells, back pain, memory difficulty, stomach pain, pelvic pain and gynecological infections/sexually transmitted infections. More so, some of the respondents complained of having mental health problems and psychological traumas especially depression while some have even had suicidal thoughts.

Describing their health conditions, some of the respondents have this to say:

“The beatings and psychological abuse I received from those men in Lybia hunts me till today... I can't sleep at night I always have a flash of how they raped me in that place... Sometimes I just feel like killing myself” (KII, Victim 59).

Similarly, victim 66 reported:

“I have been infected with sexually transmitted infections of several kinds by the several clients I have, sometimes I feel terrible body pains and abdominal pains, but I thank God am still alive, and I am out of that business now” (KII, Victim 66).

Buttressing the foregoing points made by the victims, the social workers interviewed posited that the victims are vulnerable to all forms of physical, mental and psychological health problems due to the inhuman treatments they receive from their traffickers and pimps. In their focus group discussion, they argued thus:

“Most of these girls rescued and repatriated still needs to be well rehabilitated before they will be reintegrated back into the society. Most suffer from physical and mental health problems and some have all forms of sexually transmitted infections arising from their exploitation and abuse” (FGD, Social Workers).

The findings from the study also indicate that the poor health status of the victims of trafficking has in turn negatively impacted their socio-economic well-being. More so, their poor financial status due to the exploitation of their labour power has further hindered their ability to have access to health care providers and other social support systems which further constitutes socio-economic deprivation for the victims.

Test of Hypothesis

The four themes that emanated from the qualitative study was quantified and utilized as proxies for socio-economic deprivation arising from human trafficking. This culminated in the development of four hypotheses which forms the basis for the quantitative aspect of the study.

Hypothesis 1

H_A: There is a significant relationship between human trafficking and victim's labour exploitation

H₀: There is no significant relationship between human trafficking and victim's labour exploitation

Table 2 below provides data on responses for whether human trafficking constitutes labour exploitation of victims. Data show that, 100 of the respondents strongly agreed with the notion, 58 of the respondents agree, 40 of the respondents disagree, while 22 of them strongly disagree.

Table 2: Human Trafficking constitutes labour exploitation of victims

<i>Respondents</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
<i>Male</i>	40	8	15	7	70
<i>Female</i>	60	50	25	15	150
<i>TOTAL</i>	100	58	40	22	220

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The data in table 3 below is further used for the chi-square computation and test of hypothesis 1.

Table 3: Chi-Square computation for hypothesis 1

<i>Respondents</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>O-E</i>	<i>(O-E)2</i>	<i>(o-e/e)2</i>
<i>Male</i>	40	31.8	8.2	67.24	2.11
	8	18.5	-10.5	110.25	5.96
	15	12.73	2.27	5.15	0.40
	7	7	0	0	0
<i>Female</i>	60	68.18	-8.18	66.91	0.98
	50	39.55	10.54	109.20	2.76
	25	27.27	-2.27	5.15	0.19
	15	15	0	0	0
<i>Chi-Square</i>					12.4

Source: Compiled by Authors

Research Decision

Calculated $\chi^2 = 12.4$

Critical $\chi^2 = 7.81$ (from χ^2 table df = 3) @ = .05

Calculated $\chi^2 >$ Critical χ^2 @ =0.5

Therefore, it is applicable since data are statistically significant.

Result: Ho is rejected. There is a significant relationship between human trafficking and victim’s labour exploitation.

Interpretation: There is sufficient evidence to prove that human trafficking significantly result in victims’ labour exploitation.

Hypothesis 2

H_A: There is a significant relationship between human trafficking and loss of manpower in victim’s households

H_o: There is no significant relationship between human trafficking and loss of manpower in victim’s households

Table 4 below provides data on responses for whether human trafficking has resulted in loss of manpower in victims’ households. From the table, data reveal that 102 of the respondents strongly agree to the assertion, 56 of the respondents agree, 42 of the respondents disagree, while 20 of them strongly disagree.

Table 4: Human trafficking has resulted to loss of manpower in the households of trafficked victims

<i>Respondents</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
<i>Male</i>	23	23	22	2	70
<i>Female</i>	79	33	20	18	150
<i>TOTAL</i>	102	56	42	20	220

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The data in Table 5 below is further used for the chi-square computation and test of hypothesis 2.

Table 5: Chi-Square computation for hypothesis 2

<i>Respondents</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>O-E</i>	<i>(O-E)2</i>	<i>(o-e/e)2</i>
<i>Male</i>	23	32.45	-9.45	89.30	2.75
	23	17.82	5.18	26.83	1.51
	22	13.36	8.64	74.65	5.58
	2	6.36	-4.36	19.01	2.99
<i>Female</i>	79	69.54	9.46	89.52	1.29
	33	38.2	-5.2	27.04	0.71
	20	28.64	-8.64	74.65	2.61
	18	13.64	4.36	19.01	1.39
<i>Chi-Square</i>					18.83

Source: Compiled by Authors

Research Decision

Calculated $\chi^2 = 18.83$

Critical $\chi^2 = 7.81$ (from χ^2 table df = 3) @ = .05

Calculated $\chi^2 >$ Critical χ^2 @ = 0.5

Therefore, it is applicable since data are statistically significant.

Result: Ho is rejected. There is a significant relationship between human trafficking and loss of manpower in victim's households.

Interpretation: There is sufficient evidence to prove that human trafficking significantly result in loss of manpower in victim's households.

Hypothesis 3

H_A: There is a significant relationship between human trafficking and reduction in victims' household income

H₀: There is no significant relationship between human trafficking and reduction in victims' household income

Table 6 below provides data on responses for whether human trafficking has resulted in reduction in victims' household income. From the table, data reveal that 132 of the respondents strongly agreed to the assertion, 49 of the respondents agree, 29 of the respondents disagree, while 10 of them strongly disagree.

Table 6: Human trafficking has resulted in reduction of victims' household income

<i>Respondents</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
<i>Male</i>	35	15	12	8	70
<i>Female</i>	97	34	17	2	150
<i>TOTAL</i>	132	49	29	10	220

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The data in Table 7 below is further used for the chi-square computation and test of hypothesis 3.

Table 7: Chi-Square computation for hypothesis 3

<i>Respondents</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>O-E</i>	<i>(O-E)²</i>	<i>(o-e/e)²</i>
<i>Male</i>	35	42	-7	49	1.17
	15	15.59	-0.59	0.35	0.02
	12	9.23	2.77	7.67	0.8
	8	3.18	4.82	23.23	7.31
<i>Female</i>	97	90	7	49	0.5
	34	33.41	0.59	0.35	0.01
	17	19.77	-2.77	7.67	0.39
	2	6.82	-4.82	23.23	3.41
<i>Chi-Square</i>					13.61

Source: Compiled by Authors

Research Decision

Calculated $\chi^2 = 13.61$

Critical $\chi^2 = 7.81$ (from χ^2 table df = 3) @ = .05

Calculated $\chi^2 >$ Critical χ^2 @ =0.5

Therefore, it is applicable since data are statistically significant.

Result: Ho is rejected. There is a significant relationship between human trafficking and reduction in victims' household income.

Interpretation: There is sufficient evidence to prove that human trafficking significantly result in reduction in victims' household income.

Hypothesis 4

H_A: There is a significant relationship between human trafficking and poor health status of victims

H_o: There is no significant relationship between human trafficking and poor health status of victims

Table 8 below provides data on responses for whether human trafficking has resulted in reduction in victims' household income. From the table, data reveal that 131 of the respondents strongly agreed with the assertion, 49 of the respondents agree, 24 of the respondents disagree, while 16 of them strongly disagree.

Table 8: Human trafficking has resulted in poor health outcomes of victims

<i>Respondents</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
<i>Male</i>	33	15	13	9	70
<i>Female</i>	98	34	11	7	150
<i>TOTAL</i>	131	49	24	16	220

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The data in Table 9 below is further used for the chi-square computation and test of hypothesis 4.

Table 9: Chi-Square computation for hypothesis 4

<i>Respondents</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>O-E</i>	<i>(O-E)2</i>	<i>(o-e/e)2</i>
<i>Male</i>	33	41.68	-8.68	75.34	1.81
	15	15.59	-0.59	0.348	0.02
	13	7.64	5.36	28.73	3.76
	9	5.09	3.91	15.29	3
<i>Female</i>	98	89.31	8.69	75.51	0.85
	34	33.41	0.59	0.35	0.01
	11	16.36	-5.36	28.73	1.76
	7	10.91	-3.91	15.29	1.4
<i>Chi-Square</i>					12.61

Source: Compiled by Authors

Research Decision

Calculated $\chi^2 = 12.61$

Critical $\chi^2 = 7.81$ (from χ^2 table df = 3) @ = .05

Calculated $\chi^2 >$ Critical χ^2 @ =0.5

Therefore, it is applicable since data are statistically significant.

Result: Ho is rejected. There is a significant relationship between human trafficking and poor health status of victims.

Interpretation: There is sufficient evidence to prove that human trafficking significantly result in reduction in poor health status of victims.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the problem of human trafficking and its implications on the socio-economic deprivation of victims and their households. The findings derivable from the study revealed that human trafficking constitutes socio-economic deprivation for victims and their families by means of labour exploitation, loss of household manpower, loss in household income, and poor health outcomes. Based on the foregoing, the paper concludes that the interplay of several impacts of human trafficking on the victims be it social, psychological, or health may not only deprive victims of basic needs of life, but disempowers them and predisposes them to further subjugation from their traffickers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. There is urgent need for trafficked victims to be tracked and rehabilitated to cater for their socio-economic and psychological needs.
2. There is need for the NAPTIP and sister agencies to engage in mass sensitization of the public especially in the rural areas of the ill of trafficking so as to dissuade unsuspecting victims from being trafficked.
3. Poor socio-economic conditions have been identified as both causes and consequences of human trafficking; hence poverty reduction and economic empowerment policies must be pursued to arrest the situation.
4. There is an urgent need to reduce the political, social, legal, and financial barriers that impede measures that promote the wellbeing of women at risk of being trafficked, as well as those that hinder the provision of adequate health interventions for those who are trafficked.

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