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# The Highway of Stolen Innocence: Sex Trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa

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# The Highway of Stolen Innocence: Sex Trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa

## **Abstract**

In this study I looked to examine the causes of sex trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa. Pulling data from the World Bank, Human Development Reports, the U.S. Department of State, and international organizations like the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women and the International Justice Mission, I examined five potential causes – corruption, lack of information, economic inequality, gender discrimination, and, finally, culture, hypothesizing that gender discrimination and culture are the two factors most directly linked to the problem. I used correlations and a multiple linear regression model to show the relationships between the first four of my independent variables and the extent of sex trafficking in the region, using qualitative data from Nigeria and South Africa to bolster these relationships, fill in the gaps in the data, and examine culture. Essentially, I show that until there is more research conducted, we still cannot be sure as to what exactly causes sex trafficking; however, culture definitely aids in its perpetuation. Since there are huge holes in the data out there, I explain that sex trafficking needs to be studied more if this world is ever to see it on the decline.

## THE HIGHWAY OF STOLEN INNOCENCE: SEX TRAFFICKING IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Leah N. Strege

### **Abstract**

*In this study I looked to examine the causes of sex trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa. Pulling data from the World Bank, Human Development Reports, the U.S. Department of State, and international organizations like the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women and the International Justice Mission, I examined five potential causes – corruption, lack of information, economic inequality, gender discrimination, and, finally, culture, hypothesizing that gender discrimination and culture are the two factors most directly linked to the problem. I used correlations and a multiple linear regression model to show the relationships between the first four of my independent variables and the extent of sex trafficking in the region, using qualitative data from Nigeria and South Africa to bolster these relationships, fill in the gaps in the data, and examine culture. Essentially, I show that until there is more research conducted, we still cannot be sure as to what exactly causes sex trafficking; however, culture definitely aids in its perpetuation. Since there are huge holes in the data out there, I explain that sex trafficking needs to be studied more if this world is ever to see it on the decline.*

## Introduction

Girls as young as four years old are tricked and stolen from their homes and forced into sexual slavery all over the world. The International Justice Mission reports that “Human trafficking is the world’s third largest criminal enterprise, after drugs and weapons,” with a total market value of \$32 billion.<sup>i</sup> Of the 600,000 to 800,000 people trafficked across international borders each year, 80% are women and girls, and 50% are minors (International Justice Mission).

What could possibly be the cause(s) behind this elusive industry? I posit that gender discrimination and culture are the two factors that are keeping women down and this industry alive and well in Sub-Saharan Africa.

## Literature Review

Sex trafficking is defined by the U.S. Department of State as “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person” for sexual exploitation, “through the use of force, fraud, or coercion” (*Trafficking in Persons Report 2007*).<sup>ii</sup> Sex tourism, a specific form of sex trafficking, involves the traveling of rich people from developed countries to poor developing countries in order to pay for sex. In my study, I investigated the possible explanations for why sex trafficking is so prevalent in Sub-Saharan Africa, specifically looking at Nigeria and South Africa as examples. I collected data from the World Bank, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and several scholars, including both sociologists and political scientists, who have studied issues related to sex trafficking in villages and cities within Sub-Saharan Africa. I also intertwined some recent headlines from African news sources in order to highlight the scope and modernity of this issue.

When people hear the term “sex trafficking,” Southeast Asia – Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam – is usually what comes to mind. However, unbeknownst to many, sex trafficking takes place in countries all over the globe, including developed countries like Italy, Belgium, and the United States of America. The U.S. Department of State reported in 2003 that there were an “estimated 800,000-900,000 people bought and sold annually around the globe” (Woolman & Bishop 2006).<sup>iii</sup> In one particular region of the world, the sex trafficking industry has been largely ignored in recent years due to this continent’s several other ongoing problems and crises.<sup>iv</sup> In the last decade, sex trafficking and sex tourism have been on the rise in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Within Sub-Saharan Africa alone, the reports of sex trafficking are alarming. Scientific studies have been conducted in South Africa,<sup>v</sup> Nigeria,<sup>vi</sup> and Malawi,<sup>vii</sup> while instances of sex trafficking have also been reported in Uganda, Cape Verde, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Zambia. On June 12, 2007, 39 of Sub-Saharan Africa’s 48 countries were listed in the U.S. Department of State’s *Trafficking in Persons Report*. In West Africa alone, it is estimated that up to 200,000 women make their way into the sex trafficking market annually (Woolman & Bishop 2006). Stu Woolman and Michael Bishop point to South Africa as “both [a] source and transit hub for sexual trafficking activities; it functions primarily as a final market for tens of thousands of women” (2006). They report that most women who are involved in the elusive industry in South Africa are refugees from surrounding nations such as Lesotho, Mozambique, and Malawi, and even distant nations like Thailand and China. Similarly, in Nigeria, almost half (44.8%) of 1,500 young women sampled knew someone engaged in sex trafficking (Okonofua, Ogbomwan, Alutu, Kufre, & Eghosa 2004).

There are three major sources of sexual trafficking. First, there are the women who choose to get involved in order to make money – one woman in Kenya even took language classes so she could service clients from more countries.<sup>viii</sup> Second, there are the men who trick women into traveling abroad with them by lying to them, promising fancy jobs and expensive lifestyles. Finally, there are the parents who trade their children or encourage them to become involved in sex trafficking in order to bring in some extra money – some communities in South Africa believe child sexual exploitation is just a “‘necessary evil’ in a society where children are increasingly needed to help supplement the family income or to provide for themselves” (Snell 2003).

When it comes to why sex-trafficking is so prevalent in Sub-Saharan Africa, several theories have been laid out by scholars. The majority of these scholars point to economics as the culprit for sex trafficking, citing economic inequality as the main reason women are interested in traveling abroad for prostitution. The results of a study interviewing young women about their knowledge and attitudes about sex trafficking in Benin City, South-South Nigeria show that “the majority of the women reported that they lacked sufficient funds to take care of their daily needs” (Okonofua, Ogbomwan, Alutu, Kufre, and Eghosa 2004). 62.8% of the 1,501 women included in the study reported that their major source of income was their husbands or boyfriends. Therefore, without the help of their men, these women would have little hope of putting food on the table. In addition, 47.4% of the women interviewed believed there are benefits associated with international trafficking – that it “brings wealth to the family,” “improves [the] standard of living for women,” and “gives women the ability to own houses, cars and other investments” (Okonofua, Ogbomwan, Alutu, Kufre, and Eghosa 2004). Surprisingly, 11.7% of the women believed that there are no disadvantages to sex trafficking. When clients are willing to pay up to \$25 per session in a country where the majority of people live on less than \$1 a day, these disadvantaged women do not think about the physical consequences of sex trafficking – not only pregnancy, STDs, and the spread of AIDS, which is ravaging parts of Africa, but also the physical violence. In a study done by Beverly Balos in South Africa and Zambia, 81% of women involved in sex trafficking were threatened, 73% were physically assaulted, 68% were threatened with a weapon, and over 50% were raped at least once (2004)<sup>ix</sup> – all they can think about is the money that it will provide for themselves or for their families (Snell 2003).

Similarly, theorists believe that women voluntarily become involved in sex trafficking because of the aforementioned lies fed to them by sex trafficking barons. In their study in Nigeria, Okonofua, Ogbomwan, Alutu, Kufre, and Eghosa found that of the 464 women propositioned to travel abroad for sex, 151 (33.5%) were told they would be hairdressing, nursing, or cleaning; 144 (32%) were not told what they would be doing; 70 (15.5%) were told they would be schooling; 35 (7.8%) were told they would be involved in trade or business; 8 (1.8%) were told they would marry; 2 (.4%) were told they would learn skills; 6 (.8%) were told they would be visiting. Only the remaining 30 (8.4%) were flat-out told that would be involved in prostitution (2004). It seems completely rational to these underprivileged women to go abroad with strange men after being offered fancy lifestyles that allow them to escape from their current state of poverty – most of them have no idea what they are getting themselves into.

One team of scholars has a slightly twisted take on sex tourism and trafficking – they see transactional sex as a social insurance policy in which women establish a support system through their sexual partners. Once again, sex trafficking is a means to economic security. Swindler and Watkins’ participant observation study in rural Malawi showed that “men and women are

constituted as they are – with needs, identities, and desires they have – by the system in which they participate, a political economy in which ties of dependence are crucial and ubiquitous” (2007). They go on to explain how men who generate more wealth are forced to take on multiple sexual partners because with money comes the obligation to provide for those who need it. Furthermore, one Malawian woman, while in a fight with her lover’s wife, shouted, “Your husband is not for you alone! He was born not for you special, and indeed he will be sleeping with all of us here, because we also need what he has, we need the penis as well, for once it enters on us, we just know that we are to eat that day! No penis, no money!” (Swindler & Watkins 2007). Therefore, for this woman and other Malawian women, sex trafficking and sex tourism provide for both a social and economic network of support.

Some social scientists, on the other hand, see traditional African cultures as the problem. In several African countries, teenage marriage is extremely common, and although there are laws in place by governments setting an age limit for marriage without parental consent, the parents are the ones offering their young daughters to older men as second or third wives in order to inherit the bridal dowry.<sup>x</sup> According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 65,000 children were married in Uganda in 2005 alone.<sup>xi</sup> Karen Mahler furthermore explains in her special report that the teenage marriages often end up in dissolution, which “may itself result in abuse; it may leave a young woman with few viable avenues of economic support other than commercial sex work” (1997). In a sample of over 2,000 Ethiopian women, for example, 42% of the women engaged in sex trafficking married for the first time prior to age 13; only 9% of the women engaged in sex trafficking were still in their first marriage (Mahler 1997). In addition, a myth exists in several tribal cultures throughout Sub-Saharan Africa that sex with a virgin cleanses the body of HIV, leading more virgins to be sexually exploited (Science in Africa 2002).<sup>xii</sup> If men believe they can protect themselves against HIV by having sex with virgins, adolescent girls are more likely to be traded or sold into sexual exploitation.

Another theory attacks corruption as the main cause behind sex trafficking. An African newspaper from November 13, 2006 explains that in Uganda the perpetrators behind sex trafficking, the trafficking barons promising women well-paying jobs abroad and then forcing them into sexual slavery, bribe the police when victims come forward claiming sexual abuse (Africa News). Similarly, “corruption among officials in law enforcement, immigration and the judicial system” leads these people to “profit from the illegal sex trade and thus have little motivation to enforce the laws” (Mahler 1997). In Cape Verde, prostitution is not illegal, and since sex tourism brings wealth to the small island, with “rich foreigners having sexual relationships with impoverished locals,” the government has nothing to gain economically from cracking down on sex trafficking (Africa News 2007).<sup>xiii</sup>

Another researcher believes that it is purely the lack of information that women have access to that drives their interest in sex trafficking.<sup>xiv</sup> After conducting research in a village outside Kano, Nigeria, Dr. Ghaji Badawi concludes that there is a “poverty of information” that drives women’s exploitation in Nigeria. She observes that there are “no institutions like a library, a school, an advisory centre or even a clinic. They are on their own...most can only speak their local language and 90% are illiterate” (Daily News 2007). Alarming, women in the region in which she studied are unaware that they are HIV positive until they are taken to the hospital with AIDS. Furthermore, 71.3% of the women interviewed by Badawi became prostitutes because their male friends encouraged it – in exchange for food and shelter, the women obey their providers. When asked if they were interested in joining adult education programs, all of the interviewees were excited about the prospect. Dr. Badawi is convinced that “even if a library in

Gada simply allows women to gather and share their knowledge of sexual matters with each other, a giant step would have been taken” (Daily News 2007).

International NGOs and some governments are hard at work to put a stop to sex trafficking in Africa. The International Justice Mission – a U.S.-based NGO seeking justice at home and abroad – trains women all over the continent about their legal rights and the laws pertaining to sexual violence.<sup>xv</sup> These training sessions “are making a tangible impact on the reporting of sexual crime in the communities where they have been held” (IJM 2007). Similarly, governments around the world are recognizing this issue and trying to make a difference. As Karen Mahler points out, “Many developed countries are now ... passing legislation that allows for the prosecution of citizens who engage in sex crimes while traveling abroad, even if their actions are legal in the country of destination” (1997). Such laws are in effect in the U.S., Australia, Belgium, France, Germany, and New Zealand (Mahler 1997).

When discussing sex trafficking, many scholars point to violence against women and children. Beverly Balos discusses the horrendous things done to women involved in prostitution: “Many are beaten and raped if they try to escape or refuse to have sex with customers. Some trafficked women are ‘subject to starvation, forced use of drugs and alcohol, burning with cigarettes, isolation in dark rooms’” (2004). Children’s bodies on the other hand, as evidenced by Cudore L. Snell, are traded for necessities such as food, clothes, or school fees (2003). Karen Mahler also concludes that “the pervasiveness of gender discrimination underlies many of the issues” involved with sex trafficking (1997). She and other scholars agree that “if the international community is to succeed in protecting the world’s most vulnerable citizens, it must first succeed in valuing them” (Mahler 1997).

## Research Design

In this study I looked to see what explains sex trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa. In order to test my hypothesis that as gender discrimination increases, the extent of sex trafficking increases, I intended to look at all 48 countries in the region – 42 mainland countries and six island nations – therefore making my unit of analysis each individual country. However, my dependent variable had no data for nine of the countries in the region,<sup>1</sup> therefore dropping my N to 39 cases. In addition, some of the independent variables I measured were missing some data, therefore reducing that N even further at certain times. My data comes from several different sources, including the World Bank, Human Development Reports, Transparency International, the U.S. Department of State, and the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women.

Even though there have been plenty of qualitative studies conducted on sex trafficking across the globe, there is hardly any accessible quantitative data out there. Not only is it an illegal industry, making it difficult to map in the first place, but also governments are not eager to confess the extent of the problem within their borders. Due to this lack of data, I formulated my own measure for my dependent variable – the extent of sex trafficking – merging data from two different sources. For this dependent variable, I combined incident reports from the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) with the U.S. Department of State’s list of Sub-Saharan African countries on the 2007 *Trafficking in Persons Report*. The CATW is a non-governmental organization that promotes the well-being of women in every corner of the world; it was the first NGO to focus its attempts on combating global sex trafficking of women. The U.S. Department of State’s *Trafficking in Persons Report* serves to raise awareness of trafficking

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<sup>1</sup> Cape Verde, Comoros, Eritrea, Lesotho, Namibia, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Somalia, and Swaziland.

as a global issue as well as to highlight and encourage the efforts of the international community to counter all forms of trafficking.

In order to accurately measure my dependent variable of sex trafficking, I defined seven different levels of the problem, ranging from zero to six in the dataset. Table 1.1 outlines these levels. Zero denotes that the country was listed on the 2007 *Trafficking in Persons Report*. In all of these countries, sex trafficking was identified as a problem to be addressed by each national government.<sup>2</sup> This report did not, however, examine the extent of the problem within each country's borders. Therefore, I relied on the incident reports from the CATW to take it from there. A value of one denotes that CATW has found prostitution in the country; two denotes organized and institutionalized sexual exploitation and violence, and three denotes trafficking. The values from four to six denote different combinations of these activities – four denotes a combination of prostitution and organized and institutionalized sexual exploitation and violence (one and two), five denotes a combination of prostitution and trafficking (one and three), and six denotes a combination of all three activities (one, two, and three). None of the cases had a combination of only trafficking and organized and institutionalized sexual exploitation and violence (two and three), so that combination was left out of the data.

Table 1.1:

Value	Dependent Variable Measure
0	Found on U.S. Department of State's 2007 <i>Trafficking in Persons Report</i>
1	Prostitution
2	Organized and Institutionalized Sexual Exploitation and Violence
3	Trafficking
4	Prostitution & Organized and Institutionalized Sexual Exploitation and Violence
5	Prostitution & Trafficking
6	Prostitution, Organized Institutionalized Sexual Exploitation and Violence, and Trafficking

I assigned these specific values to these different activities with the assumption that with each increase of one, the problem is worsened. For those countries with a value of zero, sex trafficking is a recognized problem in that country. However, a value of one means that not only is the problem recognized, but also that prostitution has been found by the CATW. Moving up to two means that organized and institutionalized sexual exploitation and violence has been found, which is worse than prostitution. Similarly, three shifts to trafficking, which is worse than organized and institutionalized sexual exploitation and violence. Finally, for each combination of these three activities, an increase in value denotes a worsening from the previous value. Therefore, a combination of all three activities is worse than a combination of one and three, which is worse than a combination of one and two, which is worse than any single activity found in that country. That was the logic of my dependent variable measure. Table 1.2 shows each country's value of the dependent variable.

<sup>2</sup> The nine aforementioned countries left out of the study were not found on this list, but that does not necessarily mean that sex trafficking is not a problem in that country, only that no data has been reported; therefore, rather than coding them as zeros and increasing all the other values by one, I ignored these countries altogether in order to prevent contamination of the measure and retain validity.



Table 1.2:

Country	Sex Trafficking Value
Angola	1
Benin	3
Botswana	3
Burkina Faso	2
Burundi	0
Cameroon	0
Cape Verde	-
Central African Republic	0
Chad	0
Comoros	-
Congo, Republic of	0
Côte d'Ivoire	0
Democratic Republic of Congo	0
Djibouti	0
Equatorial Guinea	0
Eritrea	-
Ethiopia	0
Gabon	0
Gambia, The	0
Ghana	4
Guinea	0
Guinea-Bissau	0
Kenya	1
Lesotho	-
Liberia	2
Madagascar	0
Malawi	0
Mali	0
Mauritania	0
Mauritius	0
Mozambique	0
Namibia	-
Niger	0
Nigeria	5
Rwanda	2
Sao Tome and Principe	-
Senegal	0
Seychelles	-
Sierra Leone	0
Somalia	-
South Africa	6
Sudan	6
Swaziland	-
Tanzania	3
Togo	3
Uganda	2
Zambia	3
Zimbabwe	4

For my independent variables, on the other hand, the data was much more accessible. I quantitatively looked at four potential explanations (independent variables) for sex trafficking. These four independent variables include corruption in government, lack of information, economic disadvantage/inequality, and gender discrimination. In order to measure corruption, I relied on Transparency International's *Corruption Perceptions Index*. Transparency International

is a global civic organization that focuses on exposing and fighting against corruption on a worldwide scale. This index uses a scale from zero to ten, a value of ten meaning that the country is not corrupt at all. This independent variable had an N of 35.

For my second variable, I used the 1998 *Human Development Report's* indicator of adult female literacy to measure a lack of information. Since women who can read have more access to information than illiterate women, I assumed that lower literacy rates suggest a greater lack of information. This independent variable had an N of 36.

My third variable – economic disadvantage/inequality - once again pulled data from the 1998 *Human Development Report*, relying on percentages of female earned income to measure economic disadvantage/inequality. This report breaks down national income into that earned by women and that earned by men, therefore showing the economic discrepancies between the sexes. This independent variable had an N of 36.

Finally, I used the World Bank's data on women in Parliament from 2003 in order to measure gender discrimination. I assumed that countries with more women in Parliament are more likely to have a higher degree of equality between men and women and therefore a less gender discrimination. This independent variable had an N of 37.

Table 1.3 shows my variables, the measures for those variables, and the direction of the relationship predicted by theory.

Table 1.3:

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Expected Direction of Variable's Relationship with Sex Trafficking</b>	<b>Expected Direction of Measure's Relationship with Sex Trafficking</b>
Sex Trafficking (Dependent Variable)	CATW incident reports & <i>Trafficking in Persons Report</i>	-----	-----
Corruption	<i>Corruption Perceptions Index</i>	<i>POSITIVE</i> – As corruption increases, so should sex trafficking.	<i>NEGATIVE</i> – As index values increase, corruption decreases, so sex trafficking should decrease as index values increase.
Lack of Information	Adult Female Literacy	<i>POSTIVE</i> – As a lack of information increases, so should sex trafficking.	<i>NEGATIVE</i> – As literacy rates increase, a lack of information decreases, so sex trafficking should decrease as literacy rates increase.
Economic Disadvantage/ Inequality	Earned Income	<i>POSITIVE</i> – As economic disadvantage increases, so should sex trafficking.	<i>NEGATIVE</i> – As earned income increases, economic disadvantage/inequality decreases, so sex trafficking should decrease as earned income increases.
Gender Discrimination	Women in Parliament	<i>POSITIVE</i> – As gender discrimination increases, so should sex trafficking.	<i>NEGATIVE</i> – As women in Parliament increases, gender discrimination decreases, so sex trafficking should decrease as women in Parliament increase.

My method of testing the relationships between my independent and dependent variables rested on both correlation data and a multiple linear regression model. First of all, I examined the correlations between each of the independent variables and the dependent variable, noting the strength and direction of each relationship. After having done this, I then ran a multiple regression in order to control for all the independent variables to see whether or not they had effects on one another, changing the overall explanation for sex trafficking. Whereas the correlations show the relationship each independent variable has with the extent of sex trafficking, this multiple regression model showed me what goes on in a country in which all of these variables combine to explain sex trafficking. This multiple regression model, after taking into account the missing data from all of the independent variables, had an N of 33.

After examining these correlations and my multiple regression model, it was clear to me that something else was going on to explain the incidences of sex trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, I ran a series of multiple regressions, each time replacing the dependent variable of sex trafficking with an independent variable, in order to test for multicollinearity. These regressions examine the effects the independent variables have on one another. I ran a total of four multiple regression models in order to test the interaction effects of my four independent variables.

Noticing some serious multicollinearity, I looked to the Gender-Development Index (GDI) from the 1998 *Human Development Report* to see its relationship to sex trafficking. The GDI combines data on life expectancy, adult literacy rates, school enrollment, and earned income of women versus men in order to compile a ranking system of gender development. Therefore, this measure allowed me to test the relationship of three of my variables together – economic inequality, a lack of information, and an overall gender discrimination implicit in the GDI's ranking system.

In addition to my quantitative method, in order to test my second hypothesis, that traditional African culture was a major culprit behind sex trafficking, I relied on qualitative data collected by scholars studying in Nigeria and South Africa. Since I could not think of a valid way to quantitatively measure the cultural oppression and repression of women in Sub-Saharan Africa, I used arguments from sociologists and political scientists studying in the region to explain how traditional African cultures perpetuate sex trafficking in that region.

As mentioned earlier, since sex trafficking is an elusive worldwide industry, it is practically impossible to find any quantitative data describing the extent of the problem. Because of this lack of data, I created my own measure of sex trafficking, making assumptions along the way and therefore running the risk of invalidating my research. I assumed that my dependent variable measure was valid and that each value increase of one meant a greater extent of sex trafficking. I assumed that organized and institutionalized sexual exploitation and violence is worse than prostitution and that trafficking is worse than both of these, even though I had no way of measuring the extent of each of these problems within each country. However, instead of shying away from this research question because of a lack of data, I decided that even with a lack of perfect data, the issue of sex trafficking must be studied if the illegal practice is ever to be curtailed.

## Analysis

### Quantitative Data

#### Correlations

My first independent variable – corruption – had a correlation coefficient with sex trafficking of .216 and a significance value of .106. With an N of 35 cases, this relationship is rather weak. Actually, this relationship runs counter to scholar’s claims that as corruption increases, sex trafficking increases. Karen Mahler holds that bureaucrats involved in law enforcement, immigration, and the court system in Sub-Saharan Africa profit from the sexual trafficking of women, therefore discouraging them to enforce laws against the illegal industry (1997). Transparency International’s *Corruption Perceptions Index* awards high values to the least corrupt nations, and since my dependent variable’s values increase as the extent of sex trafficking increases, if it were true that corruption was a major cause of sex trafficking, this relationship should be negative – the value of the dependent variable should decrease as the independent variable increases. Also, since the significance does not meet the .05 level standard, we can rule out this variable as having any real effect on sex trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa. See table 2.1.

Table 2.1:

Correlations			
		Sex Trafficking	Corruption
Pearson Correlation	Sex Trafficking	1.000	.216
	Corruption	.216	1.000
Significance (1-tailed)	Sex Trafficking	.	.106
	Corruption	.106	.
N		35	35

My second independent variable – a lack of information – had a correlation coefficient of .325 and a significance value of .053. This relationship with an N of 36 cases is relatively strong, and it just barely misses statistical significance at the .05 level. Again the direction of this relationship runs counter to theorists’ claims. Dr. Ghaji Badawi believes that a “poverty of information” in Nigeria is what drives women into sexual exploitation (2007). If a lack of information (measured by adult female literacy) indeed causes a higher incidence of sex trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa, the relationship between these two variables should be inverse – as adult female literacy rates increase, sex trafficking should decrease. However, as we see, the relationship is positive, not negative. In addition, just like the previous variable, this relationship does not meet the .05 level standard for statistical significance, therefore ruling out a lack of information as a major cause of sex trafficking in the region. See table 2.2.

Table 2.2:

Correlations			
		Sex Trafficking	Adult Female Literacy
Pearson Correlation	Sex Trafficking	1.000	.325
	Adult Female Literacy	.325	1.000
Significance (1-tailed)	Sex Trafficking	.	.053
	Adult Female Literacy	.053	.
N		36	36

My third variable – economic disadvantage/inequality – had a correlation coefficient of  $-.092$  and a significance value of  $.296$ . With an  $N$  of 36 cases, this relationship is even weaker than the previous two. The correlation coefficient is practically zero, suggesting no relationship at all. This correlation does have one redeeming value – it has the right direction. Since I used the percentage of income earned by women to measure economic inequality, according to scholars on the subject, sex trafficking should decrease as women have a better economic standing (make more money). According to a team of scholars studying in Nigeria, 62.8% of the 1501 women surveyed or interviewed listed their husbands or boyfriends as their main source of income. In addition, 47.4% of these women saw sex work as a means of improving their standard of living or allowing them niceties in life (Okonofua, Ogbomwan, Alutu, Kufre, and Eghosa 2004). Since these women see the illegal sex industry as their only economic opportunity, they are left incredibly vulnerable to the lies of trafficking barons – the recruiters for the industry – who offer fancy lifestyles to young girls. Of the 464 girls propositioned to go abroad with these barons, only 8.4% were told they would be doing commercial sex work; the remaining 91.6% were deceived with lies (Okonofua, Ogbomwan, Alutu, Kufre, and Eghosa 2004). Therefore, the argument runs that as women become more economically stable, they will not be vulnerable to such lies. Furthermore, the relationship between earned income and sex trafficking should be an inverse one, which my correlation shows it to be. However, the statistical significance of this relationship is even further from the  $.05$  level standard than the previous two variables, once again ruling out this variable as a chief cause of sex trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa. See table 2.3.

Table 2.3:

Correlations			
		Sex Trafficking	Earned Income
Pearson Correlation	Sex Trafficking	1.000	$-.092$
	Earned Income	$-.092$	1.000
Significance (1-tailed)	Sex Trafficking	.	$.296$
	Earned Income	$.296$	.
N		36	36

Finally, my fourth quantitative variable – gender discrimination – had a correlation coefficient of  $.190$  (women in Parliament) and a significance value of  $.261$ , with an  $N$  of 37 cases. This relationship between women in Parliament and the extent of sex trafficking is neither substantial nor in the right direction, nor does it meet statistical significance of  $.05$ . If the relationship between women in Parliament and sex trafficking were to agree with theorists' assertions, as the number of women in Parliament increases, incidence of sex trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa should decrease, reflecting an inverse relationship. However, my positive correlation coefficient of  $.190$  runs counter to this argument. Perhaps the number of women in Parliament is not the best measure of gender discrimination in the region. See table 2.4.

Table 2.4:

Correlations			
		Sex Trafficking	Women in Parliament
Pearson Correlation	Sex Trafficking	1.000	$.190$
	Parliament	$.190$	1.000
Significance (1-tailed)	Sex Trafficking	.	$.261$
	Parliament	$.261$	.
N		37	37

### Multiple Regression

With an N of 33 cases, my multiple regression model yielded an adjusted R Square of .050, meaning that this model explains 5% of the variance in the dependent variable. My four independent variables combined, therefore, only explain 5% of the variance in sex trafficking. Furthermore, this model had a significance value of .253, nowhere near the .05 level used as a standard in social science. See tables 3.1 and 3.2. This suggests that something else must be going on – this equation is leaving out an important cause of sex trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa – perhaps culture.

Table 3.1:

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	.441 <sup>a</sup>	.169	.050	1.900

a. Predictors: (Constant), Earned Income, Corruption, Adult Female Literacy, Women in Parliament.

Table 3.2:

**ANOVA<sup>b</sup>**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Significance
1 Regression	20.536	4	5.134	1.422	.253 <sup>a</sup>
Residual	101.100	28	3.611		
Total	121.636	32			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Earned Income, Corruption, Adult Female Literacy, Women in Parliament

b. Dependent Variable: Sex Trafficking

When examining each independent variable in the regression, the standardized coefficients values were as follows: -.126 (earned income), .324 (adult female literacy), .043 (corruption index), and .179 (women in Parliament). These coefficients show adult female literacy to have the strongest relationship with sex trafficking; however, just as in the correlation, the direction of this relationship is wrong. As adult female literacy rates increase, sex trafficking should decrease, and this positive relationship runs counter to theory. In addition, this variable does not meet statistical significance at the .05 level, yielding a significance value of .091. The relationship between women in Parliament and sex trafficking is also in the wrong direction, showing sex trafficking to increase as the number of women in Parliament increases. With a significance value of .349, this relationship is not statistically significant. The remaining two independent variable's relationships with sex trafficking have the right direction; however, the strength and direction of these relationships are somewhat irrelevant because of the significance values obtained: .825 (corruption index) and .491 (earned income). The significance values of all four independent variables are terrible, essentially meaning that this model cannot be relied upon to explain sex trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa. See table 3.3.

Table 3.3:

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Significance
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.803	2.470	.	.325	.747
Corruption	.098	.438	.043	.223	.825
Adult Female Literacy	.030	.017	.324	1.752	.091
Earned Income	-.043	.061	-.126	-.698	.491
Women in Parliament	.048	.050	.179	.952	.349

a. Dependent Variable: Sex Trafficking

Due to the terrible significance levels of all of my independent variables in this multiple regression, there must be some interaction effects going on here. The only rational conclusion is multicollinearity - several of these variables must be highly correlated with one another, therefore wreaking havoc on the multiple regression model. In order to test for this, I ran four more multiple regressions, replacing the dependent variable of sex trafficking with an independent variable each time, therefore allowing me to see the relationships between all of the independent variables.

#### *Multicollinearity*

The first multiple regression, with corruption as the dependent variable, yielded an adjusted R Square of .162 and a significance of .032. The second multiple regression, with lack of information (measured by adult female literacy rates) as the dependent variable, yielded an adjusted R Square of .073 and a significance of .141. The third multiple regression, with economic inequality (measured by earned income) as the dependent variable, yielded an adjusted R Square of -.009 and a significance of .454. Finally, the fourth multiple regression, with gender discrimination (measured by women in Parliament) as the dependent variable, yielded an adjusted R Square of .089 and a significance of .110. See table 4.1.

Table 4.1:

Multicollinearity		
<i>Dependent Variable</i>	Adjusted R Square	Significance
Corruption	.162	.032*
Adult Female Literacy	.073	.141
Earned Income	-.009	.454
Women in Parliament	.089	.110

\* Statistically significant at the .05 level

Only one of these four regressions – with corruption as the dependent variable – meets statistical significance at the .05 level. However, three of these four regressions yielded adjusted R Squares higher than my original regression model, showing me that the independent variables' correlations with one another were overshadowing their relationships with the dependent variable in my initial multiple regression.

After looking at the partial coefficient values (standardizes Beta values) for the independent variables in my four multiple regression models, it is clear that some multicollinearity exists between some of these variables. See tables 4.2-4.5.

Table 4.2:

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>			
Model	Standardized Beta	Significance	
1	Adult Female Literacy	.342	.034*
	Earned Income	-.045	.778
	Women in Parliament	.323	.048*

a. Dependent Variable: Corruption

\* Statistically significant at the .05 level

Adult female literacy and women in Parliament both had relatively strong relationships with corruption, with partial Beta coefficients of .342 and .323 respectively. Both of these variables also met statistical significance at the .05 level, yielding respective significance values of .034 and .048. Earned income, on the other hand, had both a very weak relationship with corruption and was nowhere near meeting statistical significance, yielding a Beta coefficient of -.045 and a significance value of .778.

Table 4.3:

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>			
Model	Standardized Beta	Significance	
1	Corruption	.378	.034*
	Earned Income	-.116	.489
	Women in Parliament	-.051	.773

a. Dependent Variable: Adult Female Literacy

\* Statistically significant at the .05 level

Corruption had both a relatively strong relationship with adult female literacy and met statistical significance at the .05 level, yielding a Beta coefficient of .378 and a significance value of .034. Earned income and women in Parliament, on the other hand, both had weak relationships with adult female literacy and did not meet statistical significance, with respective coefficients of -.116 and -.051 and significance values of .489 and .773.

Table 4.4:

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>			
Model	Standardized Beta	Significance	
1	Corruption	-.054	.778
	Adult Female Literacy	-.126	.489
	Women in Parliament	.252	.166

a. Dependent Variable: Earned Income

Corruption and adult female literacy had very weak relationships with earned income, with Beta coefficients of -.054 and -.126, respectively. Women in Parliament had a bit stronger relationship, yielding a coefficient of .252. However, none of these three variables' relationships with earned income met statistical significance at the .05 level, with significance values of .778 (corruption), .489 (adult female literacy), and .166 (women in Parliament).



Table 4.5:

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>			
Model	Standardized Beta	Significance	
1	Corruption	.351	.048*
	Female Youth Literacy	-.050	.773
	Earned Income	.227	.166

a. Dependent Variable: Women in Parliament

\* Statistically significant at the .05 level

Finally, the fourth regression showed corruption to have had a relatively strong relationship with women in Parliament and met statistical significance, with a Beta coefficient of .351 and a significance value of .048. Earned income yielded a weak relationship with women in Parliament (.227), while female youth literacy yielded a very weak relationship (-.050). Neither of these two relationships met statistical significance at the .05 level, yielding respective significance values of .166 and .773.

In conclusion, it is clear that multicollinearity exists at least in part between corruption, adult female literacy, and women in Parliament. Tables 4.2 and 4.3 show corruption and adult female literacy to be relatively strongly related – both variables had standardized Beta coefficients above .3 when examining their effect on one another, while tables 4.2 and 4.5 show corruption and women in Parliament to be relatively strongly related, once again with Beta coefficients above .3. Since these relationships all met statistical significance, it can be concluded that multicollinearity exists between these three variables. Earned income seems to be the outlier, not significantly related to any of the other independent variables. Overall, however, this multicollinearity could explain the poor statistical significance, adjusted R Square, and the weak independent variable coefficient values of my initial regression model with sex trafficking as the dependent variable. However, the multicollinearity I found was not substantial enough to fill the gap between my multiple regression model and theory behind sex trafficking. Realizing this dilemma, I tried one more method of eking out the real cause(s) of sex trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa – combining variables.

### *Combining Variables*

Since the multicollinearity of the independent variables in my study was not substantial enough to make up for the poor results of my original multiple regression model, I looked to a combination measure of three of my independent variables – the gender-development index (GDI) to see if perhaps this combination worked to cause sex trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa. This measure combines data on school enrollment, literacy rates, and earned income to create a ranking system reflecting gender development. This index overall is another measure of gender discrimination, though it relies on economic inequality and a lack of information as well.

First, just like my other variables, I ran a correlation between GDI rank and sex trafficking. The results are shown in table 5.1. With an N of 36, this correlation yielded a correlation coefficient of -.320 between GDI rank and sex trafficking, meaning that as GDI rank increases (gender development increases), sex trafficking decreases. This inverse relationship is relatively strong at -.320, but it does not quite meet statistical significance at the .05 level, rather yielding a significance value of .057.

Table 5.1:

		Sex Trafficking	GDI Rank
Pearson Correlation	Sex Trafficking	1.000	-.320
	Parliament	-.320	1.000
Significance (1-tailed)	Sex Trafficking	.	.057
	Parliament	.057	.
N		36	36

With such a strong correlation coefficient, I decided to run a regression between GDI rank and sex trafficking to see what percentage of variance in sex trafficking could be explained by gender development (GDI rank). The results are shown in tables 5.2-5.5. The adjusted R Square of this model was .076, .026 higher than the adjusted R Square in my original multiple regression. 7.6% of the variance in sex trafficking can therefore be attributed to gender development (GDI rank) in Sub-Saharan Africa. Once again, however, just as in the correlation, this relationship between GDI rank and sex trafficking does not meet statistical significance at the .05 level.

Table 5.2:

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	.320 <sup>a</sup>	.103	.076	1.818

a. Predictors: (Constant), GDI rank

Table 5.3:

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
1 Regression	12.842	1	12.842	3.885	.057
Residual	112.380	34	3.305		
Total	125.222	35			

a. Predictors: (Constant), GDI rank

b. Dependent Variable: Sex Trafficking

Therefore, although this combination of variables is indeed having an effect on sex trafficking in my model, without statistical significance it cannot be generalized to be the case in Sub-Saharan Africa. What could possibly be the cause then?

### *Qualitative Data*

Since my previous analysis shows that something else besides my four independent variables or a combination of those variables must be the culprit behind sex trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa, this leads me to my qualitative variable – culture. After examining data from sociologists and other social scientists, it is clear that the patriarchal social structures found in many nations throughout Sub-Saharan Africa keep women oppressed and spur the sex trafficking industry. Cultural practices keeping women oppressed include forced marriage, female circumcision/female genital mutilation (FGM), polygamy, and other cultural myths. As Oluyemisi Bamgbose explains, “Under many African traditional cultures, the marriage of a girl is entirely the responsibility of her father if she has not attained the age of puberty. The father gives her away to a person of his choice without consulting her or her mother” (2002).<sup>xvi</sup> This practice often results in the rape of an adolescent girl. In Nigeria, as Bamgbose explains, “girls

are generally treated as ‘parcels to be exchanged in marriage’” (2002). In one form of exchanged, forced marriage known as “Kwase Yamwn Sha,” “a male family member exchanges his adolescent sister or ward for a girl in another family who then becomes his wife ... Such girls are usually exchanged to a man who is elderly, ugly, diseased or disabled” (Bamgbose 2002). Such teenage marriages often end in dissolution; since these adolescent girls have little to no skills other than how to acquiesce to their husbands’ demands, they are left prone to sex work when their marriages dissolve. In Ethiopia, as Karen Mahler points out, “early age at first marriage was found to be a significant predictor of commercial sex work: In a sample of more than 2,000 women, 42% of women working as prostitutes had married before the age of 13” (1997). Forced marriage therefore has a potentially large effect on sex trafficking.

Female circumcision or “FGM” is “culturally considered proof of femininity and a ‘demonstration of a woman’s courage’” (Bamgbose 2002). This term encompasses several different forms of excision, all of which leave the female without part of or their entire sexual organ. In the Ijaw and Etsako cultures in Nigeria, FGM is a premarital ritual that brings an adolescent into womanhood. It is a “deeply rooted African practice held with much pride” (Bamgbose 2002). This practice strips women of their sexuality, giving their husbands control over their bodies. These men are then able to sell their wives’ bodies in order to make more money. In South Africa, as Cudore L. Snell reports, sexual exploitation of young girls is seen as a “‘necessary evil’ in a society where children are increasingly needed to help supplement the family income” (2003). Female circumcision simply takes away a woman’s control over her own sexuality, leaving her vulnerable to male dominance and sexual exploitation.

In many Sub-Saharan African cultures, it is accepted tradition that a man is allowed as many wives as he wishes. As he increases that number of wives (and eventually children), once the dowry money from each union runs out, more and more people are relying on his fixed amount of income. This leaves the second, third, fourth, or even fifth wife with hungry children, forcing her to find a way to make income of her own to supplement that of her husband. Since most of these women live in rural societies with little economic opportunity, they are easily deceived by sex trafficking barons promising wonderful jobs abroad that will allow them to support their families. A group of sociologists who conducted a study in Benin City, Nigeria found that of the 1,456 women surveyed or interviewed, 464 were approached by people offering assistance in traveling abroad. Of those women, almost half of them were lied to as to what they would be doing in the destination country. 33.5% were told they would work as hairdressers, babysitters, and cleaners, while 15% were told they would be furthering their education. Only 8.4% were told they would be doing commercial sex work, while 31.9% were not told anything (Okonofua, Ogbomwan, Alutu, Kufre, and Eghosa 2003). Since polygamy often forces women to make their own income, women who have never worked outside the home and are simply trying to provide for their families are vulnerable to such sex trafficking barons’ lies.

Finally, traditional African myths have a significant impact on sex trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa. The virgin sex myth, for example, holds that sex with a virgin is an easy way to prevent HIV. This myth is accepted as fact in several parts of South Africa, leaving adolescent boys and girls vulnerable to sexual exploitation.<sup>3</sup> Africa News reports that this myth has led to an

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<sup>3</sup> In his memoir of his life in Zimbabwe, Peter Godwin confirms this myth’s popularity, writing, “Some of them have begun saying that the only way for a man to cure himself of this lethal affliction is to have sex with a young virgin, that this will make him clean again. Many young girls are raped by men for this reason” (51). Godwin, Peter. *When A Crocodile Eats the Sun: A Memoir of Africa*. New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2006.

increase in foreign demand for sex with young black children (2000).<sup>xvii</sup> Even outsiders are caught in this myth's web of lies, desperate to find an easy way to prevent the disease. Full-grown men (and perhaps women) do not find it difficult to find a poor helpless virgin to rape in order to ward off the disease ravaging their homeland. Due to this foreign demand, children from neighboring countries like Angola and Mozambique "end up as prostitutes on the streets of Johannesburg and Cape Town" (Africa News 2000). This myth, along with others, perpetuates the problem of sex trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa.

## Conclusions

Based on my findings, it is still unclear as to what exactly is causing sex trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa, although the qualitative evidence points to traditional African culture as a major culprit of its perpetuation. None of my initial correlations met statistical significance at the .05 level, only a few of them yielding relatively strong relationships. Of my four independent variables, a lack of information, measured by adult female literacy rates, yielded the highest correlation coefficient (.325), but it was in the wrong direction, implying that sex trafficking increases as literacy rates increase, which runs counter to theory. Of the remaining three variables, corruption and economic inequality (measured by earned income) were in the right direction, but too weak and not significant enough to really mean anything. Gender discrimination (measured by women in Parliament) had a positive relationship with sex trafficking, which is opposite of what theory suggests it should be.

My multiple regression model yielded a weak adjusted R Square (.050) and did not meet statistical significance at the .05 level (.253). This means that this model can explain only 5% of the variance in sex trafficking. Three of the four partial coefficients were rather weak, only adult female literacy breaking .3, and none of them met statistical significance at the .05 level. The weakness of this model could be attributed to the multicollinearity found between corruption, adult female literacy, and women in Parliament, but even then there still must be some other factor to explain the remaining 95% of the variance in sex trafficking.

The results of my analysis of GDI rank – the composite of literacy rates, school enrollment, and earned income to tabulate an overall gender development index – was not substantial enough to explain sex trafficking. Although the correlation between GDI rank and sex trafficking was relatively strong (-.320) and in the right direction – sex trafficking decreasing as gender development increased – it did not meet statistical significance at the .05 level (.057). In addition, although the adjusted R Square in the regression was higher than the adjusted R Square in my original multiple regression (.076), it once again did not meet statistical significance (.057), therefore ruling out the chance that it is a major factor in causing the sex trafficking industry in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, I believe that the combination of the analysis of GDI rank and the multicollinearity between corruption, adult female literacy, and women in Parliament show that something is going on between all of these factors to perpetuate the problem of sex trafficking in that region.

Finally, my qualitative analysis did lend support to my original hypothesis that traditional African cultures perpetuate the problem of sex trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa. With forced marriage, female genital mutilation, polygamy, and myths such as the virgin sex myth, African cultures are promoting male dominance of adolescent women, which in turn leads to sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. Young girls are married off by their families before they even reach puberty, leaving them with no skills with which they can make a living. When these marriages fall apart, as Karen Mahler points out they usually do, the young women are left with

no other alternative than sex work in order to make a decent living to provide for themselves and/or their families. Young girls are also “brought into womanhood” in several Sub-Saharan African cultures through female circumcision, which reaffirms men’s dominance over women by taking away women’s control of their own sexuality. Polygamy leaves second, third, and fourth wives with the burden of providing for their families as their husband takes on more wives with a fixed salary. Since more wives means more children and therefore more mouths to feed, polygamy leads women into alternative money-making markets, such as sex trafficking. Finally, traditional myths such as the virgin sex myth confuse people into doing heinous things, such as raping adolescent girls and boys in order to prevent HIV. With all of these obvious elements of male dominance, it is clear that traditional Sub-Saharan African cultures are contributing to the problem of sex trafficking in the region.

With this heap of confusing data, one thing is for sure – one factor alone does not cause sex trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is a combination of several factors, one of which I have shown to be traditional African culture and others of which I have suggested to be communally affecting sex trafficking. However, unless the multicollinearity contaminated my original multiple regression in such a way as none of my findings can be considered accurate, or unless culture can explain away the rest of the problem, other factors must be at work to cause and perpetuate the illegal market of sex trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa.

### **Flaws in the Data**

As can be seen from my study, there is a major lack of data out there that can be used to measure sex trafficking. My independent variable datasets were all missing at least a few cases, some of them not including island nations, some simply leaving out war-ridden countries like Somalia and Sudan, others apparently just randomly missing cases. In addition, there was no clear way in my mind as to how one could quantitatively measure cultural practices linked to sex trafficking, leaving me with one option – qualitatively try to represent the relationship. My dependent variable, however, left me with the most difficulty. No national data exists that has statistics on sex trafficking in African countries. Since sex trafficking is an illegal industry, there is not much quantitative data to describe it in any region of the world. Due to this lack of data, I decided to use the data I could find, that of the CATW reports and the U.S. Department of State, to try to measure the problem. Whether or not this measure is accurate is for someone else to decide – it was simply the best I could muster from the limited data I found. I simply relied on face validation to justify my variable’s measures, assuming each measure’s validity based on its self-evident character. This may sound like a poor decision – perhaps I should have followed the data I did find in another direction; however, if people do not take such risks in working with limited data, elusive industries like sex trafficking are never going to be understood and they are only going to expand if nothing is done to stop them. More research needs to be conducted on sex trafficking – not only in Sub-Saharan Africa, but across the entire world – if we ever hope to see it disappear from the world we know.

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