



## Human Trafficking and Child Education in Nigeria

Goddy Uwa Osimen<sup>1</sup>, Akande Clement Olukayode<sup>2</sup>, Grace Olufolake O. Alofun<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Political Science and International Relations, Covenant University, Ota.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Public Administration, Rufus Giwa Polytechnics, Owo- Ondo State.

<sup>3</sup>Institute of Technology-Enhancement & Digital Humanities, FUTA- Nigeria.

### ABSTRACT

*This study examines human trafficking and its impact on child education. Human trafficking has had various effects on child education. On this note, the major aim of this work was to explore the relationship between human trafficking and child education, the causes of human trafficking, the effects of human trafficking on child education and ways the government can curb human trafficking and improve child education thereby providing suitable solutions to the problem at hand. The theory used for this project work is conflict theory, conflict theory explains how the dominant classes maintain their power over lower income and ethnic minority groups. The research method used for this study was the qualitative research method. An in-depth interview was conducted, and the opinions of the respondents were well articulated and transcribed. Three respondents participated. The result revealed that the causes of human trafficking are poverty, lack of education, ineffective law/unenforced law, unemployment, and ignorance. Also, the research showed that there is a relationship between human trafficking and child education in Lagos State. The government should make laws stronger, work together with other countries to stop trafficking, campaigns should be created in order to teach people about the dangers of human trafficking in order to curb human trafficking and promote child education.*

**KEYWORDS:** Child Education, Human Trafficking, Nigeria, Children, Violence

### INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking has historical parallels with the exploitation of black Africans in previous centuries, indicating that it is not a new phenomenon (Lee, 2013). The forced movement of people is as old as the laws of supply and demand. What is new is the growing scale of human trafficking and the realization that little or nothing is being done to stop it. Human trafficking has raised serious social and political concerns in recent years. It is widely believed to cover a variety of crimes and abuses related to the recruitment, movement and sale of people in various exploitative conditions around the world. Despite the fact that human trafficking has long existed in various forms, it has only recently been acknowledged as a serious social issue, as shown by public discourse and media coverage (Farrell and Fahy 2009; Gulati 2011; Weitzer 2007).

Human trafficking is defined differently, but they all share three key characteristics. These include the intention or purpose to exploit, the illegal activities carried out, and the approach taken. Human trafficking may be intentional rather than accidental and may not be intended to be mutually beneficial, according to the intention to exploit the (United Nations Palermo protocol, 2000). The idea of criminality or illegal activity points to the subversion of victims' rights

and violation of both national and international mechanisms designed to protect those rights. The approach taken by the perpetrators is important because it shows how victims are incorporated into the trafficking system. Illegal activities refer to the steps taken, and methods emphasize how victims are made into inputs in the system of trafficking, the intent can be thought of as the output (Hartmann, 2018).

Human trafficking is understood as a form of slavery (Bales 2005; Ould 2004). Human trafficking as a modern form of slavery is not characterized by legal ownership of one human being by another or long-term servitude, but rather by temporary ownership, debt bondage, labour, and overexploitation contracts in the global economy (Bales 2000; Bales 2005).

Human trafficking, sometimes known as modern slavery, takes many different forms. Sex trafficking, or the sale of women and children as prostitutes, is the most prevalent kind of human trafficking. The sale of men, women, and children for forced work with little to no payment is known as labor trafficking. The use of children as soldiers, war brides, and organ harvesting are further types of trafficking (Barrows and Finger, 2008). Victimization and criminology are useful tools for studying the minds of victims and system protagonists when applied to the study of human trafficking.



Although victims may be taken captive or enter the system voluntarily or involuntarily, they ultimately find themselves at the mercy of human trafficking perpetrators. Through the system, victims may sustain permanent psychological and emotional harm.

According to the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (2000), human trafficking includes the recruitment, transfer, reception or harboring of persons through force, threats or other deceptive practices, kidnapping, coercion, fraud, abuse of power or vulnerability, position, or receiving or giving payment or wages to obtain that person's consent to control that other person for the purpose of exploitation.

Human trafficking is a serious crime and a serious violation of human rights. Every year thousands of men, women and children fall into the hands of traffickers at home and abroad. Almost every country in the world is affected by human trafficking, be it the country of origin, transit or destination of the victims. Trafficking in human beings can take place anywhere as long as the surrounding area has vulnerable conditions. According to Shelley (2010), human trafficking is seen as one of the most dynamic activities of international criminal organizations. Human trafficking is condemned by international conventions as a violation of human rights. Despite this condemnation, trafficking in persons still remains rampant in the society.

However, human trafficking encompasses the exploitation of vulnerable school-age youths, particularly those with unstable family circumstances or limited social support. Studies reveal that children as young as 11 to 14 years old are trafficked into the commercial sex trade. (SDCOE, 2021). When children are trafficked, they are often forced into harmful and unsafe work that jeopardizes their health, safety, and values. As a result, they are unable to attend school, which deprives them of the chance to create a better future for themselves (UNICEF, 2016). The right to learn is a component of a child's right to education. Nelson Mandela famously remarked that "education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Education and knowledge of trafficking in persons among all members of society are key to beating human traffickers (Chutikul, 2011).

## **OPERATIONALIZATION OF CONCEPTS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Human trafficking, commonly referred to as trafficking in persons, is the crime of forcing or coercing a person to engage in sexual activity for profit or for the provision of work or services. Coercion can be mental or physical, covert, or overt. Regardless of whether coercion, deception or force was used, the commercial exploitation of children always constitutes human trafficking (The United States department of justice, 2020). Humans do not have to cross borders for human trafficking to take place. The movement of people defines human trafficking, and it can take place

within a single nation or even within a single community (Anti-slavery, 2016). Human trafficking occurs in all parts of the world: people are sold, bought and traded like goods. Victims of human trafficking fall into the hands of traffickers through deception, coercion or kidnapping (UNHCR, 2020).

The act, the method, and the purpose are the three main components of the crime of human trafficking. Traffickers use a variety of ways to keep their victims under control, including physical and sexual abuse, blackmail, emotional manipulation, and the removal of official documents. The victim may be exploited at home, while migrating, or in a foreign nation (UNODC). Regardless of race, nationality, gender, age, or economic standing, anyone can become a victim of human trafficking in today's world. Social media and the internet have suddenly made it easier for human trafficking. The victims of traffickers may not even recognize themselves as victims; instead, they are used as control tools. (Hannah Gould, 2017).

## **Human Trafficking in Nigeria**

Nigeria is counted among the countries with a significant prevalence of human trafficking. The country faces the serious issue of millions of young Nigerian women and girls being vulnerable to human trafficking. This vulnerability arises from factors such as gender imbalance, poverty, high unemployment rates, cultural bias against women, deprivation, and other related causes. It is important to note that the global exploitation industry generates more than \$32 billion by victimizing around 27 million people, with over 70% being women and girls (Ismaila and Ivy, 2020). The 2016 Global Slavery Index Report indicates that there are over 875,500 Nigerian victims. From a personal perspective, the statistics may seem relatively low, emphasizing the need for government and independent organizations to collaborate in gathering accurate data on this heinous crime (United Nations, 2017).

Nigerian women and girls who fall victim to trafficking are primarily recruited for domestic servitude and sex trafficking, while boys are often coerced into working on plantations in commercial farming, construction, quarries, mines, or engaging in petty crimes and the drug trade. These Nigerian victims are transported to various countries in West and Central Africa, including Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Benin, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Gabon, Guinea, as well as South Africa. Edo and Delta States are major sources where women and girls, mainly, are subjected to forced prostitution and trafficked predominantly to Italy (Olujuwon, 2008), as well as Spain, Scotland, the Netherlands, Germany, Turkey, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, Ireland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Greece, and Russia. The trafficking of young Nigerian women to Europe for sexual exploitation represents one of the most enduring trafficking flows due to its sophisticated organization and challenging detection (UN Global Report, 2014). Victims of the sex trade and forced labor are also transported to

North Africa (Libya, Algeria, and Morocco), the Middle East (Saudi Arabia), and Central Asia (ILO 2006). An important characteristic of the Nigerian trafficking system is the use of charms or threats of voodoo curses by traffickers to control Nigerian victims and coerce them into prostitution (Siddhert, 2015). The Nigerian National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons reports that approximately 90 percent of girls trafficked to Europe are subjected to “oaths of secrecy” at shrines (Wilmot, 2012). In other words, these young women are often either willing or enticed by the promise of a better life to engage in prostitution abroad. Nigeria is also a destination for victims of human trafficking from neighboring African countries such as Togo, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, Benin, Liberia, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Ghana (Akpmera, 2009). Boys are primarily forced to work in Nigeria’s granite mines, while women and young girls are coerced into prostitution or exploitative domestic work. As a transit country, Nigeria serves as a hub for the distribution of trafficked individuals to West Africa, Gabon, and Cameroon. Additionally, Nigeria acts as a transit point for trafficked persons from the Republic of Benin and Togo en route to Europe and the Middle East. Over the past two decades, there has been a rise in internal trafficking of Nigerian women and children within the country itself (UNESCO, 2006). A growing number of people are trafficked from rural communities to urban areas such as Lagos, Abeokuta, Abuja, Ibadan, Kano, Kaduna, Calabar, and Port Harcourt. Trafficking within these regions is primarily for exploitative domestic and farm labor, prostitution, or ritualistic purposes (International Movement against All Forms of Discrimination Racism, 2015) (United Nations, 2017).

Aristotle defined education as the process of developing a healthy mind in a healthy body. It refines man’s faculties, especially his mind, and enables him to enjoy the meditation of ultimate truth, goodness, and beauty, which is essentially perfect happiness. Education, in accordance with Tagore, is the broadest path to solving all issues. Education is defined as the conscious, methodical, and ongoing process of imparting, provoking, or acquiring knowledge, values, attitudes, abilities, or sensibility, as well as any learning that arises from the process (Cremin, Public Education, p. 27). Education is an intentional activity, as this broad definition suggests. Additionally, it sees education as a procedure rather than a physical location. It is an intentional action that can take place in many different contexts, not just in establishments with the name “school.”(Barry Chazan, 2020). Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights identifies education as a human right that children have the right to learn. In addition to stating that technical and professional education should be “generally available,” it also states that higher education should be “equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.” Education should be free and mandatory. Since low-income potential is a major contributing factor to poverty, poor education has a detrimental influence on people’s life and the lives of their families, especially their children. Additionally, there are more cases of trafficking

in occupations that don’t need a degree. A good education can help people find better employment and stay away from situations that might lead to exploitation (Emmaline Huberty, 2019)

Education is essential for establishing environmental and ethical awareness, values and attitudes, skills, and behavior compatible with sustainable development, as well as for effective participation by the public in decision-making (UNESCO, 1992). According to the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, education is not only a means to acquire knowledge but also a catalyst for social and economic development. It empowers individuals, promotes social cohesion, reduces inequalities, and enhances economic productivity (UNESCO, 2020). Education equips individuals with the necessary skills and competencies to actively participate in society, make informed decisions, and contribute to their communities (OECD, 2019). Moreover, education fosters critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities, which are essential for addressing global challenges and promoting innovation (UNESCO, 2015).

### **Education in Nigeria**

Education continues to play a crucial role in the growth and development of nations, including Nigeria. Around the world, countries, especially developing nations, strive to enhance the quality of their education systems. Nigeria is no exception and has undergone a significant shift towards achieving high-quality education for its population. With a history of British colonization, Nigeria witnessed the introduction of formal or Western education on December 19, 1842, in Badagry by Mr. and Mrs. William De Graft and Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. (Tete and Matthew, 2020). Their primary objective was to provide missionary education to convert the local population to Christianity. These missionary organizations actively pursued their mission, incorporating religious interpretations into various subjects of instruction. The Bible often served as the main textbook, while moral education was emphasized to instill exemplary values in students (NTI, 2007).

The Nigerian educational system is overseen and managed by the federal, state, and local governments. Education falls under the shared responsibility of these authorities. The Federal Ministry of Education plays a role in setting national policies and ensuring quality control across the education system. It is also responsible for overseeing higher education at the federal level. State governments are in charge of administering secondary school education, while local governments handle basic education within their jurisdiction. Nigeria’s educational system comprises three levels: primary school education (lasting nine years), post-basic/senior secondary education (spanning three years), and higher education which lasts for four to six years, depending on the program of study (Samuel and Jacob, 2020).

Conflict theory, originating in the late 19th century through the work of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (Hutchison,



2013), focuses on examining power structures and disparities, specifically how power imbalances contribute to social inequality (Hutchison, 2013; Parillo, 2012; Rössel, 2013). Based on the ideas of Marx, Hobbes, and Machiavelli, conflict theory analyzes power imbalances between people or social groupings. It implies that while competing for riches and power, individuals are naturally hostile. The Civil Rights Movement questioned the predominant roles of Whites and men, which helped the argument gain progress. Conflict is a fundamental aspect of family interactions, and conflict theory acknowledges that conflict is an inevitable outcome of social interaction. Positive conflict, on the other hand, can trigger beneficial change and problem-solving. The objective is to stop disagreement before it damages someone permanently or interferes with one's own interests. Family split, divorce, and communication failures can result from unresolved disagreement. Power, influence, and resource conflicts are the causes of conflict. (Paige and Frederick).

Conflict theory aims to explain why and how social inequality, power imbalances, and oppression occur in the context of human trafficking and human rights. Barner, Okech, and Camp (2014) show how factors like sexism, racism, and classism contribute to human rights violations such as child brides, sex trafficking, and organ trafficking. These violations are fueled by socioeconomic disparities not only between different classes but also globally between developed and underdeveloped nations. Similarly, a functionalist perspective questions the reasons behind and the role of oppression. It suggests that in the past, gender roles existed to meet the needs of society, with men performing labor and wage-earning tasks while women focused on homemaking and nurturing (Parillo, 2012). Some argue that this still holds true today. To address human rights violations, it is crucial to understand the function they serve within society and then work towards creating a new harmony without such violations. For instance, labor trafficking provides cheap labor for higher profits, sex trafficking caters to the demand for sex and benefits pimps, child soldiers serve militant groups during conflicts, and organ trafficking supplies a limited resource to those in need. By examining the functions of human rights violations, it becomes possible to intervene and prevent them by addressing the underlying needs. (Meshelemiah, 2013).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The exploratory research design was chosen for the purpose of this study. The selected research project is appropriate as the study is exploratory in nature as the research aims to better understand the experiences of victims of human trafficking and its impact on the education of children in Lagos State. The interview would help to know the opinions of people who are experts in the fields that has to do with human trafficking. The number of observations used to calculate estimates for a certain population is known as the sample size. The sample size is chosen from the population and 4 people will be selected. The researcher has selected

Lagos State as the human trafficking victim sample frame for this study. This is due to the fact that Lagos State, known as the center of excellence, has many cases of human trafficking. The sample technique to be used is the simple random sampling technique.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with individuals who have a knowledge of human trafficking and also victims of human trafficking. Open-ended questions were asked. For the responders to cooperate, a nondisclosure and confidentiality agreement was required. Secondary data was also utilized; it was gathered from journals, websites, and other relevant items. In addition to helping the researcher understand the research topic, this would provide insight into the experiences of victims of human trafficking. For this study, the chosen data analysis approach will be thematic content analysis, which is utilized to examine qualitative data. This particular method enables the researcher to convert qualitative data into numerical form.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Relationship between Human Trafficking and Child Education in Nigeria**

This research examines human trafficking and emphasizes the value of education in putting an end to it. When someone is compelled to labor or have sex against their will, it is called human trafficking. The meaning might signify different things to different people. Prevention of human trafficking requires education. It aids in understanding the dangers and deceitful practices of traffickers. Children may learn about human trafficking in schools, and everyone can be informed through public awareness campaigns. People who are educated are better able to spot indicators of human trafficking, understand their rights, and make wise decisions. Children can feel protected in schools, and education aids in the rebuilding of lives after a disaster. The main way to fight human trafficking is through education.

### **Causes of Human Trafficking in Nigeria**

According to the study's participants, there are several reasons why people get trafficked. Poverty is a big influence, since people in desperate circumstances may think that moving overseas will give them greater chances and financial stability. As people who are ignorant of the strategies employed by traffickers are more prone to fall into their traps, lack of education also increases susceptibility. Traffickers can operate more freely without being stopped because of weak enforcement and unenforced regulations. A person may become vulnerable to trafficking if they leave their job to look for work elsewhere due to unemployment. . Finally, ignorance about the dangers of trafficking increases the risk of becoming a victim. To address this issue, it is important to tackle poverty, improve education, strengthen law enforcement, and raise awareness about human trafficking.

### **Effects of Human Trafficking on Child Education in Nigeria**

Human trafficking has a big impact on children's education.

It prevents them from going to school and forces them to work instead. This makes them miss out on learning and affects them physically and emotionally. Some children are promised jobs abroad, but they don't realize that they are being trafficked. This is really bad because education is important for kids to grow and have a better future. We need to stop human trafficking so that children can go to school and learn in a safe place.

### **Ways Government can curb Human Trafficking to Promote Child Education in Nigeria**

One person who works for the government said that children who have been trafficked face many challenges. They may become violent and have psychological problems because of what they went through. Some of them are forced to do dangerous things like hard labor and sexual exploitation, which can harm their health and shorten their life. They also suffer from emotional abuse and may struggle to be good citizens in the future.

Another person said that those who have been trafficked may face stigma when they come back to their communities. People may treat them differently because of what happened to them.

Another person said that trafficked children have a lot of problems when it comes to going to school. They may feel scared, miss a lot of school, not have the right documents, not understand the language, and be treated poorly because of what they experienced. To help them, it's important to provide special support, like talking to someone about their feelings, helping them catch up in school, finding flexible ways for them to learn, and getting legal help when needed. Schools, child protection agencies, and other people who help children need to work together to solve these problems.

### **Relationship between Human Trafficking and Child Education in Nigeria**

The first research question introduces and explains what human trafficking all is about. The first question shows peoples perspectives on human trafficking. There is various perception about what human trafficking entails. Human trafficking involves compelling or coercing a person to provide labor or services, or to engage in commercial sex acts. The coercion can be subtle or overt, physical or psychological. Exploitation of a minor for commercial sex is human trafficking, regardless of whether any form of force, fraud, or coercion was used (The United States Department of Justice, 2020). Various respondents were asked what they understood by human trafficking. The question goes thus "What is your perspective on Human Trafficking?" One of the respondents was asked about his perspective on human trafficking.

"Human trafficking is when people are forced to do labor or commercial sex for other people or traffickers or the act of taking people by force to do free labor or commercial sex" (Ministry of education staff 1 /Lagos/,2023).

According to the UNODC (2020) human trafficking is the act of obtaining individuals by coercion, fraud, or deception for the purpose of exploitation for financial gain. This crime occurs all throughout the world and may affect men, women, and kids of different ages and socioeconomic situations. To deceive and coerce their victims, traffickers frequently resort to violence, dishonest employment agencies, and false claims of chances for education and work. A Respondent who works in an immigration office also perceives it as:

"It is the smuggling of human beings out of the country. That's the simple way. It's the smuggling in of immigrants" (immigration officer /Lagos/, 2023).

Migrants who are smuggled are susceptible to abuse and exploitation. They may die at sea while being trafficked by profit-seeking criminals who consider them as merchandise, suffocate in containers, or perish in deserts, putting their safety and even lives at danger (UNODC,2023). Another respondent also claimed that:

"Human trafficking means that people are being traded and used in a bad way without their permission. This can happen when someone is forced to work, forced to do sexual things, or made to do other things they don't want to do. It is a very serious violation of people's rights, and it affects everyone, but children, women, and migrants are especially at risk" (Ministry of education staff 2 / Lagos/, 2023).

Human trafficking activities violate the fundamental rights of the victims of the crime. Many of the methods used in modern-day trafficking are categorically forbidden under international human rights legislation (Abiodun, 2021). According to Kara Napolitano, Promoting and protecting human rights is especially important in the fight against human trafficking since abuses of human rights are both a cause of and a result of it.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked how education could be used as a preventive tool against human Trafficking. According to Allie (2023), "It is impossible to stop human trafficking unless everyone has equitable access to healthcare, education, and family-sustaining employment". The key to defeating human traffickers is education and awareness of the issue among every member of society (Chutikul, 2011). According to one of the respondents, he agreed that education is a great tool for combatting human trafficking.

"Education can be used when you allow all the children to go to school. And then there should be increased awareness in schools and in religious institutions and they should be told the risk of human trafficking and what usually happens to trafficked people and that they are usually abused. Also, they should know that traffickers usually deceive people and them good things they would do for them when they get abroad which usually is the opposite. Human trafficking usually takes some stages, the first is the recruitment stage, people

are usually recruited by promising them that life abroad will be juicy for them and so it is usually easy to recruit people. The next is transportation stage, they travel through long distances which are usually dangerous routes and then when they get to their destination, they are forced to do free labor. Therefore, if children go to school, their minds will be occupied and so, traffickers will not have the opportunity to deceive children because they will be educated and more aware. And in schools now, it is advisable that the school should put it in their curriculum. They should put it in their school curriculum so that at the end of the day, there will be a subject on this human trafficking where they will be able to educate all the students that may be risked involved in human trafficking” (Ministry of education official1 / Lagos/, 2023).

Other than their homes, schools are one of the locations where kids spend the most time. Schools provide pupils the tools they need for the future and open doors to possibilities as adults. They are frequently important providers of stability and protection for kids, especially those who reside in dangerous homes or communities. Children not only learn to read and write but also social and life skills in school, which can boost self-assurance and efficacy (Gardner, 2023).

Another respondent also replied that people can be educated about human trafficking and its impact through public gatherings and programs.

*“Well, we need to tell the public. To bring it to the public awareness by teaching them about the negative impact of human trafficking and how it destroys the lives of people. When we talk about education it is not only in schools but also in public gatherings” (immigration officer/Lagos/, 2023).*

To defeat human traffickers, it is essential that all members of society are educated about the crime, its causes, and the harm it causes to victims. Governments, civil society, the media, and private businesses must all work to increase public awareness of this issue. It is essential that we try to increase education and information among the general public since they have a specific role to play in the battle against human trafficking. Additionally, their regular interaction with governments, the business community, and civil society is exceptional and creates new opportunities for collaboration in the fight against trafficking. Another respondent also replied that;

“Education is really important in stopping human trafficking. If we teach students, parents, and teachers about human trafficking in a way that they can understand, it helps them know what to look for and how to protect themselves. Education gives people the power to recognize when something is wrong, understand their rights, and make smart choices. It also helps people think carefully, care about others, and learn important skills that can stop exploitation from happening” (Ministry of education staff 2/Lagos/, 2023).

A student may opt to drop out of school or may be compelled to do so if their family is unable to support them financially. Traffickers usually take advantage of the weaknesses that such financial turmoil causes. Removing these obstacles and encouraging access to high-quality education might help people become less vulnerable to problems like human trafficking.

Education may help victims of human trafficking restore their lives in addition to acting as a preventative measure and an intervention tool. Opportunities for education frequently act as doors for survivors to acquire crucial skills, engage with their community, reestablish stability in their lives, boost confidence, and make plans for the future. But survivors commonly run into access issues with schools. For instance, a lack of funds may prevent survivors from paying for expensive tuition, and if they require assistance and time to rebuild their credit, they may not be eligible for student loans. Further preventing survivors from attending school are acknowledged problems including language hurdles and mental health challenges (Gardner, 2023).

### Causes of Human Trafficking in Nigeria

The second research aims at explaining what causes human trafficking in Nigeria. The research question reads “What are the causes of human trafficking?” During this research for in-depth knowledge, the causes of human trafficking were asked and most of the respondents agreed to the same reasons that lead to human trafficking. The respondents attributed the causes of human trafficking to poverty, Lack of employment, Lack of education, Ineffective law/ unenforced legislation and ignorance.

#### • **Poverty**

Poverty is one of the root causes of poverty. Most people become victims because of poverty and this needs to be tackled. One of the respondents shared his opinion on this point;

*“The causes are many. The first one is Poverty. Because people are poor, they become desperate to get jobs. When they are looking for a job, they are looking for money. But because they are poor, they believe that if they are able to travel abroad, they will be able to get money” (Ministry of education staff 1/Lagos/, 2023)*

People who are living in poverty sometimes have no alternative but to sell themselves. Traffickers have even been known to trick parents into handing up their kids in unusual circumstances. Parents send their children off in the hopes that they could have a chance at a better life. In this way, when they believe their children are somewhere happy, they can actually be working in a sweatshop or something even worse (Kolesnik, 2017). Another respondent also mentioned poverty was one of the major cause In his statement;

“Poverty is the major reason because people who do not have money they will be hungry and so they will do anything to get money. There is the saying a hungry



man is an angry man and so they become so angry that they will do anything to provide for themselves even if it is to exploit their fellow men".(immigration officer / Lagos/,2023)

According to an ILO/IPEC research, 40% of Nigerian street children and hawkers are trafficked children as a result of poverty, and 8 million Nigerian children are employed in exploitative child labor (Barr, 2015).

- **Lack of Education**

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights identifies education as a human right. "Everyone has a right to education," the text declares. It continues by stating that technical and professional education should be made "generally available" and should be free (at least in the primary and fundamental phases). All people should have equal access to higher education based on their merit. One of the respondents said:

"Some of those people who are being trafficked don't have education. And those who are educated don't have awareness and do not know how human trafficking works and so they fall into the traps of human traffickers because most of the traffickers, what they do is deceive them and they tell them that they are going to give them a lucrative job abroad. But only when they get there, that is the time, they will now realize that it's not a lucrative job they have come to do. They have come to do forced labor. And they are coming to do commercial sex" (Ministry of education staff 1/Lagos/, 2023)

This can also be seen as a cause for human trafficking because they are not exposed enough. Poor education has an adverse effect on a person's life as well as the lives of their family members, which includes their offspring. Potential for income is a major factor in this. Without education, it is far more difficult to leave poverty. Additionally, there are more cases of trafficking in the industries like agriculture, mining, fishing, construction, and domestic service, which often do not require a college degree. Another respondent responded that;

"Because some people are not educated, they are less aware of human trafficking and so, this makes them vulnerable to traffickers" (Ministry of education staff 2/ Lagos/, 2023)

- **Ineffective Law/ Unenforced Legislation**

Human trafficking has become more widespread because the police and laws are not strong enough. The laws mostly focus on trafficking for sexual exploitation, but there are other types of trafficking too. The police are not well-prepared and don't know how to handle these cases properly. They also need to be more sensitive to gender issues (UNESCO, 2006).A respondent spoke on this issue of ineffective law/unenforced legislation as one of the causes;

*"Also, Ineffective Law/unenforced legislation. Promotes human trafficking because when traffickers know that*

*there is no law that is going to send them to jail or punish them, they will force people to do free labor for them. This usually encourages people to go into human trafficking. There is a law but it is not usually enforced"* (Ministry of education staff1/Lagos/, 2023)

Trafficked people often say that some Nigerian officials work together with traffickers. They help them get fake documents and help them cross borders and ports. Police officers are usually not interested in investigating violent crimes, especially against women and children. This is because the victims cannot afford the costs of investigations or bribe the police officers. So, people who commit rape, sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking often get away without being punished in Nigeria. (UNODC, 2006). Another respondent also said;

"Human trafficking is made easier by weak law enforcement, dishonesty and the existence of organized crime networks". (Ministry of education staff 2/Lagos/, 2023)

Porous borders, dishonest government employees, involvement of foreign organized crime organizations or networks, and the inability or unwillingness of immigration and law enforcement agencies to manage border traffic (Barr, 2015).

- **Unemployment**

Another reason is unemployment. One of the most serious societal issues Nigeria is now dealing with is unemployment. It has far-reaching effects on the economy and national security and impacts every member of society, young and old (Johnson, 2017). A respondent who is a government official said;

"The second one maybe job. Some people willing let themselves to be trafficked because of their desperate desire to get a job and also ignorance. Some people do not know they are being trafficked because of ignorance" (immigration officer /Lagos/, 2023)

About one in four Nigerians are unemployed, according to the country's 33% unemployment rate. With such a high unemployment rate, many people in the nation are unable to find job (Johnson, 2017).Another respondent also said;

*"There are many reasons why human trafficking happens, and they are complicated. Some of these reasons include not having enough money, not having access to education, treating men and women unfairly, having wars or fights, not having stable governments, and not being included in society. People who do human trafficking take advantage of these problems. To stop human trafficking, it's important to help people who are poor, provide education, treat everyone fairly, make peace, have stable governments, and include everyone in society"* (Ministry of education staff 2/Lagos/, 2023).

Even though Nigeria has one of the largest and fastest-growing economies in Africa, many of its residents struggle

to find employment. For many people, it is difficult to obtain a good education and acquire the necessary skills to find employment. As a result, they attempt looking elsewhere. It is also crucial to note the difficulty in finding employment, especially for individuals with a degree and relevant experience. Additionally, they could run into con artists while they look for work overseas who could use the pretense of job to seduce them into doing something horrific (Kolesnik, 2017).

- **Ignorance**

Traffickers frequently use promises of better living circumstances abroad to lure in the weak. The traditional lure is a job opening with more pay than what is offered in the neighborhood. Traffickers often take advantage of chances for additional education or skill development. Most often in the unofficial and unregulated industries, such as hairdressers, nannies, or domestics, they make promises about possible marriages or offer positions abroad. A respondent claimed that;

“Some people do not care they are just ignorant about things and therefore they can easily fall victims” (immigration officer/Lagos/, 2023).

Many victims of international human trafficking, particularly women and girls, are unaware of what awaits them when they arrive in their new country. Due to the fact that many of the women and girls had little to no education, they were readily seduced by the positive portrayal of their sponsors’ lifestyles (Mosimabale & Iyore, 2020).

### **Effects of Human Trafficking on Child Education in Nigeria**

This research question aims to understand the effects of human trafficking on child education. The question is “What are the effects of human trafficking on child education in Nigeria?” Human trafficking has affected the education of children in many negative ways. Some respondents gave their view on the question “What are the effects of human trafficking on child education?” According to one of the respondents;

“Human trafficking affects the education of children because most of them will not be able to go to school and so, this will affect them physically and so some of them become violent and this may affect them psychologically. And another thing is that it may result in poor living conditions. When you see children doing jobs, their parents must have forced them to do that job and so definitely, most of these children will not be able to go to school. So it will decrease the number of children in school and increase the number of children not in school. And this thing is going to affect the economic life of Nigeria in future because those who are not in school may take to crime and then they may do all other bad things.” (Ministry of education staff 1/Lagos/, 2023)

Human trafficking affects the education of children because

children who have been trafficked will not be able to go to school to have a better future because children who have been trafficked are usually restrained and their freedom is usually restricted.

“Those who don’t have the knowledge that they are being trafficked It affects their education because some are promised job abroad. Once they are promised jobs, they forget about education. They promise them jobs abroad without them knowing that they are but then you don’t know that they are being trafficked” (immigration officer/Lagos/,2023).

Another respondent also said;

“Human trafficking really affects children’s education. Kids who are trafficked often can’t go to school or have to stop going. They might have to work for a long time, be in dangerous situations, and be hurt physically or emotionally. Because of this, they can’t learn and grow like they should. We want to stop human trafficking so that children can go to school and learn in a safe and caring place” (Ministry of education staff 2/Lagos/, 2023).

Human trafficking has severe consequences on children’s education. It prevents them from attending school, leading to physical and psychological impacts. It also results in poor living conditions as children are forced into labor instead of receiving an education. This decreases the number of children in school and increases the number of children who are unable to access education. These circumstances can negatively affect Nigeria’s future economy, as children deprived of education may resort to crime and engage in harmful activities. Furthermore, some children are lured into trafficking by the promise of jobs abroad, causing them to prioritize work over education without realizing they are being trafficked. Trafficked children face dangerous situations, endure physical and emotional harm, and are unable to learn and develop properly. Efforts to combat human trafficking are crucial to ensure children can attend school and thrive in a safe and supportive environment.

Usually, Children who have been trafficked face some challenges in accessing education. They are usually

According to a respondent who is a government official;

“The challenges that they normally face is that most of them become violent. Some of them may become violent later because they have a psychological problem. And then, some of them may be exposed to all these conditions that may even shorten their life in the future because they are forced to do what they are not supposed to do like sexual exploitation. It will force them to take drugs. And when they force them to take drugs, this drug abuse, it will result in drug abuse which will affect their life in the future or even reduce their lifespan. So, therefore, another one is psychological abuse. Another thing is that it will be in their mind always that they are



forced to do forced labor. And with that, they will not be a good citizen in the future” (Ministry of education staff 1/Lagos/, 2023).

Trafficked individuals face numerous challenges that have long-term impacts on their well-being. Many of them become violent due to the psychological trauma they endure. They are exposed to conditions that can shorten their lives, such as forced labor and sexual exploitation, which may also lead to drug abuse. This abuse can further deteriorate their future prospects and potentially reduce their lifespan. Psychological abuse and the constant reminder of their forced labor contribute to a negative outlook on their future as responsible citizens.

Another respondent also replied that;

“Stigmatization can be one of the challenges people who have been trafficked face”. Some people who have been trafficked and they come back because of their history feel they are not accepted into the society anymore” (immigration officer /Lagos/, 2023).

Also, those who have experienced trafficking often encounter stigmatization upon their return, feeling excluded from society. For trafficked children, attending school becomes difficult as they experience fear, emotional distress, lack of proper documentation, language barriers, and mistreatment from others. It is crucial to provide specialized assistance to help them overcome these challenges, including emotional support, catch-up programs, flexible learning options, and legal aid when necessary. Collaboration among schools, child protection agencies, and relevant stakeholders is vital to address these issues effectively.

Another respondent also replied that;

“Children who have been trafficked have a lot of problems when it comes to going to school. They might feel really scared or upset, they might miss a lot of school, they might not have the right papers to prove who they are, they might not understand the language, and people might treat them badly because of what happened to them. To help them, it’s really important to give them special help. This can include talking to someone who can help with their feelings, programs that help them catch up on what they missed in school, finding flexible ways for them to learn, and getting legal help when needed. It’s also important for schools, people who protect children, and others involved to work together to solve these problems” (Ministry of education staff 2/ Lagos/, 2023)

Governments frequently commit major human rights breaches against trafficking survivors. Survivors are completely cut off from their support networks and constantly under the trafficker’s control. Thus, when a person is able to leave or escape the circumstances of trafficking, a number of intricate elements may come into play and make it challenging for survivors to satisfy their own fundamental requirements (Laboratory to combat Human Trafficking, 2018).

## Ways Government can curb Human Trafficking to Promote Child Education in Nigeria

This research question aims at finding ways in which the government can curb human Trafficking and promote child Education. The research question is “How can the government curb human trafficking to promote child education system in Nigeria?” There are various steps the government can take to increase awareness about human trafficking.

One respondent replied that;

*“Government should encourage religious institutions about creating awareness to the people. There must be awareness through the religious organization that can educate people about the risk of this human trafficking. Through school, the government should put it among school activities so that there will be a day set aside to educate them about this human trafficking risk. It should be added to school curriculum. There must be an agency created against trafficking in persons .These agencies should go to market places, bus stops and so on to tell people about the risk of human trafficking. We have an agency in Nigeria now known as NAPTIP. Also there should be programs created by government officials for awareness purposes” (Ministry of education staff 1/ Lagos/, 2023).*

To increase awareness about human trafficking, respondents suggested various actions the government can take. One approach is to involve religious institutions in spreading awareness and educating people about the risks of human trafficking. Incorporating human trafficking education into school activities and curriculum is another important step. Another respondent replied that;

“The government should create subjects in the school curriculum in schools so people can be more aware about human trafficking and also, agencies should be created although there is an agency called NAPTIP that is against trafficking of persons” ( immigration officer/ Lagos/, 2023).

Creating dedicated agencies or organizations focused on combating trafficking and conducting awareness campaigns through media platforms like TV, radio, and the internet were also recommended. Organizing meetings and classes for teachers, parents, and the community can further enhance awareness. Collaboration between the government, organizations, police, and other countries is crucial to effectively combat human trafficking. This collaboration can involve preventive measures, support for victims, and ensuring appropriate punishment for offenders. Another respondent also replied that;

“The government can do many things to make people more aware of human trafficking. They can create special campaigns that tell people about it using TV, radio, and the internet. They can also organize meetings and classes for teachers, parents, and people in the

community to learn about it. It's also important for the government to work together with organizations, police, and other countries to stop human trafficking. They can work on ways to prevent it, help find and support the people who are hurt by it, and make sure that the people who do it are punished" (Ministry of education staff 2 / Lagos/, 2023).

Also, the respondents were also asked the question about the measures to be taken to prosecute traffickers. The question goes thus; "What are the measures taken to prosecute traffickers?"

According to a respondent:

"Traffickers who are caught and arrested should be made to face the law immediately. Not that they will just arrest them and keep them in detention for a long period without a prosecution. In Lagos state I think there is a special court for that. So that they will be able to do away with the cases and then to serve as a deterrent to the offenders. If they are enforcing the legislation, I think this human trafficking will reduce" (Ministry of education staff 1/Lagos/, 2023).

Another respondent also replied that;

"To stop the people who do human trafficking, the government needs to take strong actions. They should make strict laws and make sure the police and other enforcement groups are strong enough to catch and punish the traffickers. It's important for countries to work together and have special units that focus on stopping human trafficking. They should also give help to the people who have been hurt by trafficking and help them get better. To prevent trafficking from happening, it's important to control the borders, keep an eye on the agencies that recruit people, and have strict rules for how people are treated at work" (Ministry of education staff 2 /Lagos/,2023).

Respondents emphasized the importance of immediate legal action against traffickers upon arrest. They advocated for the establishment of special courts, such as in Lagos state, to expedite cases and serve as a deterrent to offenders. Strong actions should be taken by the government, including the enactment of strict laws and ensuring that law enforcement agencies are capable of catching and punishing traffickers. Collaboration between countries and the establishment of specialized units to combat human trafficking were also highlighted. Support should be provided to trafficking victims for their recovery. To prevent trafficking, effective border control, monitoring of recruiting agencies, and strict workplace regulations are crucial.

There were various steps taken by the government to combat human trafficking. The Lagos State Task Force against Human Trafficking was established by the Nigerian state of Lagos to combat illegal immigration and human trafficking. In order to combat human trafficking and associated issues in the state, the Lagos State administration wishes to collaborate closely

with the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP). By offering them the assistance and services they require, the NAPTIP Lagos Command assists victims of trafficking as well as persons who have returned from nations such as the Arab Emirates, the Benin Republic, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, and others (Busari, 2020).

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study was conducted to examine the significant relationship that exists between human trafficking and child education. As the study progressed, it became evident that human trafficking has negative effects on child education and human trafficking has been a growing phenomenon. To address the issue of human trafficking and its impact on child education, the following recommendations are suggested based on the findings of this study.

- Make the laws stronger and better: Create clear rules and guidelines that specifically focus on stopping human trafficking. These rules should cover everything from preventing trafficking to protecting the victims and punishing the traffickers. It's important to keep updating these rules to keep up with new ways that traffickers might try to do their bad actions. Also, make sure that different parts of the government, like the police and schools, work together to stop trafficking and protect children.
- Make the police and other law enforcement groups stronger: Give them more money and training so they can do a better job of finding, catching, and punishing the people who do human trafficking. Create special teams and groups that focus specifically on stopping trafficking. Encourage them to share information and work together with other countries. By improving their techniques and focusing on helping the victims, we can make sure that the people who do human trafficking are caught and their networks are taken apart.
- Work together with other countries to stop trafficking: Make agreements and treaties with them to share information and help each other catch the traffickers. This includes working together on operations, sharing important details, and bringing the victims back to their home countries. Take an active role in international groups and meetings to share what works best and learn from others who have been successful in stopping trafficking. By collaborating with other countries, we can have a bigger impact and make a difference in the fight against human trafficking worldwide.
- Create campaigns that teach people in communities, parents, teachers, and young people about the dangers of human trafficking and why it's important to protect children's education. Use different ways to reach people like TV, radio, social media, and events in the community. Share the right information, show them what to watch out for, and encourage them to report any suspicious activities. Work with people who are respected in the

community, like leaders and organizations, to help get the message out even more. By making more people aware, we can all work together to stop human trafficking.

- Set up and make stronger support systems for people who have been trafficked: Make sure they have safe places to stay, and get the medical and emotional help they need. Provide them with legal assistance and support for their education. Give them counseling that understands the trauma they've been through. Create different ways for them to learn that fit their needs, like flexible schedules or programs that help them catch up with their studies. Work together with organizations, government agencies, and other people involved in protecting children to make sure they get the help they need at every step of their healing and rejoining society.
- Encourage teamwork between schools and organizations that protect children: Make it easier for education authorities, people who help protect children, police officers, and non-profit groups to work together regularly. Create plans and systems for sharing important information, managing cases together, and referring children who might be victims of trafficking to the right people. Help teachers and school staff get better at recognizing, supporting, and getting help for children who might be in danger. Also, make sure schools are safe and welcoming places that help children feel strong and happy. By working together, we can make sure that children who have experienced trafficking get the support they need and can succeed in school.
- Make efforts to stop human trafficking before it happens: Look at the main reasons why trafficking happens, like poverty, lack of good education, unfair treatment of different genders, and people being left out of society. Create plans that tackle these issues, like helping poor communities have better job opportunities, giving scholarships and support to children who are at risk, and empowering women and girls. Also, work with communities to create programs that teach people about their rights, challenge harmful beliefs, and help children and families become strong and confident. By doing these things, we can prevent trafficking and create a safer and fairer world for everyone.
- Create strong rules and systems to make sure that recruitment agencies don't exploit or traffic people. Check on them regularly to make sure they follow fair labor rules and treat people ethically. Make sure the agencies are licensed and accredited properly, and have a way for people to report if they're being mistreated or taken advantage of. By doing these things, we can make sure that people are hired for jobs in a fair and safe way.
- Help people who have survived trafficking get job skills and support for their lives: Create programs that teach them practical skills for jobs and help them start their own businesses. Make sure these programs also connect

them with opportunities to earn money. Work together with companies to help them find jobs and encourage fair and ethical employment practices. By doing these things, we can help survivors of trafficking build a better future for themselves

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