

# HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND NIGERIA'S DEVELOPMENT: AN EXAMINATION OF THE BENIN METROPOLIS, EDO STATE, NIGERIA

*Roland Aghahiysi UKHUREBOR*

## **Abstract**

The study investigated the causes, effects and remedies of human trafficking in Benin metropolis of Edo State with particular respect to trafficking in young girls and women outside the shores of Nigeria for sexual exploitation and how human trafficking has impacted on the development of Nigeria. The research design was anchored on case study with a descriptive approach. The population of the study was drawn from victims of human trafficking sent intermittently to NAPTIP's shelter, Officials of the anti-trafficking agencies of government and non- governmental organizations within the Benin metropolis with a sample size of 116 (one hundred and sixteen) respondents who were purposively selected for the study. Two different types of qualitative research methods were used to generate data for this study being a qualitative one were the key informant interview of victims and in-depth interview of officials of the anti-trafficking agencies. The data were content analysed; verbatim quotations were employed to illustrate issues discussed during interview sessions. The main findings of the study among others established socio-economic and socio-cultural factors as the main factors affecting victims of human trafficking which makes young girls and women vulnerable to trafficking. The study recommends among others that the government of Edo State and Nigeria by extension should make serious efforts towards addressing poverty in the land by embarking upon massive job creation, aggressive and sustainable public enlightenment and education campaigns, as well as empowerment of the jobless and vulnerable persons in the society.

**Keywords:** Human trafficking, victims, sexual exploitation, development, socio-economic and socio-cultural factors.

## **Introduction**

The phenomenon of Human Trafficking in Nigeria especially of young girls and women into exploitative sexual and forced labour, has recently began to attract local, national, regional and international attention from world leaders, academics, the mass media, advocacy groups, the clergy and humanity in general. According to United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2011), Human Trafficking is the illegal movement of people typically for the purposes of forced labour or commercial sexual exploitation. Human trafficking is the trade of humans most commonly, for the purpose of sexual slavery, forced labour or commercial sexual exploitation for the trafficker or others.

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**Roland Aghahiysi UKHUREBOR** is a Lecturer with the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria.

A popular and widely cited definition of human trafficking is that of the United Nations Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children (also referred to as the Trafficking Protocol or the Palermo protocol) defined human trafficking as:

the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person for the control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (United Nations 2000, p.42).

The above trafficking definition consist of three elements:

**Act:** Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, receipt of persons.

**Means:** Threat of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability, giving payments or benefits.

**Purpose:** Exploitation, which includes prostitution of others, sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery or practices similar to slavery or removal of organs, labour exploitation/child abuse and other types of exploitation.

According to a report prepared by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2010), Nigeria was ranked 8<sup>th</sup> on the World index among countries involved in sex trafficking. Nigeria is a source, transit and destination country for other African countries where women and girls as well as children subjected to forced labour, domestic services and sex trafficking. Nigeria is also the main source of trafficked women and girls as well as children are taken to other West African countries such as Mali, Ghana, Benin Republic, Burkina Faso, Cote D' Ivoire and to Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as to South Africa were they are exploited for the same purposes. A majority of the victims come from Edo and Delta states. The main countries of destination where they are subjected to forced prostitution are mainly Italy, Spain, Germany, France and Netherlands (Ebegbulem, 2012).

### **Human Trafficking and its resemblance to the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade**

Human trafficking is to a large extent a form of modern day slavery on account of its resemblance to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade which started in the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century. According to Akor (2011), the history of human trafficking including that of the present day trafficking of women, cannot be completely divorced from the phenomenon of slavery. This is because both involve the acquisition and transportation of humans across local, national, and international borders for servitude, with or without the consent of trafficked person(s).

Omolola (1982) posited that a more drastic change in the character and complexity of slavery came in the late 15<sup>th</sup> to mid -19<sup>th</sup> century when many Africans were shipped across the Atlantic as slaves in what later became known as the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. The intercontinental slave trade which involved Europeans and Africans was carried on through from continents of Europe, Africa, America and Latin America. The European countries involved in the transatlantic slave trade include chiefly, Portugal, Britain and Spain. The major African countries involved in the slave trade includes, Nigeria, Congo, Angola, Sierra-Leone, Chad, Gambia, Kenya, Cape-Verde, Madeira Island etc. Latin American countries include chiefly, Brazil, Chile and the Caribbean etc. (Bales, 2004 & Shelly, 2010).

The main agents of human trafficking according to (Edeko, 2011), includes recruiters as well as transporters, receivers, pimps, brothel-keepers, corrupt border guards and producers of false documentation, all of whom benefits as the trafficked persons pass through their hands. The trafficker could be part of the extended family or has links with the family nucleus, or someone known within the local community. They are also those known as "trolley" or "dagos" or "brothers" who are local traffickers. Prominent among the traffickers are the madams in Italy. The Madam has a male assistant, business partner or lover who is often called madam's boy, madam's black boy, black boy or maman boy.

It should be pointed out that many are of the opinion that poor economic conditions or recessions that led to the structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s in Nigeria which concomitantly led to poverty among large concentration of the population. These socio-economic factors coupled with socio-cultural factors such as the breakdown of the extended family system, gender inequality, child fosterage, high fertility and population growth, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, break-down of societal values amongst others, seems to account for human trafficking in Edo state and Nigeria by extension. It should be pointed out that this study focused on trafficking in young girls and women out of Nigeria to other countries across the boundaries of Nigeria which is external trafficking and with a view to finding out the causes, effects as well as proffering solutions to this problem as it has impacted on the country's development.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The adverse effects of human trafficking on development of Nigeria are enormous. Human trafficking constitutes a drain on National resources due to the exodus from source countries. Many young women and girls who would have contributed immensely to the development and growth of the country are trafficked away to foreign countries into exploitative labour and sex work. Children who are supposed to be trained as leaders of tomorrow are being lured away into slavery, domestic servitude, sexual and labour exploitation as well as debt bondage in both within and outside their freedom zones and communities. It seems to be a very big disservice to Nigeria in general and Edo state in particular (Akor, 2011).

It should also be pointed out that one major concern with trafficking in human beings is the life threatening health consequences which prevent the victims from attaining the highest possible level of physical, mental and social well-being. Quite often, victims are exposed to HIV/AIDS, various forms of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) through their exposure to prostitution and in extreme case to death (Beyrer & Stachowiak, 2003; Shelly, 2010). Some victims are likely to suffer from infertility due to infections to their reproductive organs as a result of unprotected sex during prostitution. Hossain (as cited in World Health Organization 2012) reported that majority of women suffer high levels of physical and sexual abuse before and during their exploitation, and multiple concurrent physical and mental health problems immediately after their trafficking experience. Edeko (2011) also asserted that victims of trafficking pay a horrible price, ranging from psychological trauma to emotional and physical harm etc.

The socio-economic and cultural factors such as poverty, lack of empowerment, poor economic conditions and the desire to get rich quick syndrome seems to be factors responsible for the vulnerability of our women and young girls being trafficked to foreign countries. The inordinate desire to get rich quick as well as the juicy picture of Eldorado in foreign countries painted by dubious sponsors seems to make girls and women especially in Nigeria and Edo State in particular to be easily trafficked away and only to be forced into the exploitative labour and sex work. (Adomako-Ampofo, 1997, Maicibi, 2007) noted that many of such victims have paid dearly for their ignorance while in Europe.

The frequent occurrence of premature and avoidable deaths among able-bodied young boys and girls on their way to Europe by road and through the Mediterranean high seas is an issue of concern and it portrays bad image of Nigeria to the outside world. Frequent reports of incidence of boat mishaps and numerous deaths have caused the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to identify trafficking as the most dangerous form of migration (Gushulak & Macpherson, 2000).

All the above problems caused by human trafficking seems to lead to great damages not only to the image of the families of the victims and communities in Nigeria but has also impacted or affected Nigeria's development as a country. It has also affected the image of Edo State and Edo people.

The problem the study addressed by way of filling the existing gap created in the study of human Trafficking was to focus on victims of human trafficking and to access them in their temporal abode with particular respect to the shelter of National agency for the prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) as well as other existing shelters within the Benin Metropolis. This is because carrying out empirical researches with victims of trafficking is always an uphill task in gaining access to victims of trafficking as a result of restrictions placed by the government as well as service providers towards guaranteeing their confidentiality. Theoretical researches with service providers which are often based on convenient samples are often embarked upon by researchers than embarking on empirical study with victims of trafficking (VOTs).

**The following were the research objectives of this study:**

The overall aim of this study is to identify the causes of human trafficking and its effects on the development of Nigeria as well as proffer remedies for its eradication or drastic reduction in the country. Accordingly, the specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Identify the socio-economic and cultural factors influencing human trafficking in Benin Metropolis.
2. Examine the effects of the act of trafficking on victims and development of Nigeria.
3. To proffer remedies by way of making recommendations based on the findings of the above on how to stem this practice.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the socio-economic and cultural factors affecting victims of human trafficking and their families in Benin Metropolis that make women and girls vulnerable to trafficking?
2. What are the effects of human trafficking on victims and development of Edo State?
3. What are possible ways or solutions to reduce drastically the problem of trafficking in human beings?

**Literature Review****Socio-economic and Cultural Causes of human trafficking**

Numerous studies exist which attempt to provide reasons why trafficking takes place among certain categories of individuals. Poverty, unemployment and inadequate educational attainment are the socio-economic factors affecting individuals especially the women and girls which leads to their vulnerability and consequent trafficking according to Awogbenle and Iwuamadi, 2010 (as cited in Anegbode & Alonge, 2015). The impact of the desire to get-rich-quick syndrome and deception on prospective persons to be trafficked as well as the impact of large family size on family members which led to their vulnerability and subsequent trafficking were also highlighted by (UNAFRI, 2007, Okojie, Eghafona, Vincent-Osaghae & Kalu, 2003). They asserted that many people that came from large family size parenthood are uncared for as many parents are unable to cater for them because of their inadequate resources. Hence they become vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers.

Emenyonu (2009), conducted a study on causes of human trafficking in Edo State. The purpose was to determine the factors responsible for trafficking and ways of tackling the problem in Edo State. The survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study consisted of all the employees of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) in Edo State. The entire population participated in the study. Data

were collected using questionnaire. Analysis was done using descriptive statistics (frequency counts and percentages). The results showed that the main causes of Trafficking in Persons (TIPs) were high level of poverty in Nigeria, high rate of unemployment, strong desire of youths to migrate to foreign land and low level of education. It was recommended that the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP) should be empowered and advised to collaborate with government to wage war against TIPs in the State.

In a related study, Ogbodo (2011) became interested in finding out whether human trafficking was declining in Edo State. The study utilized survey research design and a sample of 52 NAPTIP officials out of a population of 72. The instrument used for data collection was an open ended questionnaire titled, "Incidence of Human Trafficking Questionnaire". Descriptive statistics was used for data analysis. The results indicated that the incidence of TIPs was high in the State. It was recommended that support (empowerment) and vocational training be given to young people who otherwise would still be trafficked for exploitation being without means of livelihood.

### **Effects of trafficking on victims and its implication on the development of Nigeria**

The costs of human trafficking are experienced on the individual, community, national, regional and global level. They affect not only source countries but also transit and host or destination countries. Trafficking impact on the individual and community. In fact, the consequences of trafficking on the victims, their families and communities are severe and diverse. Trafficked children, women and girls are deprived of the opportunities of obtaining their desires at a crucial age and they suffer psychological scars that may never heal and may prevent them from functioning well in society. Teenagers and women trafficked for both sexual and labour exploitation are sometimes deprived of the opportunity of marriage or of having children. Men trafficked as labourers face years without family life and may suffer pain from work related injuries (Shelley, 2010).

Human trafficking has devastating demographic consequences in many regions of the world as it deprive societies of men and women of childbearing age (Shelley, 2010, Cockbain, Bowers & Dimitrova, 2018). The adverse effects of human trafficking on the development of Nigeria are enormous. This is so because it constitute a drain on national resources due to the exodus from source countries like Nigeria. Consequently, many thousands of women and girls, men and boys who would have contributed immensely to the development and growth of the country are trafficked to foreign countries especially Italy and Mali into exploitative labour and sex work. According to Nworgu (2005) who was a female researcher provides additional insight into the volume of human trafficking in Nigeria. According to her, within Africa, Nigeria is the largest single source of trafficked women to Europe and Asia. Edo State for instance, has been identified as a hub for trafficking in young women legislated against human trafficking and the prostitution of women

(UNESCO, 2004). Despite the enactment of the anti-trafficking law, the incidence of trafficking in young women continues to increase. Benin City, the capital of Edo State has been defined as the head-quarters of trafficking in young women (UNICRI, 2004). Young men and women, boys and girls who are supposed to be leaders of tomorrow and contribute their quota to the development and growth of the country, are on exodus to foreign countries of Italy, Spain, Germany, Netherlands, France and presently Mali in the West Africa sub-region. In this way, trafficking impact negatively on the development and growth of Nigeria economy as well as in its infrastructures.

### **Remedies to eradicate human trafficking**

According to Mba (2017), human trafficking has being discovered to be the fastest growing criminal industry in the world. It ties with illegal arms trade as the second largest, after the drug trade in terms of revenue generation for the perpetrators with an estimated income of \$32 billion dollars yearly. Solutions advanced by Mba (2017) towards the eradication of human trafficking in Nigeria includes investment in Education, social orientation in the form of awareness/sensitization of the rural dwellers by NAPTIP and government as well as non-governmental organizations since they are the more vulnerable group; resolution of conflicts in the country; proper monitoring of human movements across the borders; using social media to report cases of human trafficking and discuss how to reduce or eliminate it from the society and to partner with telecommunication companies on how to expose the evils of human trafficking.

Among the ways to eradicate or at least reduce the high incidence of human trafficking from the Nigerian society is also to identify people in economic need, undocumented migrants, children dysfunctional families, persons who are marginalized and have mental disorders are among those who are particularly vulnerable to traffickers. Their desperation to get-rich-quick in life led to their being vulnerable to traffickers. Member states anti-trafficking agencies were enjoined to address these socio-economic factors that create an environment conducive to trafficking activities. Criminal justice and assistance should be put in place to make victims to be at least comfortable which will invariably lead to their resistance to trafficking. Furthermore, there is need for world leaders to address global poverty (Kriftcher, 2019, United Nations, 2021).

### **Methodology**

The study took place at the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) Edo State Command in Benin City. The empirical study was carried out among the victims of human trafficking that were repatriated back to Nigeria from foreign countries for sexual exploitation. The study population also include staff of government agencies involved in the fight against human trafficking and social workers of the Non-Governmental Organisations.

This study was purely qualitative in nature and the Key Informant Interview (KII) as well as the In-depth Interview (IDI) were used to generate data for the study. Two categories of respondents were purposively selected and used for

the study. These were the Victims of Human Trafficking (VOTs) and officials of government agencies as well Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The victims' respondents were 52 (fifty-two), officials of government agencies of NAPTIP (National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons), ETAHT (Edo State Government Taskforce on Human Trafficking and Irregular Migration) and NIS (Nigeria Immigration Service) were 44 (forty-four). The number of respondents from the Non-Governmental Organisations of Idia Renaissance (I.R), Committee for the Support of the Dignity of Women (COSUDOW), Society for the Empowerment of Young Persons (SEYP), and Girls Power Initiative (GPI) were 20 (twenty) respectively. The reasons for their being purposively selected was that the victims were adjudged to be the best informants who could narrate and describe their experiences including the push and pull factors which led to their involvement in trafficking than any other person or persons.

The officials of government agencies and non-governmental organisations on the other hand, were also purposively selected because they have regular dealings with VOTs and a good knowledge of human trafficking in the course of their involvement in the fight against human trafficking and irregular migration within the Benin Metropolis in particular and Nigeria in general. This brings the total number of respondents to 116 (one hundred and sixteen) that constituted the sample size for the study. The data collected were analyzed through content analysis while the results were presented with quotations of expressions of the respondents to support the issues being discussed.

### **Results and Discussion of Findings**

The research question which sought to identify the various socio-economic and socio-cultural factors affecting young girls and women which make them vulnerable to traffickers was asked the various respondents. In the course of this study, many socio-economic and socio-cultural factors were identified by the staff or respondents of the various government and non-governmental agencies that are involved in the fight against human trafficking in Edo State and Nigeria, by extension. From the angle of the victims of human trafficking at the shelter, the key informant interview conducted with them revealed that over 96.2% or 50 out of the 52 total victims pleaded poverty, joblessness as a result of the unemployment situations in the country as reasons why they agreed to be trafficked in the first place in order to overcome their poverty stricken nature. Their parents don't have money, so do members of their families and neither do they have themselves. According to a victim at the NAPTIP's shelter, she responded as follows:

.....The suffer too much for house, my father no get money, even my mother no get, talkless about me and no money for me to finish my secondary school. This na the reason I kukuma travelled so that I can now have plenty money to solve my problems and that of my family members (KII-1 /Female Victim / NAPTIP's Shelter Oredo, Benin City, 2020).



Another victim corroborated the above victim's assertion in this way:

We are seven children born by my father and my father is farmer while my mother is a petty trader. And she at times engage in farming. There is no money like that as I could not get money to enroll for my WAEC/NECO Examinations due to lack of money. There was no work for me to do and no money to do business. Then, I decided to travel in order to take care of myself, my junior brothers and sisters as well as my parents. Unfortunately, things did not still work out as I planned it because of this deportation (KII-2 / Female Victim / NAPTIP's Shelter /Oredo, Benin City, 2020).

Again, a respondent maintained that:

In fact, it was due to poverty which was confronting me and my parents as well as the desire to make my music work or to be successful in life since I was learning Music, also for my daughter not to suffer were the reasons why I travelled to Italy. Yet, my dreams were not fulfilled (KII-3 / Female Victim / COSUDOW's Shelter Oredo, Benin City, 2020).

Socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, economic downturn as the nation is currently undergoing, inadequate educational opportunities etc. fuel human trafficking. All these were the problems that confronted the victims of human trafficking that make them vulnerable to traffickers and their agents. A female respondent from one of the government agencies which is National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), has this to say regarding socio-economic factors of human trafficking:

The socio-economic factors responsible for human trafficking include the poor economic downturns in Nigeria as well as the wide spread unemployment generally in the country in which large number of able-bodied men and women, boys and girls are jobless and almost hopeless (IDI-1 / Female / NAPTIP's staff, Oredo,Benin City, 2020).

Socio-cultural factors of human trafficking on the other hand, include breakdown of the extended family system, high fertility and rapid population growth, gender inequality, ignorance of the nature and evils of trafficking, child fosterage, swearing to oaths of secrecy, etc. From the study, 73.1% or 68 of the total female respondents and 26.1% or 6 of the total 23 male respondents were of the opinion that the male dominated society that we are now has led to women domination by the men leading to a state of gender discrimination. Also, the breakdown of the extended family system in which everyone is his or her brother's keeper has given way to the spirit of individualism leading to a situation of, 'every man for himself and God for us all'. These factors have led to lack of extending helping hand or assistance to people in dire need especially the helpless female folk. The above factors also made many young girls and women to be vulnerable to traffickers and their agents. This general opinion was captured by a female respondent as follows:

In those days, everyone used to be his or her brother's keeper but nowadays, the story is different. Everyone is now for himself and family alone. There is no longer the zeal to help one another as the spirit of individualism is pervading the length and breadth of most the large and extended families in Benin Metropolis and Edo State by extension due to the breakdown of the extended family system. This is the reason why many young girls now take to trafficking in order to survive and be successful in life (IDI-3/ Female / GPI's staff, Egor LGA, Ugbighoko, 2020).

A female respondent who was a victim of trafficking avers that:

Family members don't care about you and they don't know how you eat and drink since the death of my father and there is very little my mother can do. Things were very tough with me hence I agreed to travel out of the country when somebody came to me that she would provide me with a job in abroad. Before travelling, she took me to a native doctor who used me to swear to his juju that 'I will die a sudden death if I did not pay the exact money as promised the woman that was to take me to abroad'. And this juju man instilled some fear into me. Even at times when I was to run away from my Madam to another city, I was afraid to do so anytime I think back regarding the oath of secrecy. This was because, my finger nails, some hairs on my head, pubic hairs, were collected from me by the native doctor (KII-4/ Female victim/ NAPTIP's Shelter, Oredo LGA, Benin City, 2020).

The fact should be pointed out that from the study, majority of respondents other than the category of the victims totaling 75% or 48, were of the belief that most victims of human trafficking are traumatized and with few of them looking psychologically unbalanced.

### **The Effects of Human Trafficking on victims and Development of Nigeria**

On the effects of human trafficking on victims of trafficking, very few victims of human trafficking really opened up in the course of in-depth interview with them about the injuries suffered in their private parts which included bleeding and bruises. Here is an excerpt of a female victim who narrates her experiences being engaged in sex trafficking in which she suffered health issues that were unattended to:

Prostitution business is a risky one as you will most of the time see young men numbering about 3 or 4 who will sleep with you till day break. Sometimes they would not even give you any money. Again, many of the boys don't like using condom. If you try to resist them, they will just overpower you with their physical strength and still have their way through. Sometimes they would mal-handle me and inflict injuries on my body. At times, I will have bruises in my private part. Sometimes too, my private part will be itching me. My madam will not buy me medications as she was only interested in collecting her proceeds from me (KII-6/ Female victim / NAPTIP's Shelter Oredo, Benin City, 2020).

Another female victim also shares her experience regarding serious health issues she suffered while prostituting when she was trafficked to Ghana. She reveals her travails as follows:

I was introduced into prostitution along with two other girls by our Madam. She introduced us to club houses to be prostituting in the name of hustling. Myself and my friends were gang raped, beaten up and at times sent away empty handed especially when the boys or men are aware that we were foreigners. In the process of prostituting, I started bleeding from my private part right from Ghana till I got to Nigeria (KII-7/ Female victim/ NAPTIP's Shelter, Oredo, Benin City, 2020).

Finally, officials of the government and non-governmental organisations were asked to express their views on the impact of human trafficking on the development of Nigeria since they were the ideal category to be asked such a question and not the victims of trafficking. Here are some excerpts of their responses of officials from Girls Power Initiative and National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons:

Frankly speaking, the effects of human trafficking on the development of Nigeria are enormous as it leads to serious exodus of our young men and women as well as boys and girls who would have contributed to the development and growth of the country are taken to foreign countries of Europe and Asian countries for sexual and labour exploitation. This is a great disservice to Nigeria by undermining her developmental progress (IDI-8/ Male/GPI staff, Egor LGA, Ugbighoko, 2020).

A staff of NAPTIP corroborated the assertion given by the GPI's staff on the same subject matter in which she commented thus:

Human trafficking not only have negative effects on victims and their families but also have negative effect on the image of Nigerians in diaspora as Nigeria is seen as a country of origin, transit and destination for human trafficking. Furthermore, human trafficking also culminate in negative image of the communities, states where it is most prevalent. For example, Edo state is seen as the hub of human trafficking in Nigeria and Italy as the international headquarters of the Benin girls and young women. So, Nigeria's image is dented leading to low patronage from investors and its consequent low developmental pace and growth (IDI-9/Male/NAPTIP staff, Oredo LGA, Benin City, 2020).

Majority of the respondents in the government and non-government agencies were of the view that human trafficking impacted negatively on the development and growth of the country as well as smearing the image of Nigeria among community of nations as a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking.

### **Solutions to the scourge of trafficking in human beings**

It should be pointed out that respondents of government agencies and that of the Non-governmental Organizations were asked the above research question. Some of their various responses are stated as follows:

Both the NGOs and the government agencies should embark on aggressive advocacy and public awareness campaign both in the cities and rural areas. In fact, market places, religions places such as mosques and churches, schools etc. should be visited vigorously. Prosecution is also another area to be looked into by the government so that traffickers don't go scot free from their clandestine, illegal and inhuman activities (IDI-10/Male/GPI's staff, Egor LGA, Ugbighoko, 2020).

A female respondent also corroborated the above respondent thus:

Government should be alive to their responsibilities by providing the basic needs of her citizenry. Employment should be provided for the unemployed and social amenities provided for the people. Helpless citizens should be empowered with basic skills training to make them productive. Edo people by way of parents and their respective families should desist from sending their children on dangerous journeys to be travelling out of their state and across the Nation's borders which always end up in sexual exploitation (trafficking) (IDI-12/Female/ETAHT's staff/Oredo LGA, Benin City, 2020).

Corroborating the above assertion, a respondent expressed the following view:

The government should not be keeping the victims of human trafficking too long in the shelter and they should be empowered in order not to be re-trafficked again. And government should create job opportunities as well provide social amenities for the people. The people in turn should be contented with what they have and not to be too greedy. They should look inwards as it is not only travelling outside the shores of this country that one can make it in life (IDI-16/Female /COSUDOW's Staff/ Oredo LGA, Benin City, 2020).

Furthermore, a female respondent noted further that the government should embark on creating awareness as well as the education of the citizenry regarding the evils of human trafficking while traffickers should be brought to justice (IDI-17/Female / Idia Renaissance's staff/ Oredo LGA, Benin City, 2020). Another respondent also commented further on the suggestions for the government and people of Edo State on how to reduce trafficking in persons in this way:

The Edo State Government has to encourage potential victims of trafficking to go to school. Secondly, engage the unemployed in skills acquisition centres and to empower them in order to stand on their feet after their vocation. And the people should stop sending their children and wards on journeys outside the country with the hope of making it quickly and easier in life (IDI-18/Female //SEYP's Staff, Ikpoba-Okha LGA, 2020).

The respondents from the government agencies also proffered their suggestions on how the government and people of Edo State could drastically reduce trafficking in persons in the following ways:

The government of Edo State should adequately fund NAPTIP, TASKFORCE and other agencies and prosecute traffickers diligently and speedily through the setting up of a special court meant for that purpose. Also, the people should cooperate with the government to wipe out trafficking from the state (IDI-20/Male /Naptip's Staff, Oredo LGA, Benin City, 2020).

Still on the suggestions on how the government and people of Edo state can reduce trafficking in persons to the barest level, a respondent from the Edo State Taskforce on human Trafficking and Irregular Migration (ETAHT) has this to say:

All hands should be on deck by the government, stakeholders and the people of Edo State so that the fight is collectively fought. There should also be advocacy and public enlightenment programmes being embark upon by the government and other organizations throughout the length and breadth of the state (IDI-21/female/ETAHT's Staff, Oredo LGA, Benin City, 2020).

In the same vein, another respondent corroborated the above respondent that "there should be creation of jobs for the people to do, empowering of the jobless with skills acquisition as well as embarking on enlightenment campaign to the people on the dangers of human trafficking" (IDI-22/Male /N.I.S's staff, Ikpoba-Okha LGA, 2020). Another respondent also explained that "the government should provide jobs while the people should also look for minor jobs to be doing in order to be engaged so that they would not be easily deceived by traffickers" (IDI-23/Female /N.I.S'S staff, Ikpoba-Okha LGA, 2020).

### **Discussion of Findings**

One of the findings of this study with regard to research question one is that the study established that there is a significant relationship between trafficking in human beings and the above socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, and inadequate educational opportunities as these factors were seen as the root causes of trafficking in Edo State and Nigeria by extension. This was so because, poverty and unemployment affect families which makes them to be unable to provide for their children and wards' needs. These factors make young girls and women to be vulnerable to traffickers that promise them lucrative jobs and educational opportunities in the cities of these foreign countries. This finding confirmed the findings of UNESCO (2006); Nwokeoma (2010); Ndiora (2012); Essien (2013); Majeed and Malik (2017). They asserted that poverty, unemployment, greed, and poor educational attainment are the main factors affecting families which make them unable to cater for their children and wards, which are the root causes that makes young girls and women vulnerable to traffickers who trafficked them for labour and sexual exploitations in the major cities within and outside countries.

Another finding of this study with respect to research question one is that it was established that socio-cultural factors such as the desire to “get-rich-quick”, inequality against the female sex” are factors responsible for the causes of human trafficking and which have equally sustained trafficking within the Benin Metropolis. This finding is in line with the study carried out by some experts for the (UNODC/UNICRI, 2003 & Maicibi, 2006). They asserted that parental greed on one hand as well as the inordinate desire of the young boys and girls to get rich quick now-adays is another cause that has escalated trafficking in persons. It is always the belief of these young boys, girls and women that they must travel outside their country in order to make it in life. This factor obviously trigger or promote vulnerability of these young ones into the ever ready waiting hands of the traffickers to grab for onward transfer into the booming sex industry abroad. Maicibi (2006) asserted when he was examining the factors that make the youth ready to submit themselves to traffickers that it was greed as well as insatiable desire for material wealth that was responsible both for the trafficker and the victims.

Other findings of this study with respect to research question one was the swearing to an oath of secrecy by victims of human trafficking and this socio-cultural phenomenon has sustained human trafficking to date in Edo State. It should be pointed out that a reasonable number of the victims of human trafficking at the NAPTIP’s Shelter revealed that the hairs on their heads were cut, hairs in their armpits were shaved including that of their pubic hairs. Also, their fingernails and toes nails were also cut and kept by the herbalists or native doctors in their shrines. This cultural pre-requisite demanded by traffickers has sustained trafficking in persons till this day as this act instils fear into victims and makes them serve traffickers and their agents under obligation. 61.5% or 32 respondents of the category of victims of human trafficking attested to the fact of being made to swear to Oath of secrecy which the above rituals entails.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study reiterates that all human societies irrespective of the levels of development have crimes and criminality to contend with especially trafficking in persons in this present dispensation. Therefore, all efforts should be geared toward employing proactive measures in combating this crime as the study revealed that socio-economic and socio-cultural factors affects families within the Benin Metropolis which makes the children and wards of these families to be vulnerable to traffickers and their agents who trafficked them outside the shores of this country mainly for sexual and labour exploitations, among others. Consequently, the exodus of our able-bodied young men and women, boys and girls to foreign countries in search of greener pastures, impact or affect the development of Nigeria as a country.

Based on the findings of this study and conclusions reached, the following recommendations were made:

1. It was recommended that the government of Edo State and Nigeria by extension should make serious efforts towards the reduction of poverty in the land since it has been established that there is a significant relationship between trafficking in persons and socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment and inadequate educational opportunities as these factors were seen as the root causes of trafficking in Edo State and Nigeria by extension.
2. Another recommendation also arising from the findings of this study is that government should legislate against the girl- child discrimination and make the girl-child education free at the primary and post primary school level. This will help to reduce the high rate of female school dropouts especially at the secondary school level. Also, it will help reduce the high rate of trafficking in females since females with good education are believed to be good at resisting being trafficked.
3. It was also recommended that the government should adequately fund its agencies involved in the fight against human trafficking in order for the war against trafficking to be won. These anti- trafficking agencies include NAPTIP (National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons), ETAHT (Edo State Government Taskforce Against Human Trafficking and Irregular Migration), and NIS (Nigeria Immigration Service). It was recommended that the government should adequately fund the various Non-Governmental Organisations such as GPI, COSUDOW, etc. in order to thrive and be successful in their fight against human trafficking in the state.
4. Finally, as a recommendation arising from the findings of this study with respect to research question which borders on the suggestions or solutions to drastically reduce the scourge of trafficking in persons in the Benin Metropolis, it was recommended that the government of the day should embark upon aggressive and sustainable public enlightenment and education campaigns against trafficking in persons in all the nooks and crannies of the state as well as empowerment of the jobless and vulnerable persons in the society. This will go a long way in reducing drastically the upsurge in human trafficking in the Benin Metropolis in Edo State and Nigeria by extension.

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