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Socio-Cultural Determinants of Child Trafficking in Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

Child trafficking is a form of human trafficking. It is the act of illegally taking and relocating, transporting or kidnapping a child typically for the purpose of forced labour, slavery and all levels of exploitation. This study examined the socio-cultural determinants of child trafficking using Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria as its study area. Three objectives were developed for the study while structural strain theory developed by Robert K. Merton was adopted as the theoretical framework. One hundred and ninety-four (194) questionnaires were distributed to respondents whose age ranges from 13. The findings showed that poverty, ignorance and unemployment are the major socio-cultural determinants of child trafficking in Ohaukwu Local Government Area. The study therefore recommended that Government should do everything possible to tackle the issue of poverty in the state and that there should be policy that encourages parents to have the number of children they can adequately train.

Key words: Child trafficking, Determinants, Poverty, Socio-cultural, Unemployment.

Introduction

Culture according to Tylor (1871) cited in Oke (2006) is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. It is culture that defines the attitudes of man's behavior as normal or abnormal in a society, Oke (2006). Socio-cultural determinants are those variables such as religious belief, traditional belief, cultural practices, belief systems, socio-economic status, politics, which makes human beings to conform or to rebel against

social order in any human societies. Also certain socio- economic determinants like unemployment and poverty can trigger aberrational behavior in society (Kaplan et al, 2004).

Child trafficking, human trafficking and trafficking of persons for the purposes of rituals are such aberrational behaviors which have become a global social problem since the end of the year 2000. In Africa, and Nigeria in particular, with the increase in poverty, unemployment and breakdown of the extended family, inappropriate education, and hunger are some of the actors responsible or human trafficking. Many children have been forced into new types of labour that are exploitative, hazardous and detestable to their live and wellbeing (UNICEF, 2000).

Since children cost money to raise, many poor families sell them for a good price to rich men in the cities, while some parents give them out willingly to other people for vain promises, they actually know that cannot be fulfilled (UNICEF, 2005).

Child trafficking was defined as the abduction, transportation or the retention of a child or the attempt to abduct, transport or retain a child for illegal means (International Organization for Migration (IOM) 2019). It is also defined as "any behaviour which facilities the entry into, transit through, residence in or exit from any territory for exploitation" (Engage Together, 2020).

It has been observed that child trafficking is a booming business in Nigeria especially in places like Nnewi and Onitsha in Anambra state, Enugu state, Ohaozara in Ebonyi state, Akwa Ibom state, Cross River state, Rivers state, Edo state and Delta state. It was recently observed that, most barons of child trafficking have discovered Calabar, the capital of cross River state Akwa Ibom state and Edo state as a safe haven, as a transit point for trafficking, (The Punch, October 19, 2001).

UNICEF NIGERIA (2005) stated that, over 100 children were recovered on the first weekend of March 2005 during two separate incidents. On 4th March 2005, immigration authorities at the border to Togo stopped a truck carrying 52 children. Four suspected

traffickers in the truck were arrested. The children were allegedly being trafficked for forced labour across boarder. The driver of the truck was a woman, and she was also arrested. The children were severally dehydrated; they said the children were from Anambra, Enugu, and Ebonyi, Abia and Imo state of Nigeria. The Police in Ebonyi state command on Monday said it has rescued over twenty-six (26) abducted children from their abductors. The source further said the victims were abducted in Ebonyi and sold to different states of the federation (Anioke, 2021)

Child trafficking can exist either in internal or external types. Internal type of child trafficking exists when children are being required to work within the cities in the country, either in the agriculture or any other exploitative works. While external type, exist when children and adult are being abducted to work in Europe and other western countries as child prostitution or working in plantations (Adesina, 2014).

There are basically six forms of child trafficking, and they include: children in drug trade, child exchange, forced labour, children in armed force, sexual exploitation and child begging. These were identified by different researchers and scholars such as (Adesina (2014), Abdulaheem and Oladipo (2010), Ebigbo (2000) cited in Chizobe, 2009).

(1) Children in drug trade: Children are trafficked into exploitation as dealers or drug carriers and are paid in drugs in a way that they are entrapped and addicted with drugs (Chizobe, 2009).
(2) Child exchange: Is the process whereby children are being exchanged, killed, boiled and eaten. This happens because of famine and starvation. In the Book of Lamentation 4:10, children were boiled by their mothers and were eaten because of hunger and starvation.
(3) Forced Labour: Forced labour could also be called child labour. This refers to the situation where children are required to do work that is supposed to be done by an adult. In Nigeria it is a common sight to see under aged children working as bus conductor and the other exploitative works such as street hawking, carry loads and others, Chizobe (2009).

(4) Children used in Armed forces: According to united nation report, children under the age of 18years are forced to join troops. Even though the protocol states that any person who is up to eighteen years can willfully join the armed forces but should not be forced to join.

(5) Sexual exploitation: According to International Labour Organization (ILO) (2009) sexual exploitation includes all these following practices: using children in sex shows both in private and in public, child prostitution, sex tourism and sex trade.

(6) Child begging: According to Adesina (2014), child begging is the type of begging whereby children are being trafficked for the purpose of begging or trafficked for organized begging with the physically challenged or disabled persons, such as the blind and crippled.

It is observed that over 10 million children are trafficked across the globe annually for sexual exploitation, (ILO, 2009). About ten percent of this figure is trafficked from Nigeria annually both Eastern gate way and south-south geopolitical zone, some of these children are trafficked for child begging, child exchange, forced labor, sexual exploitation, for children in the armed force, both internal and external.

Sociologically, the trafficked child under the control of his or her mistress or master is used as an "economic commodity" and attracts profit in cash to the traffickers.

The extent to which children are trafficked for cheap labour from third world countries such as Latin America, Africa, Asia, China and Nigeria is socially and politically worrisome to the entire world (Wolthuis & Blaak, 2001).

Numerous economic outfits have emerged in the power nations of Nigeria, Africa and more recently some parts of England, which have turned themselves into child trafficking recruitment centers. These centers recruit children and adolescents for assumed employment in unknown and undisclosed habitations, (Renton 2001). The truth is that many children and adolescents are enticed to this type of recruitment in the name of going over sea to work. Many children trafficked over sea have experienced a lot of trauma,

neglect and abuse, emotional and physical violence, sexual abuse and multiple pregnancies for girls, sexually transmitted diseases like Hiv/Aids, gonorrhea, candidacies etc.

There is a vast array of factors that give rise to child trafficking in Ebonyi state of Nigeria under a given cultural milieu, such factors as poverty, politics and socio-economic domains of the society. Though child trafficking is a global social problem, its affects in Ohaukwu local government Area of Ebonyi state is devastating. This study therefore seeks to examine the Socio-Cultural Determinants of Child Trafficking in Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the socio-cultural factors that encourage child trafficking in Ohaukwu Local Government Area.
2. To examine the social consequences of child trafficking on the trafficked child in Ohaukwu Local Government Area.
3. To identify measures to be taken by the society to solve the problems of child trafficking in Ohaukwu Local Government Area.

Theoretical Orientation

This study adopted the Structural Strain Theory as its theoretical framework. The proponent of this theory is Robert Merton. He propounded the theory in the year 1957. Merton believed that when societal norms or socially acceptable goals place pressure on the individual to conform, they force the individual to either work within the structure society has produced or if not become a member of a deviant subculture on attempt to achieve these goals.

According to Merton societies are characterized by both culture and social structure. Culture provides goals for individuals in society while social structures provide or may not provide the process or means for people to achieve these goals. Societies that are well integrated or organized, Individual are more likely to accept the means to achieve these

goals which society provides. If the means are imbalance with the goals, deviance is likely to take place. This imbalance between cultural commodities and the structural available means can compel an individual into crime or deviant behaviour.

Members of the society see success especially as expressed in material wealth as cultural good and acquiring good education and high paying jobs as the only cultural approved means for achieving this goal. He noted that unfortunately, not all members of society especially the poor and minority can achieve this goal using the approved means. Hence the outcome is structural strain that produces crime. Minority individuals are more likely to experience this strain because they aim for the same goal as the other members of the society. This lower class is more likely to turn to deviance and crime as a way to obtain the available resources in the society. Merton identified five adaptations to these goals. They are Ritualism, Retreatists, Rebellions, conformity, innovation.

1. **Ritualism:** Individual abandons the goals and accepts the means in order to avoid being labeled deviants.
2. **The Retreatists:** Individuals are out of the society and goes about doing anything neither for the good of society nor for themselves. Examples are drug addiction, pathological drunkenness and chronic alcohols.
3. **Rebellions:** Here individuals abandon the culture goals and the approved means. They try to make new goal and new means. And replace them with their new created norms. Example: law breakers.
4. **Conformity:** Here individual accept the cultural goal and the approved means. For instance, they acquire education to get a good job.
5. **Innovation:** Here individuals accept cultural goal but rejected the approved means. This is most often what results in child trafficking, drug abuse, armed robbery and order illegal and inappropriate means to obtain cultural goals (Okeibunor, & Anugwom, 2005).

Methodology

Ebonyi state which is our study area was created on October 1st, 1996, with Abakaliki town as the capital. Her name was derived from Ebonyi River. The state lies between 7.3 Longitudes, 5.4E and has a land mass of approximately 5932 square kilometers. Ebonyi state shares boarder with Benue state to the north, Enugu to the west, Imo and Abia to the south and cross river to the East. According to the 2006 national population census, its population of adults in Ebonyi state was 1,124,177. The state slogan is "salt of the nation". Ebonyi state has 13 local government area and Ohaukwu local government area is one of the local government areas. The local government has ten (10) communities which include Ukwagba Ngbo, Umuezeaka Ngbo, Okposhi Ngbo, Ezza Ngbo, Ekwashi Ngbo, Okposhi Eheku, Amofia Ngbo, Umuogudu Ngbo, Umuogudu Osha, and Effium.

Economically, the state is predominantly rural, and agrarian, with a substantial proportion of its working population engaged in farming. They are also involved in trading service within the state and other cities. The federal and state universities in the state are Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike (FUNAI) and Ebonyi State University (EBSU). The state also has Federal Teaching Hospital Abakaliki (FTHA) and Federal Medical Centre (FMC) and other private hospitals. The state has one of the Nigeria's largest poultries- Nkali poultry, (https://Ebonyi zipcodes). And one of the Nigerian's foremost cement factory, the Nigeria cement company (NIGERCEM) at Nkalagu (Uzozie 2002 & Onokala 2002).

National Population Commission (NPC 2006) puts the population of Ohaukwu Local Government Area at 196, 337 for adult, males and females. The research population consists of students, law enforcement agents, Staff of ministry of Women affairs, Farmers, Traders and Civil servants. Ohaukwu local government Area was chosen as the area of study because child trafficking is on the increase in the area (Ebonyi State Portal @, 2015). The researchers adopted a probability sampling techniques. The sample size for the study is 194 respondents. This sample size consists of children who are thirteen years and above, and adult male and female. Data collected was placed on the frequency table and was analyzed using percentages to determine the level of relationship between the variables.

Results

Table 1 below; show the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1:

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
13-22	14	7.2
23-32	22	11.3
33-42	33	17.0
43-52	78	41.2
53and above	47	24.2
Total	194	100.0
Sex	115	59.7
Male	79	40.3
Female	194	100.0
Total		
Marital status	48	24.7
Single	110	56.8
Married	11	5.7
Separated	6	3.1
Divorced	19	9.8
Widower	194	100.0
Total		
Occupation	78	39.8
Civil servant	35	17.9
Farmer	37	18.9.
Student	25	13.8
Trader	19	9.7
Others indicate	194	100.0
Total		
Religious affiliation	105	54.1
Christian	82	42.3
Traditional	7	3.6
Islam	194	100.0
Total		

Educational qualification		
No formal education	19	9.8
Primary education	11	5.7
Secondary education	48	24.7
Tertiary education	116	59.8
Total	194	100.0

Respondents were asked to identify the socio-cultural courses of child trafficking. Table 2 below show the responses from the respondents.

Table 2:

Respondents' views on the socio-cultural causes of child trafficking in Ohaukwu local government Area.

Response	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Poverty	32	16.5
Ignorance	18	9.3
Unemployment	26	13.4
Lack of education	21	10.8
Negative cultural practice	9	4.6
Peer pressure	12	6.1
Broken home	14	7.2
Restrictive immigration policies	11	5.7
Weak legal framework	13	6.8
Corruption	24	12.4
Dysfunctional families	10	5.2
Witchcraft accusation	2	1.0
Others specify	2	1.0
Total	194	100.0

Table 2 above shows that 16.5% of the respondents are of the view that poverty is the socio-cultural cause of child trafficking, while 9.3% of the respondents said that ignorance is the socio-cultural cause of child trafficking, 13.4% of the respondents stated that

unemployment is the socio-cultural cause of child trafficking, 10.8% of the respondents maintained that lack of education is the socio-cultural cause of child trafficking, while 4.6% of the respondents agreed that Negative cultural practice is the socio-cultural cause of child trafficking, 6.1% of the respondents view that peer pressure is the socio-cultural cause of child trafficking, 7.2% of the respondents stated that broken home is the socio-cultural cause of child trafficking, 5.7% of the respondents maintained that restrictive immigration politics is the socio-cultural cause of child trafficking, 6.8% of the respondents said that weak legal framework is the socio-cultural cause of child trafficking, 12.4% of them said corruption, 5.6% of them maintained dysfunctional families, 1.0% of the respondents stated witchcraft accusation, while 1.0% of them specify others, the table above shows that poverty is the major socio-cultural cause of child trafficking in Ohaukwu Local Government Area.

Respondents were asked to state the social consequences of child trafficking on the child been trafficked in Ohaukwu Local Government Area Eboyi State. The result was presented below.

Table 3:

Respondents' views on the social consequences of child trafficking on the child been trafficked.

Response	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Death at the hand of traffickers	11	5.8
The children are over worked	80	41.2
Physical and mental abuse.	37	19.5
Many of them suffer in silence.	10	5.0
Some avoid coming in contact with adult.	11	5.7
Malnutrition and diseases.	37	19.5
Others specify.	8	4.1
Total	194	100.0

Table 3 above shows that 5.8% of the respondents are of the view that death at the hand of traffickers is the social consequences of child trafficking on a child been trafficked, 41.2% of the respondents stated that the children are over worked, 19.5% also maintained that physical and mental abuse is the social consequences of child trafficking on a child been trafficked, 5.0% of the respondents said that many of the children suffer in silence, 5.7% of them stated that some avoid coming in contact with adult, while 19.5% of the respondents indicates malnutrition and disease, 4.1% of the respondents specify other consequences. The implication is that the children are over worked is the major social consequence of child trafficking on a child been trafficked as obtained from the majority of the respondents in Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi state.

On what could be done to reduce child trafficking in Ohaukwu Local Government Area. The responses are presented in table 4 and 5 below.

Table 4:

Respondents' views on measures to be taken to eradicate child trafficking in Ohaukwu Local Government Area.

Response	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Capital punishment for offenders.	9	4.6
Introduction of free education in primary and secondary schools and reduction of school fees in state and federal high institution.	14	7.4
Educating the public on the danger of child trafficking through the use of radio, TV, and other social medias.	11	5.7
Job creation.	41	21.1
Poverty eradication.	53	27.5

Agencies and law firms should be established and equipped by government in other to tackle the social problems of child trafficking.	44	22.7
The members of the public should report any suspected case of child trafficking in their localities to the police and any other governmental agencies that fight crimes.	14	7.0
Educating parents and youths on the issue of birth control.	8	4.1
Total	194	100.0

Table 4 shows that 4.6% of the respondents stated that capital punishment for offenders is a measure to be taken to eradicate child trafficking, while 7.4% of the respondents said introduction of free education in primary and secondary schools and reduction of school fees in state and federal high institutions, 5.7% of the respondents maintained educating public on the danger of child trafficking through the use of radio, TV, and other social media, 21.1% of the respondents are of the opinion that job creation is a measure to be taken to combat child trafficking, 27.5% of the respondents said poverty eradication, 22.7% stated agencies and law firms should be established and equipped by government in other to tackle the ugly social problems of child trafficking, 7.0% of the respondents stated that the members of the public should report any suspected case of child trafficking in their localities to the police and any other governmental agencies that fight crimes, 4.1% of the respondents said that educating parents and youths on the issue of birth control will help to fight child trafficking.

Table 5:

Other ways of fighting child trafficking in Ohaukwu Local Government Area.

Response	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Instruct children not to follow strangers	76	39.1
Educating parents to have only the children they can adequately train.	43	22.3

Inculcate the culture of hard work on the child at a very young age.	25	12.8
Creations of job opportunities in rural Areas.	25	12.8
Families should have family secret code which is unique to the family members only	25	12.8
Total	194	100.0

The table 5 above indicates that 39.1% of the respondents are of the view that if parents Instruct children not to follow strangers it will help to fight child trafficking, 22.3% of the respondents maintained that Educating parents to have only the children they can adequately train will reduce child trafficking, 25.8% of the respondents stated Inculcate the culture of hard work on the child at a very young age will help to fight child trafficking, 12.8% of the respondents stated creations of job opportunities in rural Areas and 12.8% is of the view that Families should have family secret code which is unique to the family members only so that a child does not follow anyone who does not know the family secret code.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study showed that poverty is the major socio-cultural cause of child trafficking followed by unemployment, corruption, Lack of Education, Ignorance, Weak Legal Framework, Broken Home, Dysfunctional Families, Peer Pressure, Restrictive Immigration Policies, Negative Cultural Practice, Witchcraft Accusation, Illiteracy, Socialization, Globalization, Family Size, and Greed are some of the other socio-cultural causes of child trafficking in Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

The study further showed that there are social consequences of child trafficking to the child been trafficked and some of them are Death at the hand of traffickers, the children are over worked, physical and mental abuse, many of them suffer in silence and others. The study finally observed that there are measures to be taken to eradicate child trafficking and they are capital punishment for offenders of child trafficking, introduction of free education in primary and secondary schools and reduction of school fees in state and federal high

institutions, educating the public on the dangers of child trafficking through the use of radio, TV and other social media platforms, job creation, poverty eradication. Agencies and law firms should be established and equipped by government in other to tackle the ugly social problems of child trafficking, the members of the public should report any suspected case of child trafficking in their locality to the police and any other governmental agencies that fight crimes, educating the parents and youths on the issue of birth control. Other ways to fight child trafficking which was identified includes, that parents should instruct their children not to follow strangers, parents should be educated to have only the children they can adequately train, parents should inculcate the culture of hard work on the child at a very young age, creation of job opportunities in rural Areas and that families should have family secret code which is unique to the family members only so that a child does not follow anyone who does not know the family code. The findings collaborate with the report of Traffic In Person TIP Report which places emphasis on what the society can do to eradicate human trafficking and protect the vulnerable (TIP Report, 2021). All these will help to fight child trafficking in Ohaukwo L.G.A.

Conclusion

The study observed that child trafficking exists in Ohaukwo L.G.A. and that child trafficking has different forms. The female child is the most victims of child trafficking. The study also showed that poverty, ignorance, unemployment, lack of education, negative cultural practice, peer pressure, broken home, restrictive immigration policies, weak legal framework, corruption, dysfunctional families, witchcraft accusation, illiteracy, socialization, globalization, family size, greed are the socio-cultural causes of child trafficking. The study went further to note that death at the hand of traffickers, the children are over worked, physical and mental abuse, many of them suffer in silence, some avoid coming in contact with adult, malnutrition and disease are the main social consequences of child trafficking to a child been trafficked. The study lastly observed that capital punishment for offenders, introduction of free education in primary and in secondary schools and reduction of school fees in state and federal institutions, educating the public on the dangers of child trafficking through the use of radio, TV, and other social media, job

creation, poverty eradication, will help in combating child trafficking in Ohaukwo L.G.A of Eboni State. Other ways which the society can fight child trafficking which was identified includes, that parents should instruct their children not to follow strangers, parents should be educated to have only the children they can adequately train, parents should inculcate the culture of hard work on the child at a very young age, creation of job opportunities in rural Areas and that families should have family secret code which is unique to the family members only so that a child does not follow anyone who does not know the family code.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government should try as much as possible to tackle the issue of poverty and eradicate it, once poverty is eradicated child trafficking will gradually reduce and eventually end.

2. Federal and State Governments should introduce free education in primary and secondary schools and also reduce the school fees in state and federal owned higher institutions.

3. There should be a policy that will encourage parents to give birth to the number of children they can train. This will reduce the issue of giving out their children to relatives, friends and even strangers to train for them.

4. The Federal and State Government should enact laws that will make child trafficking a capital offence with capital punishment to the offenders.

5. Parents should instruct their children not to follow strangers. This will help to reduce child trafficking, even though some traffickers are relatives or parents of the victims.

6. Parents should inculcate the culture of hard work on the child at a very young age; this will make the child not to be easily attracted by the gifts of the traffickers. It will also reduce greed and illegal quest or money when the child becomes an adult.

7. Families should have family secret code which is unique to the family members only. With this a child can easily identify a trafficker and so will not follow him.

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