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Western Framings Versus the Lived Experience of Populations Exposed to Trafficking in South-south Nigeria

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Abstract. Human and Sex trafficking issues represent contemporary global social problems which are yet to be solved. Women and young girls are particularly still exposed to the danger of maternal mortality, unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and other health and social consequences. Many victims suffer human rights abuses including confinement and effective captivity, physical and sexual assaults. 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 major implications for development impediments especially for source countries like Nigeria in Africa where a large number of young girls and women are annually recruited for sex work in Europe and other foreign countries. This research thesis uses qualitative research methods to explore tensions between Western framings of the phenomena and the lived experience of populations exposed to human trafficking in the area of study.

Keywords: Human and Sex trafficking, Western Framings, Lived Experience of Populations Exposed to the Phenomenon, Understanding Nature and Dynamics, Edo state, South-south Nigeria

1. Introduction

Human trafficking is a recent social problem profiled to have strong historical background starting with the Trans-Atlantic slave trade that lasted about 400 years ending around the mid late 19th century (see, Scarpa, 2008; also see Agbu, 2003; Bales 2004; Jones et al. 2007; Musto, 2009). Bales particularly is consistent in drawing similarities between the trans-Atlantic slave trade and human trafficking. Bales (2004) and Venkatraman, (2003) termed human trafficking as a modern day slavery. Connecting the current human trafficking activity to the trans-Atlantic slave transactions however remains a subject of debate which reflects the complexities surrounding the conceptualization of the phenomenon. Researchers also often argue that human trafficking is rather a recent global social problem associated with increased cross border migration. With late modernity the phenomenon appears to have escalated and attained greater political consideration.

Various claims about the nature and scale of the problem of human trafficking have 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). The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2016) estimates 40.3 million victims of human trafficking globally in 2016 and almost 5 million of these were victims of forced sexual exploitation. These 2015, 2016 reported figures may have increased with more than 30% in this year 2023 if projections have to be made.

Assertions as above could however be faulted with researchers questioning the definitions employed and/or the methods used to arrive at such estimation (see, 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. Arguments are that estimates of human trafficking are difficult to determine especially because of the secrecy of the practice (Blackburn et al, 2010), hence the need for caution while relying on figures often given.

Authors posit that the negative impact of trafficking on the physical, mental, social and psychological wellbeing, especially of women and children cannot be over looked (see, Costel et al 2001; Muntabhorn 2002). Trafficking women and girls for prostitution abroad has particularly serious

implications, for both the image and the socio-economic condition of any involved country (Nwanwene, 2011). 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). Rights violated through sex trafficking for example includes 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) and many others (Oyekanmi & Okunola 2017). However, emphasis on these inherent violations and consequences of sex trafficking has been criticised as overstated and misrepresented (see, O'Connell Davidson, 2017; Weitzer, 2012).

2. Focus of the Paper and Conceptual Frame Work

This paper focuses on investigating certain debates regarding the dynamics and characteristics of human and sex trafficking especially from south-south Nigeria to Europe. In the process the paper tries to examine a conceptual frame work which captures popular assertions and perspectives about cross border trafficking from source in developing countries to destinations in developed European countries. The frame work presents that state actors, practitioners, commentators and even researchers often make assertive but contentious statements regarding the nature and dynamics of cross border human trafficking from endemic nations to typical destinations countries. That this contentious statement may not match or do well to clarify the actual lived experience of victims at home in sending nations. The conceptual frame work is presented as seen below.

2.1 Conceptual frame work

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. Western legislatures often link it to criminal tendencies and inclination towards anti-social behaviour (Chuang, 2006) as a result, Western government 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 West 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.

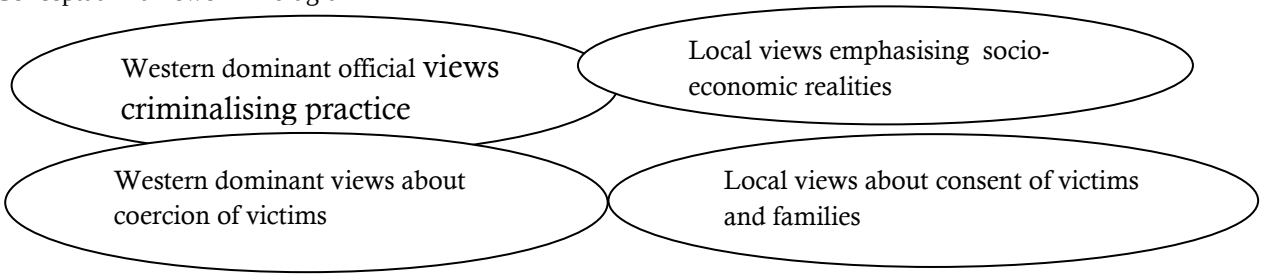
The paper consequently reflects a conceptual pattern highlighting the following tensions in perspectives.

Context of dominant Western conception 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 structural conditions (Soderlund, 2005; Okonofua, 2004)

Context of Coercion by Syndicates (US TIP 2019; UNODC, 2016) versus Consent by victims and families (Okojie et al 2003 and Okonofua et al, 2004)

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

Conceptual framework in diagram



In line with the frame work, the paper attempts to problematise the conflicts between the understanding of the causes, dynamics and nature of sex trafficking in the studied region by both the destination Western country and source African

country local authorities, commentators, and exposed populations.

3. Research Methodology

This is basically a qualitative study. Unstructured open-ended face to face interviews and focus group discussion instruments were used. Participants were drawn through a purposive method. Those selected included ex-victims, relations of victims, inhabitants of the region, government officials, National Agency Against the Trafficking of Persons (NAPTIP) officials and non-governmental organisations officials responding to human and sex trafficking in the region.

3.1 Field Data

Poverty and Vulnerability of Victims Escalating Human trafficking

Findings from the field data help to confirm or disprove assertions especially regarding the arguments reflected in the conceptual frame work of the paper. First, meanings embedded in responses from victims and other interviewees demonstrated that poverty is not just a driving force behind sex trafficking, but a common factor in the vulnerability of many victims from the region. This may negate idea of the criminalisation tendencies of the dominant Western perspective. For instance, some of the responses said:

…Poverty is a major driving force Poverty dehumanises, you are no longer a rational human being…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}.

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}

Poor Economy and Devaluation of the Nigeria Naira

"devaluation of the country's money, made European money, …the Pound, the dollar… to have more value than previously... People became interested in going abroad, not only for schooling, but also for the purposes of work" (HTP07-NGO1).

"… 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 of going again…" (HTP07-NGO1).

For this participant quoted above, 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). Another participant said:

…Like today if you compare a dollar to naira, about 450, 480 {then} 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}.

Socio-cultural Practices like patriarchy were also reported by respondents as contributory to the spread of the practice

…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}.

Patriarchal tendency is seen as a cultural reality in the area predisposing women particularly to becoming targets for the expansive sex trade in Europe.

…They will say that if you educate a girl child, it is a waste…so 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 farmer in Italy…{…} they 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).

… 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}.

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).

There is also the finding that perceptions and decision making and sometimes desperation among individuals and families in the area of study are realities. This precedes a situation were families and victims sometimes give consent to traffickers before departing for destinations in Europe. This respondent said:

"…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:

... 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).

(*Interviews were conducted by the researcher and two female research assistants*)

4. Findings /Discussion

In view of the focus of the paper, the results of the research are discussed here mainly under two broad headings which link the findings to the arguments presented in the conceptual frame work.

Criminalisation of Trafficking versus Socio-economic 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 Western Governments and officialdom e.g US TIP 2016, UNODC, 2006) or whether it is basically 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 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 Kempadoo (2016); Malloch and Rigby (2016) and a few others who pointed to 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 further discussed under the following thematic headings.

Economic Dislocations

The wide-spread prevalent poor economic condition (poverty) in the region (see, 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 (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 scholars' perspectives (see, Okonofua et al, 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.

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). 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, abandonment of farming by many and the increasing global-warming which has grossly affected farming activities generally is an issue for consideration (Akpata, 2012).

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, one of the field participants; 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.

However, apart from Bales (2005) assertions some other scholarly views appear to negate the suggested poverty factor justifying the dominant Western perspectives as contested in the conceptual frame work. 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, Akor 2011; Ejimabo 2013; Hughes 2005). This implies that even if sex trafficking does connect 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 indicate 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 polygamy and male child preference 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; Hughes 2005). Generally, the practice of gender inequality and social exclusion of women is reinforced by the hegemonic patriarchal national society. 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.

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 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 were 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

There appears to be 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 (see, Oyekanmi and Okunola 2017; Carling 2005; 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 and returnees 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.

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 indicate that, the concept of sex trafficking and sex represent a cultural phenomenon deep seated in the masculine and feminine images held firmly by society. Some perspectives arguably see 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 this, blaming the men may be justified especially when they are the known end users of the product of sex work. It would however be unfair all the same, 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.

Coercion by Syndicates versus Consent by Victims

There is also the contention in the conceptual frame work 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. Though 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. The finding is suggestive that because poverty dehumanizes and make you lose your sense of rationality you can be forced to grant consent to be enslaved. Further discussion under this line of contention in the conceptual frame work 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 finding 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; Siddarth 2016). 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 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 (Ikeora, 2016; Oyekanmi and Okunola, 2017; Van der Watt and Kruger 2016). 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; Van der Watt and Kruger, 2016). Though these religious practices among a people have benefits, 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 TIP, 2016), the practice does not seem to have stopped.

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 often features prominently in the Western political elites' championed dominant perspectives.

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 precedes 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 trafficking in the region. Many 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; Husssaini, 2017; 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. This connects with the existing international evidence regarding the general risk of being out of school (see, 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, one of the participants; 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). 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 which will require further enquiry is whether those who travel with traffickers abroad with or without consent have prior knowledge of what awaits them at destination.

5. Summary/Way Forward

From the findings and discussion so far, 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 caste 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, institutionalised 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 (UNODC, 2016) amounts to further victimising and traumatising 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.

Again, since the dominant Western and global authorities seem to misconstrue the real issues involved (as demonstrated by the findings above) regarding the contributing factors and dynamics of the trafficking business especially in most source countries like south-south Nigeria, more should be done to ensure thorough qualitative (attempting to understand victims pre, during and post trafficking conditions) investigation before concluding on conceptualisation of the phenomenon. This will allow proper understanding of the problem and appropriate and effective responses both by state and non-state actors.

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