

Patterns and Processes of Recruitment and Trafficking into sex Work in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria contributes to the global problem of the trafficking of young women and girls mainly for sexual exploitation as a major country of origin of the victims. Using information gathered from Edo and Lagos States of Nigeria, through the use of Case studies, In-depth and key-Informant Interviews, this paper probes the strategies employed by the traffickers and activities that characterize the recruitment and trafficking into sex work. The study found the family to be both facilitators of recruitment and exploiters of the prostitution of their relatives. The recruitment patterns and trafficking processes were characterized with incidences of deception, extortion, violence and exploitation with severe consequences on the emotional, psychological and health condition of the victims. To contain the activities of the traffickers, the use of formal and informal channels of education to enlighten the populace on the ulterior motives of the traffickers is suggested.

Introduction

Studies on the escalating prevalence of the trafficking of young women and girls for the purpose of sexual exploitation have been conducted worldwide (Jeffreys, 2002; Porter, 2003, Shivdas, 2005). Similarly, the rapidly rising rates of trafficking into sex work in Nigeria have attracted increasing academic attention (Aghatise, 2002; Onyeonoru, 2003 Skogseth, 2006). Generally, human trafficking has been identified as a form of modern slavery, as a threat to human security, and as one of the greatest human rights challenges of our time. The incidence and development of sex trafficking in Nigeria is indeed phenomenal, as the country's present contributions to the global sex industry remains unparalleled, with conspicuous and staggering number of Nigerian women and young girls practicing sex work in several African, Middle-Eastern and European countries especially Italy, Spain, The Netherlands, Belgium and recently, Norway and the continent of South America particularly Venezuela (Norli, 2006; Olateru-Olagbegi, 2006). The United Nations Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) particularly labeled Nigeria as a leading country of source, transit and destination for human trafficking, especially the trafficking of the under-aged (Skogseth, 2006).

Although there are no official statistics available on the magnitude of human trafficking both internally and out of Nigeria, however, the Nigerian Police Force and the Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF) reported that between March 1999 and April 2000, about 1,126 women trafficked out of the country were deported by various countries. Further statistics released by WOTCLEF, put the figure of trafficked Nigerian women deported as at December 2001 at about 5,000 (Agbu, 2003). Most of the deportees were reported to be practicing

sex trade in Italy, a country that is believed to be the main country of destination for Nigerian victims of sex trafficking. The prevalence of Nigerians practicing sex work in Italy is so high that every black woman is assumed to be a Nigerian and thus a prostitute. Infact, a black woman stands the risk of having her breast or buttocks fondled on the street by the Italian men under the belief that she is a sex worker (Aghatise, 2002; Loconto, 2002). In a study conducted on the demographic of sex workers in Italy by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, it was reported that Nigeria accounts for about sixty-one percent of migrant sex workers in Italy alone (Ume-Ezeoke, 2003).

The high number of sex workers of Nigerian descents in Italy and some other European countries were of great shock to the immediate past President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo in one of his visits to Europe in the year 2001. He directed that a “search party” be constituted and trafficked Nigerian girls be brought back home (Ayorinde, 2001). In July 2003, the President signed into law the trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administrative Act and established the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other related matters (NAPTIP), with the mandate to enforce the law and crackdown on the activities of the traffickers. Similarly, “anti-trafficking units” were established in the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) and Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) to combat the crime and intercept the traffickers and the victims.

Though sex work is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria like every other country, however, its resurgence particularly as regards the export of the practice to Europe for the acquisition of foreign currencies has not only affected the image of the country but also eaten deeply into her social fabrics. The family, the smallest unit of the society whose primary role is to socialize her offsprings into the societal norms and values, is now in the forefront of initiating her daughters into sex trade and trafficking. In some families within the society, husbands are active facilitators of the recruitment and initiation of their wives into trafficking in other for such wives to repatriate earnings for the family (Loconto, 2002).

Also added to the aforementioned problems on the patterns of recruitment into sex trafficking is the health hazards that the victims are exposed to during initiation. HIV/AIDS researchers and epidemiologists have found that women and children in the commercial sex industry are most vulnerable to HIV exposure during their initiation and first six months of sex work (Burkhalter, 2004). This they opined is the period in which the victims have the least ability to protect themselves and are thought to be safe because of their youthfulness and newness in the trade. Other forms of abuse and risks that women experience during their initiation and practice of sex work include physical, sexual and psychological abuse, the forced or coerced use of drugs and alcohol, social restrictions and manipulation, economic exploitation and debt bondage, legal insecurity, abusive working and living conditions and a range of risks associated with being an illegal migrant (Zimmerman, C. Yun, k. Shvab, L. Watts, C. Trappolin, L. Treppete, M. 2003).

However, while there is an increasing body of literature on different aspects of human trafficking, so far there has not been any remarkable empirical work on the patterns and processes of recruitment into the act of trafficking for sex work,

particularly in Nigeria-the hotbed of human trafficking. With the reported social and health problems that could emanate from the process of trafficking and practice of sex work, it is highly imperative for an empirical assessment of the Nigerian recruitment 'market' to be carried out. This is in recognition of the role that Nigeria play as the major country that supplies the 'raw materials' of the global sex industry. In addition, an insight into the patterns and processes of recruitment into sex trafficking will assist policy makers, social welfare organizations and the law enforcement agencies in comprehending the socio-cultural underpinnings of entry into sex practice in Nigeria and appropriately, plan a more effective intervention programme.

The main objectives of this study therefore, is to describe the relationship between the traffickers and the victims, investigate the method and terms of negotiation with the traffickers, determine the main venues used for recruitment and initiation, then finally, describe the stages of introduction into sex work and routes of trafficking for sex work.

Theoretical Considerations

It is a common knowledge in the social sciences that although social contracts proclaim equity and equality between individuals and groups, social equality is still a utopian phenomenon. This is due to the continuous mal-integration that occurs between the social structure (approved social means) and culture (approved goals). Merton (1938) maintains that when there is imbalance between the means and goals, disjuncture, a state of normlessness or lack of social regulation is likely to prevail. The socially approved goals are often widely shared by most members of the society, however, the socially prescribed means towards achieving those goals are strained in the face of the prevailing competitions for it. When such situation of strain occurs, there are bound to be reaction which may not conform to the orthodox means of goal attainment.

The mid-1980s represents a significant period in the Nigerian socio-economic history consequent upon the economic depression that followed the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) (Adesina, 2006; Ofido 2000). The attendant features of this economic policy are devaluation of the local currency, downsizing of the workforce in the public and civil service, embargo on the importation of some consumer goods and other austere policies and conditionalities prescribed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), causing the collapse of services, unemployment, retrenchment, inflation, hunger and desolation. The means towards achieving the social goals became strained. Salaries could no longer ensure food security while those that were unemployed became restless.

There was diverse response to the situation by the civil society. A number of anti-social activities like advance fee fraud (also known as "419"), embezzlement, corruption and armed robbery prevailed. There was also mass exodus of people from the country. There was acute brain-drain of the skilled citizens like lecturers, medical personnel and the likes of them as they traveled to the United States and Europe. Those that were without skills were also leaving the country for menial jobs in Europe. Guest (2000) asserts that trafficking began at this period as Italy was importing immigrant labourers to feed their booming agricultural sector. Nigerian women then began traveling to central Italian region of Campania to pick tomatoes. According to her,

soon the tomato farm became saturated and could no longer take more labourers. This led the Nigerian women to enter into the cities of Rome, Naples and Florence where they eventually took to prostitution as there was little that they could do with their little skills.

The success of the pioneers of sex work in Italy eventually motivated the development of the trade as more people at home yearned to be part of the European success. Those that have made money and wealth from their sojourn in Italy then became barons in the practice of recruitment and trafficking of others for sex work. The success story of the pioneers that received little or no queries from the Nigerian social system that lays more emphasis on goals than the means of achieving those goals, coupled with the rate of unemployment and economic deprivation, were responsible for the development and growth of trade as the traffickers took advantage of the vulnerability of the victims. The society that had hitherto upheld strict sexual and moral values as well as strong respect for marriage sanctity then relaxed her social values as a response to the prevailing economic crisis. The strain theory has been able to explain the emergence and development of sex trafficking in Nigeria, however, there is still need to explain the how people get recruited and initiated into the practice of commercial sex work and trafficking.

In his explanation of the development of behavioural patterns, Bandura (1977) asserted that learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them about what to do. Fortunately, most human behaviour is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviour is performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action. He further explains human behaviour in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioural and environmental influences. The social learning theorists assume dual directional relationships between deviance and conformity. To them, conformity or deviance is influenced by the processes of modeling and reinforcement. In their major premise, the process of deviance development is akin to that of conformity, but the difference is the direction in which the processes operate, which makes individual behaviour a balance of social influences. It is an either all or nothing process.

Study Areas and Methodology

Edo and Lagos States were selected as the study areas based on their importance to the phenomenon of trafficking in Nigeria. What is now referred to as Edo State was initially part of the defunct Midwestern State which was also carved out of the defunct Western Region in 1963. It remained part of a twelve state federal structure created in 1967 until it was renamed Bendel State in 1976. In 1991, Bendel State was further split into two to establish Delta and Edo States. The present Edo State now consists of 18 Local Government Areas (LGA) after it was increased from its initial 12. The people of Edo State can be divided into 5 main ethnic groups distinct from each other in certain linguistics, social and some cultural features. These are the bini, Esan, Etsako, Owan and Akoko Edo (Okogie et al, 2003). The State has a high rate of unemployment, low incomes and poor standard of living (Okogie et al, 2003). The Federal Office of Statistics (1999) estimated the incidence of poverty in Edo State

to be 53.3% in 1996. Edo State is widely regarded as the leading state of origin of trafficked victims in Nigeria (Aghatise, 2002; Ahiane, 2000; Onyeonoru 2003). In response to the high incidence of sex trafficking in the state, the anti prostitution law was signed by the state government in 2001 while the federal government also located the zonal office of NAPTIP in the state capital-Benin city.

Lagos State is widely regarded as the economic capital of the country largely due to the enormous economic activities that pervade the city and its link to the outside world via the waterways and air transport. It is also noted to be one of the fastest-growing cities in the world, with people of different tribes and ethnic origins residing in the city. Lagos State is selected as a study area due to the predominant role that it plays as destination point for most victims of sex trafficking in the country as well as the transit state for those to be taken out of the country. Also the results of fieldwork studies carried out in the state reveals a growth in the HIV/AIDS prevalence among the sex workers, from 2% in 1988/89 to 12% in 1990/91. By 1995/96, up to 70% of sex workers tested positive (USAID 2002). Also, Lagos has the highest number of brothels and resident prostitutes in the country and plays host to a number of rehabilitation centres for sex workers.

This study was conducted between November 2006 and June 2007 in the two states with the use of both primary and secondary data within a qualitative research design. Primary data were made up of information obtained through 60 in-depth interviews (IDI), 35 key informant interviews (KII), and six case studies selected through a combination of purposive sampling method and the snowball method. The respondents for the IDI were made up of 60 clients of six rehabilitation centres in the two states who were victims of transnational, cross border and intercontinental trafficking for the purpose of sex work. For the KII, 18 caregivers at the selected centres, five parents of victims of sex trafficking, two opinion leaders, two officials of the anti trafficking unit of the Nigerian Immigration Service, Lagos and eight experts/officials of collaborating agencies were selected. Six girls who were judged special cases based on their responses to the interview were selected for further interviews using the life history method. This is to enable a detailed narration of their social experiences during their recruitment and initiation into sex trade. Collection of secondary data included information sourced from agencies that were considered central to the subject of the study. These include the Ministry of Women Affairs, the anti-trafficking units of the Nigerian Immigration Service and Nigerian Police Force, Federal Office of Statistics, International Organization for Migration (IOM) and records of rehabilitation centres. Content analysis and ethnographic summaries were adopted for the analysis of the data.

Ethical Consideration

In compliance with ethical standards on research work involving human subjects, the study aims were explained to all respondents, and their consent sought and obtained before the study commenced. They were also informed that they could withdraw at any point in the process of interviewing.

Findings

Sources of Introduction into Sex Trafficking

Getting into sex trade or being trafficked for the purpose of sex work is a social problem that occurs at a particular stage and under particular circumstances in people's lives, facilitated by certain people or factors. There is usually someone responsible for any sex work initiation, though it could also be a self decision buoyed by certain factors or drives. The social learning theorists posit that deviant behaviour is acquired through the mechanisms of learning process available to the individual which could include association that they are directly or indirectly involved with (Bandura, 1977). The respondents affirmed the knowledge, consent and efforts made by their families and relatives in facilitating their journey for the practice of sex work. Forty-seven of the sixty interviewed confirmed that they met the traffickers through their parents, guardians and relatives. In all these cases, they asserted that the purpose of the intended journey was clear to both themselves and their families. Though a majority of them said that prostitution was not openly discussed on the negotiation table as the proposed vocation, yet, through public awareness and social knowledge that they had been exposed to they knew it was their most likely destination. An interviewee who was repatriated from Gabon and was trafficked since she was 18 years old puts it this way:

...though Auntie Lucy, my mother's junior sister, told me that I will get a job as hairdresser in Gabon and make plenty money, my mother told me that I may also have to do other things to make more money. My mother didn't tell me that I will have to sleep with men to make the money, but I knew that she knows because she has always been telling me I should stop following small boys who cannot spend money, that I should go after big men who will take care of me.

As reflected in the above response, thirteen of the interviewees informed that the traffickers were actually close relatives of theirs. According to an opinion leader who holds a chieftaincy title in Benin City:

...most families prefer to entrust their daughters in the hands of relatives who have made success from their own exploits in Europe. Feelers have it that they believe it will reduce the hardship and debt bondage that the girls will be subjected to in Europe. You know as they say "blood is thicker than water". You know like every normal trade, you will prefer your child to learn from your brother or sister who will be kind to your child and teach him/her all that there is to learn and afterwards "settle" him/her very well.

A caregiver at the NAPTIP shelter in Benin corroborated the above comment:

...one of our major challenges in administering rehabilitation here is the role of the family in the whole matter (sex trade). We are aware that the families led these girls into trafficking and we are afraid (that) after releasing them they (the family members) may influence the girls back to the practice. That is why we do not allow the parents to be aware of the return of their daughters until we are through with our counseling. They are not even allowed to visit them while they are here.

Ironically, all the parents of victims of trafficking interviewed in this study claimed ignorance to the journey of their children. Though they all maintained that they were not part of the plans and process, three out of the five interviewed do not see anything wrong in the issue of sex work and trafficking. Infact one of them, whose two daughters were both deported from Belgium, was full of condemnation for the Edo state government for facilitating the deportation of the girls from Europe. He retorted:

...their government is anti-people. Otherwise how will you bring back those that could not make a living while they were here, what for? I don't see any sense in it...if they are prostituting in Italy so what? There are thousands of local prostitutes in ashawo[1] joints everywhere, have they tried to rehabilitate those ones? Why are they after those in Italy and Europe alone...the answer is simple, they are selfish and jealous of the riches of those girls.

Aghatise (2002) equally remarked and lamented the breakdown of the family values within the Benin Kingdom based on the level and degree of involvement of parents and husbands in facilitating the practice of sex trade. Her submission were further corroborated by Ahiante (2000) and Adesina (2006) as they both decried the erosion of family values and asserted that with the family's overbearing influence in the pattern of recruitment into sex trafficking, intervention efforts must be restructured and redesigned if any success is to be achieved. Other notable sources of introduction are friends and self-decision.

Traffickers' Promises, Negotiations and attached Terms and Conditions to the process of trafficking. The decision to take to a particular behaviour is said to be a function of the balance of definitions favourable and unfavourable to the act and also the anticipated balance of reinforcement (Kaplan, 1996). In other words, to concede to being led away by the traffickers for sex trade, there must have been overwhelming anticipated benefits perceived to be entrenched in the practice of sex trade or being trafficked as against the perceived cost. Thus, the study moved to unveil the baits used to lure the victims and their parents by the traffickers and their perceptions about the

journey. A majority of the respondents reported that the desire to earn good money that would affect their lives and families coupled with visible material successes recorded by those that have been there and the huge promise from the traffickers that they would measure up to the league of successful Nigerians in diaspora, motivated their consent. A respondent who worked as a hairdresser before being trafficked to Italy in 2004 related her story:

...my father's junior sister who had been in Italy for more than ten years came home in May 2004 for the burial of her mother (my grandmother)...she was the one that sponsored the whole ceremony, she has lot of money and even came home with three whitees [2]. After the ceremony, she met with my father and told him that she had a beauty shop in Italy and if I work for her within a year, I should be able to complete our long abandoned family house.

A victim of internal trafficking who was taken to Lagos for sex work contributes:

...in (the year) 2000 my father was retired from UBA (a commercial bank) where he worked as a security man, he called a family meeting and told us that we should all find our levels. I was in primary 5 then, but I couldn't finish my school (education). One of my (half) sisters who stays in Lagos and sends money regularly to her mother came home and told my mother that I could come and stay with her in Lagos if I wish and that she will introduce me to her business in Lagos...I got to Lagos and discovered that na ashawo work she dey do, I call my mama and tell am but she say make I carry go[3].

An opinion leader also opined:

...you see money is the name of the game. Look around you, these Italios[4] have enough wealth to flaunt, what could be better bait than that. If they ask you to follow them in order to be rich like them, very few people will spend a minute thinking about it.

These findings do not raise any objections to earlier ones that had explained the motivations behind the choice of sex trade in Nigeria (Adegbola and Babatola, 1999; Isiugo-Abanihe and Odiagbe 1998; Onyeonoru, 2003). However, this study went further to examine what the initial conditions were before the deal was struck for the journey. All the victims of cross border trafficking interviewed told the story of deception on travel plans. They all narrated how the traffickers made them believe that they would make the journey by air only to be subjected to the tortuous journey by road and foot. One of them lamented:

...I was told that the journey will be by air, my father paid for my fare, aunty collected money for visa and ticket from my father. When we got to Lagos, she told me that the plans had changed and handed us (five of them) over to Henry who took us through Ajase (boundary between Nigeria and Republic of Benin).

All the respondents that were able to get to Europe narrated a different story of deception from the traffickers that has to do with debt bondage and conditions of service. One of them who was brought from Italy puts it this way:

...my father sold properties and borrowed money and gave Madam Grace N750, 000 (about \$5,860) which she asked for. It is (was) only when we got to Florence (in Italy) that she told me of other costs that I needed to pay and that I would have to serve her for two years before I can be on my own. She said that is the way it is being done. I no get choice I don swear[5].

Another one who claimed she was able to offset the debt after three years also lamented:

...initially the deal was for me to serve her (the 'madam') for two years and pay \$25, 000 to her. I couldn't make it in two years so I spent another year working for her before I could complete the \$25, 000 and extra \$2, 000. When I asked to be released, she refused to give me my papers saying I should spend another year to make four years. I couldn't take it so I ran away from her but she set me up with the immigration people and here I am...

The above responses represent the story of deceptions that all the twenty-nine cross border and intercontinental trafficked victims reported. However, this story is not shared by the internal or intranational trafficked victims as most of them were not subjected to any form of oath-taking, debt condition or other stringent agreement with their traffickers. Only five of the thirty-one internally trafficked victims mentioned being asked to serve and pay debts to their trafficker. The absence of stringent recruitment process for the internally trafficked may be largely due to less financial stake in internal trafficking. Also, there are no conspicuous mafia involved in the recruitment of sex workers for internal trafficking in relation to those trafficked outside the country.

Shaw and Mckay (1931) explained that when the societal social structure and context transit from simple to complex nature, deviation and non-conformity to societal norms and values increases. In the process of societal transformation, the extended family and close-knit neighborhoods relationship and interaction, which enhance conformity relatively, disappear. Findings from the study suggest that the

expected signs of family ties between the victims and traffickers that are related could not be found in the face of economic considerations. This makes the recruitment pattern into international trafficking an exploitative exercise that is only defined along economic lines.

Process of Initiation and Pre-trafficking activities

Like every deviant act, the practice of sex trade and recruitment for trafficking requires to be learnt through some mechanisms of learning process available to the new entrant through the traffickers (Akers, 1994). However, when the person is already into sex work before being trafficked, there are other recruitment processes that would precede the takeoff. This study examined the process of initiation into sex trade. Responses from the interviewees confirmed pre-trafficking initiation exercises involved in their recruitment. The victims of internal trafficking did not undergo elaborate recruitment rituals compared to those trafficked out of the country. Concisely, the features of the exercise are basically oath-taking, submission of personal effects, signing of written documents and gang-rape. The following case study presentations summarize the process of initiation and other pre-trafficking activities

Case 1

Angela[6] was approached and wooed by her mother's junior sister who is based in Italy during the Christmas season of the year 2003. She refused to heed her aunt's invitation at first, but after her mother gave her blessing and her friends encouraged her, she started seeing the positive side of the endeavour. After every condition has been met, her aunt told her that she needs to be fortified for the journey, that there are protective charms that are required. On the appointed day, her aunt came for her at about 8pm. She drove her to a small village on the outskirts of Benin City, where she met an elderly man whose only form of clothing was a deep red wrapper around his waist and two pieces of beads on his neck. She narrates further:

...the man gave me three different concoctions to drink and said some things in ishan (local dialect) that I repeated after him. Then he used blade to make marks at the back of my neck. Afterwards he asked me to eat some meats in a black small clay pot, the taste was bad. When we were through, he told me the final stage is for me to sleep with him till the morning. He told me that I need to sleep with the gods to enter into a covenant that will make me succeed in Europe. I was scared I wanted to refuse but my aunt warned me that I could go mad. He slept with me then used a red cloth to clean me up after the intercourse. My aunt came for me in the morning and informed me that we were ready.

Angela only got to know about the truth of the rituals in Italy through a sex worker colleague that was earlier brought by her aunt. She confronted her aunt who didn't deny that the ritual was meant to secure her loyalty, failure of which will make her run

mad. Incidentally, an official of NAPTIP, Benin informed us that she had symptoms of mental disorder when she was deported in July, 2006 and it took the intervention of a Benin based evangelist who took her through spiritual cleansing before she could calm down.

Case 2

Paulina in her own case was approached by a male customer in her aunt's beer parlour though with the consent of her aunt who also gave some money to the trafficker to facilitate the journey. She was willing to go and she even went to raise ten thousand naira from friends to make up the money that the trafficker requested for. The uniqueness of her own testimony was the involvement of a Church priest in the oath-taking exercise. She spoke further:

...after a week he came to pick me and we traveled at night to Amoke village in Iyala town where he took me to a church[7]...we met a priest with red cloth, he asked us to commence fasting of 6am to 6pm for 7 days. On the 7th day he asked us to kill a lizard in the bush for sacrifice, and then he cut my armpit hair, pubic hair and collected my pant and bra and buried them for sacrifice...

According to her, it was only when she got to Spain after a journey that took close to four months through walking and travelling by road that she fully understood the essence of the oath that she took

Case 3

In the case of Felicia who was a victim of internal trafficking for sex work, her entrant into sex trade happened at a tender age of 12. She was trying to avoid forced marriage being pressured on her by her father only to fall into the hands of the recruiters for sex work. She was smuggled out of her father's house by her mother's sister, with the knowledge of her mother, though with claims that her mother did not know what holds in stock for her. She ended up with a woman that owns a food joint which she converts to sex joints in the night, using her waitresses as sex workers. Felicia showed some resistance at first as she was then a young virgin, but she was subjected to a gang rape of six boys to initiate her into sexual pervasion on the instruction of the woman that she works for.

Murphy (2005) acknowledged the strength of the belief of the victims on the potency of the rituals/oath-taking exercise that they undergo. He particularly observed that sex workers of Nigerian descent are the most docile/loyal of all trafficked sex workers in Europe. He believes this expression of loyalty to the traffickers can be attributed to the perceived fear that they have on the consequences of doing otherwise. The findings on oath-taking, gang-rape and other forms of violence that characterize the initiation process to sex trafficking shares the views and discoveries of Abawuru (2005), Aghatise (2002), Loconto (2000), and Ojo (2005).

The journey and routes to destination

A majority of the respondents claimed to have been deceived in terms of the promised destination and means of getting there. All those that practiced sex work and were repatriated from other African countries lamented that it was not within their initial plan and agreement with the traffickers to end up in those African countries. They all claimed that Europe was their agreed destination with the traffickers and some even committed good sum for the journey but the traffickers reneged on the agreement. One respondent brought back from Togo retorted:

...my father sold his three plots of land to raise enough money for the visa and ticket for the journey that aunty Joy (the trafficker) asked for. I was told that the journey is to Germany then later Belgium where I would hustle. Aunty Joy's nice behavior changed to (towards) me when we got to Lagos. She told me that we cannot take the Lagos airport because it is unsafe, therefore we would take the Ghana airport. It was the man that she handed me to that confessed to me that she had sold me to a madam that owns a hotel in Togo.

The above story was shared by virtually all that were brought from other African countries. However, all those that were internally trafficked were duly informed that they would not be leaving the country though some of them claimed that they were taken to a different destination. Meanwhile, majority of those that got to Europe or their expected destination lamented the tortuous journey that they took before getting to their destination which they claimed was not part of the negotiations. One of them was quite revealing:

...my mother paid Joe and Osas (the traffickers) N300, 000 though they asked for N400, 000. They promised that it would be enough to do the journey. When we left Benin and got to Lagos, we stayed for two days and on the third day six other girls joined us. We crossed the Nigerian-Benin border on foot through the bush paths. The journey through Togo, Ghana up till Morocco was long and killing. Sometimes we walked sometimes we entered trucks. Three girls died at different parts of the journey. One of them was raped to death by some men in a village in Togo when she refused to have sex with them because she had not eaten.

All the respondents that were trafficked out through the borders of the country had similar tales of tortuous journey characterized with violence and psychological trauma. These conditions and social experiences have both short-term and long-term implications Dunne and Legosz, (2000) and Burkhalter (2004). They opined that those with such history are highly susceptible to mental illness such as post traumatic stress disorder, gynecological disorders and could fall victims of addictive behavior

that could come with its own health damaging effect. These revelations prescribe a daunting task for intervention programmes, targeted towards health and behavioural modifications.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Nigerian socio-structure continues to witness rapid changes which are both beneficial and damaging to its polity. These changes are mainly dependent upon the prevailing socio-economic situation and foreign influences facilitated by globalization. Consequently, the country continues to experience changes in values and cultural context in relations to issues like marriage, family, gender roles and sexuality. Hitherto, the cultural meaning of sex describes a concept that is sacrosanct and a myth to an individual that is not matured enough for marriage. An unmarried girl is expected to remain a virgin till her wedding night where her state of virginity will be put to test. Failure for her to pass this test will result in severe social sanctions from her in-laws and the extended society. Likewise, a married woman is expected to remain faithful to her husband as infidelity could attract strict spiritual sanction consequent upon the oath of fidelity that she would have taken as part of her marriage rites. However, the present socio-cultural relationship which is largely defined along economic lines has facilitated the weathering of these values.

The result of this study shows that the hitherto strong family ties that ensured the transmission of cultural norm and values from the immediate to the extended families have been severely disjointed by socio-economic influences. The study discovered that the family is not only a major feature in the pattern of recruitment and trafficking for sex work as earlier asserted by some literature (Aghatise, 2002; Loconto, 2000; Onyeonoru 2003), it also uncovered the growing exploitation of the prostitution of victims by their extended family, who are now directly involved in the trafficking of the girls.

The process of recruitment and trafficking is highly characterized with the incidence of deception, extortion, violence and exploitation which could translate into severe emotional, psychological and health problems for the victims. In particular, the oath-taking activities that usually precede the journey may have grave consequences on the health of the victims through blades and other sharp objects that are used to make incisions on the victims. These, and other activities involved in the process could create openings for the contracting of HIV virus and other transmittable diseases.

The study suggests that the domineering influence of material success of the Europe-based sex workers in Benin City provides the basis for the increase in the volume of recruitment and trafficking into sex work. An analyses of the socio-economic status of the victims' parents gives a picture that suggest greed as a fast emerging push factor into trafficking as some of the family disposed of valuable properties in order to get their children trafficked.

Finally, the outcomes of this study give an insight into the patterns and process of recruitment and trafficking into sex work in Nigeria. An adequate comprehension of the patterns and process of recruitment will assist medical and social caregivers to generate a more effective intervention to reintegrate the sex workers. Consequently, the following recommendations are suggested to boost the present intervention

initiatives of the government and non-government agencies:

Intervention programmes should be designed to suit and accommodate the individual and group differences, which could be traced back to the social experience, health, sex work antecedents that are important for specific and target oriented programme designs. Social rehabilitation of the sex workers should be designed to carry family members along through establishing family therapy where the family system is incorporated. Public education should be targeted towards unveiling the trickery and “hidden agenda” of the traffickers. The uncovering of the trafficker’s plot to exploit the prostitution of their victims will go miles in enlightening the public about the tricks of the traffickers. Law enforcement agencies should concentrate more in arresting the crime at the recruitment stage which portends more social danger than intercepting them on the journey to destination. The arrest of the crime at the grassroots will cut down the market supply and invariably reduce the scourge and control its devastating effects.

Endnotes

- [1] Sex worker or prostitute in local parlance.
- [2] Used to refer to white men or women, but in this case, the respondent was referring to three white men.
- [3] She was into prostitution, I called my mum and informed her but she encouraged me to go ahead.
- [4] Used to refer to those that reside in Italy, particularly the sex workers and their madams
- [5] I don’t have a choice. I had sworn an oath of allegiance to her.
- [6] All names used in this paper are fictitious and are only representing true respondents of the study.
- [7] Though she mentioned the name of the said Church, the identity is held in confidence for ethical reasons.

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