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# INVESTIGATING THE AWARENESS LEVEL OF RISKS OF CHILD TRAFFICKING IN TWO RURAL COMMUNITIES IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA.

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*This study investigated the Awareness Level of Risks of Child Trafficking In Two Rural Community In Oyo State Nigeria. The sample size was four hundred (400) randomly selected from Kajola and Iwajowa Local Government Areas of Oyo State. A validated instrument tagged Awareness of Child Trafficking Questionnaire (ACTQ) was used to obtain data. T-test statistical analysis was utilized to test the research Hypotheses. The results obtained indicated that there was no significant difference between male and female participants in their level of awareness of risks of child trafficking. The results of the study also showed that both the Christians and Muslim did not differ in their level of awareness of risks of child trafficking. However, significant difference was obtained from the results of participants with less than six children and those with six children and above. Towards this end, the paper made recommendation for checking the abuses through enlightenment campaign to increase the level of awareness of people especially those in the rural areas of the risks of child trafficking. Key Words: Awareness Level, risk, child trafficking, rural community, Oyo State, Nigeria.*

## INTRODUCTION

Child trafficking is defined in this study as the illegal recruitment and transportation of young individuals from one geographical area to another by means of deception, violence, Kidnapping and other similar acts. Its victims are usually the children of poor families who live in poor communities in the provinces. A way from their usual networks of social support (i.e families and friends) these children often end up in exploitative, hazardous and abusive occupations or work conditions. Being more vulnerable to sexual abuse, girls bear the most appealing consequences of child trafficking. (UNICEF 2002).

Trafficking in children mainly for the purpose of domestic service or prostitution is a relatively new phenomenon that has received wide media coverage in Nigeria but has been, the subject of few research studies. In view of the clandestine nature of child trafficking, accurate and reliable information on the phenomenon is sparse. The



only recent study on child trafficking was conducted on behalf of ILO in locations that were already known to have high population of trafficked children (ANPPCAN 1986). These were sites on Owerri, Port Harcourt, Lagos, Kano, Calabar, Sokoto and Maiduguri.

In addition, there has been some form of confusion between commercial trafficking and migration through traditional fostering arrangements, which have traditionally been a common practice in Nigeria. The trafficking of children is not a purely local phenomenon, within Nigeria's borders. It also has a significant regional and international dimensions too. Children are being smuggled across international frontiers, mainly for menial work in Garbon, Plantation work in Cameroon and commercial sex work in Europe.

### **ROOT CAUSES**

The complexity and risks related to generalization when analyzing the root – causes of trafficking differ from country to country. Each country's own situation and interrelation with the regional and wider international context have strong influences on the risk of trafficking human beings.

Analysis and reports often recognize poverty as the most visible cause for trafficking, but poverty is only one part of the picture. Poverty exacerbates an already desperate situation for many women and children. Trafficking occurs when the child's protective environment collapses. The includes armed conflict, economic hardship, patterns of instability, oppression and discrimination population are forced to flee across or within national borders and refugee and displaced women and children may be particularly exposed to trafficking, early marriages and lack of birth registration may exacerbate the problem (International Labour Office 2001)

Economic and Social changes are altering marketing traditions and labour requirements. Access to global markets and information resources can raise unrealistic or unattainable expectations about living standards. Young women may be tempted to seek their fortunes and children may be lured by promise of better education and better jobs abroad, making them susceptible to traffickers (Olutayo 1997).

Recently, the links between poverty, violence and trafficking have been compounded by the effects of HIV/AIDs. Women and girls trafficked for prostitution are among the most vulnerable groups exposed to HIV/AIDs are also vulnerable to trafficking.

### **THE DEMAND FOR TRAFFICKED PERSONS**

In addition to the root causes (pushing factors) the important role played by a multi-faced demand for trafficked persons cannot be over-emphasized. Sexual and economic exploitation, including domestic and agricultural work, are the most important "pull factors" creating demand for trafficked persons. In addition to that, some other new pulling factors such as early marriage, and conflict – related demand

for child soldiers are also identified. The links between trafficking and demand related to adoption must be investigated further (Ige Atsenuwa 1997). There is also anecdotal information on trafficking of organs, but still no research exists. In some cases trafficking in body parts is linked to traditional “multi-killings”. These practices are murder committed by persons to obtain organs of children to be used in rituals of witchcraft and magic.

### **TRAFFICKING AS A DEVELOPMENT ISSUE**

Child protection abuses such as child trafficking have effects on child development and on the society’s potential for development. Until children have a safety net that delivers them from abuse in all its forms and they live in a protective environment, any progress made globally on the Millennium Development Goal will be undermined.

Trafficking in human beings has a structural significance in African Society with extensive implications on social, economic and organizational levels. It is facilitated by prevailing poverty, lack of education and of investment in basic social services. Trafficking also represents a significant factor compromising development of the poorest countries and of the most vulnerable groups, increasing the waste of human resources, and contributing to the enlargement of criminal organizations capacities (Akintola and Taiwo 2004).

The extent of child trafficking in the country is unknown. The ARCHIVES survey on human trafficking (2004) revealed the following:

- In 2001, children from Benin were sold into domestic agricultural and sex industries of Nigeria and Garbon.
- There was a ship sailed from Benin for Garbon with 250 Nigerian children to be used as slave labour
- In 2003, seven child-slave camps were discovered in the Western Nigerian states of Ogun, Oyo and Osun.
- 74 Beninois children, as young as 4 years of age, rescued from Nigerian granite pits. 13 of those in that group died.
- Trafficked children were repatriated from Nigeria in 2003, 6000 of those children still there working in quarries.
- In 2004 it was also revealed that many of Nigeria children were Sold to neighboring countries and forced to work under harsh conditions. Commercial sexual exploitation has become a problem of special concern in Nigeria, both because of its scale and because of its role in the development and spread of HIV/AIDS epidemic now sweeping the country. Children between the ages of seven and sixteen years have been transported to Garbon and Cameroon from the various point in the east of Nigeria, between March, 1994 and January, 1997 at least 400 children were rescued in Akwa-Ibom state, which is one of the main departure for Garbon (Akinola & Taiwo 2004). Report has it that in 1996, 4,000 children were trafficked from Cross River State to various parts of Nigeria and other countries. Police recorded 157 cases of child trafficking in 1987; 240 cases in 1988; 95 cases

in 1989; 204 in 1990 and 174 in 1991. The immigration service mentioned about 20 cases of trafficking per month. Police Headquarters in Calabar, Cross River State has it that there are 13 cases of child stealing and 8 cases of Kidnapping between 1997 and 1999. It has also been established that about 500 Nigerian girls were practicing prostitution in Bamako, Mali and more than 500 in Burkina Faso (International Labour Office 2001). The number keep on increasing at alarming rate every year. From the foregoing, this paper sought to investigate the level of awareness of people in the rural communities of risks of child trafficking so as to prevent the ugly incidence.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study is significant in that it will isolate specific overt and covert behaviour of people in the rural community that have been aiding child trafficking in our society. Consequently, the outcome of this study will be of assistance in the process of designing preventive intervention measures to ameliorate child trafficking in Nigeria.

### **RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significant.

- (1) Male and female participants will not significantly differ in their level of awareness of risks of child trafficking.
- (2) Christian and Muslim participants will not significantly differ in their level of awareness of risks of child trafficking.
- (3) Participants with less than six children and those with six children and above will not significantly differ in their level of awareness of risks of child trafficking.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Design**

This study adopted descriptive survey design.

#### **Sample**

A total of 400 subjects who were randomly drawn from the two Local Government Areas of Kajola and Iwajowa Areas of Oyo State participated in the study. The two Local Government areas were chosen because of their proximity to the boarder of Republic of Benin. Out of these 400 participants 256 (64%) were from Kajola; 144 (36%) were from Iwajowa. From the selected sample, 221 (55.25%) were males while 176 (44.75%) were females. A further break dawn of the demographic information also shows that 145 (36.25%) have less than six children while 255 (65.75%) have six children and above. 218 (54.5%) were Christians and 182 (45.5%) were Muslims.

### Instrument

The research instrument use for the study was a self-developed validated questionnaire on the Awareness of child trafficking. The questionnaire has two major sub-divisions. Section A was designed to collect respondents demographic information which included gender, age, marital status, number of children, town and Local Government of origin.

The section B of the instrument was designed to elicit information on the participants awareness level of risk of child trafficking. Risks of child trafficking were sub-divided into psychological, social, and physical. The questionnaire consists of 20 items which utilizes a four point Likert type scale ranging from strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree to Strongly Agree (SA). In scoring the scale, the items were scored 1,2,3,4, for SD,D,A and SA respectively. Hence the minimum score for a respondent was 20 points (1 x 20 ) while the maximum score was 80 points (4 x 20 ).

The reliability index of the instrument was determined through the use of odd-even split half reliability coefficient of relationship of 60 respondents from envisaged population (30 participants each from Kajola and Iwajowa Local Government Area) when the two sets of scores were correlated the Pearson "r" was found to be 0.82.

Because of low level of education of majority of the participants, the questionnaire was supported by interview.

### Data Analysis

The t-test statistics was used to test the research hypothesis at 0.05 level of significant.

## RESULTS

### Hypothesis 1

Male and female participants will not significantly differ in their level of Awareness of risks of child trafficking.

**Table 1: t-Test Summary Table showing the comparison between Male and Female Participants Level of Awareness of Risks of Child trafficking.**

GROUP	N	X	SD	DF	t-CAL	t-CRIT
Male	221	32.10	7.97	398	1.17	1.96
Female	179	31.27	8.20			

P< 0.05 significant level; N= 400

From table 1, the mean score of males (32.10) is higher than the females (31.27). Their standard deviations also 7.97 and 8.20 respectively. This gives rise to calculated t-value of 1.17 which is lesser than the critical t-value of 1.96. hence,



the null hypothesis is accepted. There is therefore no significance difference between male and female participants in their level of awareness of risks of child trafficking.

**Hypothesis 2**

Christians and Muslim participants will not significantly differ of their level of awareness of risks of child trafficking.

**Table 2: t – Test Summary Table showing the comparison between Christians and Muslim Participants level of Awareness of Risks of Child Trafficking.**

GROUP	N	X	SD	DF	t-CAL	t-CRIT
Christians	218	32.45	9.96	398	0.32	1.96
Muslims	182	31.89	8.84			

P< 0.05 significant level; N= 400

The analysis in Table 2 presents Christians with higher mean and standard deviation of 32.45 and 9.96 respectively as against 31.89 and 8.84 of Muslim. This resulted into the calculated value of 0.32 which is lesser than the critical t-value 1.96 at alpha level of 0.5 with 398 degree of freedom, hence the null hypothesis is not rejected. There is therefore no significant difference in the level of awareness of Christians and Muslim about risks of child trafficking.

**Hypothesis 3**

Participants with less than six children and those with six children above will not significantly differ in their level of awareness of risks of child trafficking.

**Table 3: T-Test Summary Table showing the comparison between participants with less and More than Six Children Level of Awareness of Risks of Child Trafficking.**

GROUP	N	X	SD	DF	t-CAL	t-CRIT
Below	145	26.21	3.98	398	3.22	1.96
Above	255	33.44	5.97			

P> 0.05 significant level; N= 400

The comparison of data collected from participants in table 3 indicates 26.21 and 3.78 mean ratings for participant with below six children. While the participants with 6 children and above have 33.44 and 5.97 mean respectively. On this promise the calculated t-value (3.22) was found to be greater than the critical t-value (1.96).

This outcome failed to confirm the null hypothesis, hence the rejection. There is therefore, a significant difference between participants with less than six children and those with six children and above in their level of awareness of risks of child trafficking.

### DISCUSSION

The analysis of data collected shows that there was no significance difference between male and female participants in their level of awareness of risks of child trafficking. The reason for this may be traced to socio-cultural factors of which in almost all the culture in Africa, putting children to work is socially acceptable. It is customary to assign tasks to children at very tender age. Some cultures consider children as investment, and as such, some returns is expected from them either in cash or kind, this encourages child labour and consequently trafficking in children (Alenuka 1996).

The results obtained from hypothesis 2 also indicated that there was no significant difference between Christians and Muslims level of awareness of risks of child trafficking. This outcome is expected because child labour or trafficking according to Fidelis (2003) does not occur in public and organized private sectors Labour Act prohibits various forms of child labour. In addition UNICEF (2002) reported that children and their families are ensnared by the empty promises of the trafficking networks. Promises of a better life, of an escape rout from poverty.

The results obtained from table 3 shows that there was significance difference between participants with less than six children and those with six children and above in their level of awareness of risks of child trafficking. This result may be due to the fact that those with less than six children are likely to be literate who are conscious of the child's rights under the laws and would not under any circumstances submit their children or wards to any form of abuse such as sexual exploitation, child labour and neglect. They are also likely to realize that child abuse indicates all form of cruelty to child's physical moral and mental well-being. And that child trafficking may result in bruises, broken bones, permanent physical or development impairment, emotional trauma or death (Akande, 2003). On the other hand the reverse is likely to be the case of participants with more than six children. Such individuals are likely to be illiterate who may not even understand that there are laws against buying, selling, begging, child labour, trafficking and prostitution. (Child Rights Act, 2003).

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Child labour, and child trafficking, forced marriage and other abuses are intertwined with society, culture and economy. There is no doubt that these abuses are increasing at a very alarming rate due to poor economic condition. That being the case, the following means of checking the abuses are therefore recommended.

- Enlightenment Campaign: Serious efforts should be made through organizing seminars and enlightenment programmes for parents in the



dangers of exposing their children to street trading, begging, and wandering, parents especially those in the rural communities should be discouraged from the use of children as farm hands and factory hand's. In the same vein, the law enforcement agents need to be enlightened and re-orientated with a view to making them abide by the laws, especially as it affects children and to put in place, proper mechanisms to punish erring officers as well as mechanism through which the children can seek redress whenever the need arises.

- Free And Compulsory Formal Education For All Citizen: Compulsory formal education studies on human rights, child labour, trafficking and abuse should be incorporated in the schools curriculum at all levels of education.
- Poverty Alleviation or Eradication: Since poverty and lack of education are root causes of the phenomenon, the elimination of all these vices cannot be achieved unless these problems are removed. Government should create job opportunities and make Nigeria a safe place to live.

### CONCLUSION

In practice, those involved in the trafficking of children are rarely apprehended or successfully prosecuted. The traffickers have been able to corrupt and subvert weak law enforcement agents. Also, laws to protect children from hazardous forms of labour have remained ineffective because poverty drives parents to send their children to work, sometime with little or no regards for the risks attached to the type and conditions of work in which they are engaged. Everyone should be encouraged to carry the campaign and enlightenment against child trafficking and violation of child's right to a high level so as to eliminate in our society child abuses. Our media houses are particularly encouraged to join hands with government and non-governments in fighting child trafficking and all forms of abuse. The children should be sensitized on their rights and the ways and manners of protecting such rights.

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