

Academic Impacts of Human Trafficking on Christian Students in Tertiary Institutions in Edo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study is an investigation into “Academic Impact of Human Trafficking on Christian Students of Tertiary Institutions in Edo State, Nigeria”. The main objective of the study is to investigate Academic Impact of Human Trafficking on Christian Students in Tertiary Institutions in Edo State, Nigeria. A survey research design method was used for the study, with a population of ten thousand three hundred and eighty-nine (10,389) Christian students in the state and a sample size of one thousand and nine (1,009) Christian students in the state. A structured questionnaire and interview schedule were used. The major findings of the study are: the study reveals that, school enrolment is low due to human trafficking in Edo state. Those in school were becoming less interested with schooling due to success stories of human trafficking. Schools at all levels were against human trafficking in the state. Education sector seeks to put forth framework for advocacy and relevant ways to fight human trafficking. The following recommendation is made: Parents in collaboration with Government should give information about the activities of their wards to government where necessary and encourage them to acquire pragmatic education in the state.

Keywords: Academic, Impact, Christian, Human, Trafficking

Introduction

Human trafficking is an issue of concern that impacts people around the world. It is a trade of humans for forced labour, and sexual captivity. This implies that individuals are being bought and sold like objects, which is a clear deprivation of their fundamental rights. Human trafficking can happen within a country or across borders, and it is different from people smuggling because the person being smuggled gives their consent. There are many different estimates of the number of victims of human trafficking, but it is believed that there are millions of victims worldwide. Traffickers use various tactics to control their victims, including force, fraud, and coercion. They may trick or deceive their victims, or physically force them into working under terrible conditions. Victims of human trafficking can be anyone, but some people are more vulnerable than others. Factors such as recent migration, substance use, and involvement with the child welfare system can increase a person's risk of becoming a victim.

It is germane to understand that not all labor exploitation or commercial sex is considered human trafficking. The crime of human trafficking specifically involves the use of force, fraud, or

coercion. Traffickers often target vulnerable individuals and exploit their vulnerabilities to create dependency. They may use physical and emotional abuse, threats, and isolation to control their victims. It is crucial to recognize the signs of human trafficking and to report any suspicious activity to the authorities. Thus, for educators to learn about the signs of trafficking in their communities because children and young adults are especially vulnerable. Educators are committed to combating the exploitation of children and youth by addressing the negative impact of trafficking on students and school communities. To help combat trafficking, educators need to understand the risk factors and signs of exploitation. Certain vulnerable groups, such as homeless students, and those who have experienced family instability, physical and sexual abuse, and poverty, are at a higher risk of being trafficked. It's important to remember that any student can become a victim of trafficking, so it's crucial to set aside stereotypes and be vigilant in identifying and supporting students in need.

Before the emergence of human trafficking as a significant issue, the society in Edo state, Nigeria, had a rich cultural heritage and history. Edo state is the homeland of the Edo people, particularly with the historic Benin Kingdom. Prior to the contemporary human trafficking problems, the people of Edo state celebrated their cultural practices, festivals, and traditions. Students of tertiary institutions used to take part time jobs such as working as waiters/waitress, store clerks. These jobs allow them to work during evenings or weekends without interfering with their classes. However, like many regions, it also faced various challenges, including economic disparities, limited access to education and healthcare, and issues related to governance.

Research Question

What are the impacts of human trafficking on the academic pursuit of Christian students in Edo State, Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

H04. There is no significant difference between the opinions of urban and rural students on the impact of human trafficking on the academic pursuit of Christian students in tertiary institutions in Edo State, Nigeria.

Causes of Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a major international policy concern of the twenty first century. It is often confused with human smuggling and migration, given that these practices also involve the movement of persons, there are important differences between them. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (known as the Palermo Protocol) defines human trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, or of a position of vulnerability (Parrenas, 2012).

There are many factors that contribute to the prevalence of human trafficking. One of the main causes is the high reward, low risk dynamic for traffickers. They can make a lot of money with minimal fear of punishment or legal consequences. In fact, human trafficking is the second most profitable illegal industry after the drug trade, with estimated annual profits of \$150 billion. Another factor is the economic principle of supply and demand (UNICEF, 2017). There is a demand for cheap and exploitative labour, and traffickers exploit this by supplying vulnerable individuals who are seeking better opportunities (La Strada International, 2022).

Love146 (2022) asserts that people who have experienced prior abuse, homelessness, poverty, or displacement are at a higher risk. Children who have been involved with the child welfare or juvenile justice systems, run away from home, or struggle with mental health or substance abuse issues are also more vulnerable. Additionally, being a child in itself is a vulnerability that traffickers exploit, as children are still developing and dependent on adults.

It is important to understand the causes of human trafficking in order to develop effective solutions to combat it. By protecting victims, holding traffickers accountable, and addressing the demand for exploitative labour and sex, we can work towards ending human trafficking. It is a complex issue that requires a multi-faceted approach, but with awareness and action, we can make a difference in the lives of those affected by this horrific crime against humanity (Compassion Safety Support, 2023).

Types of Human Trafficking

There are different types of human trafficking, but the two most commonly seen forms are labour trafficking and sex trafficking (About Trafficking, 2023). Labour trafficking can occur in various industries, such as agriculture, construction, and hospitality. Victims of labour trafficking are often coerced to work for little or no pay, under threats of punishment. On the other hand, sex trafficking can happen in places like massage parlours, brothels, and online platforms. Victims of sex trafficking are forced into sexual activities against their will. It's important to understand that anyone can become a victim of human trafficking, regardless of their age, gender, or background. Traffickers can be strangers, friends, or even family members who exploit vulnerabilities. Victims may come from dysfunctional homes, unsafe neighbourhoods, or have limited work opportunities (About Trafficking, 2023). However, it's crucial to remember that anyone can be targeted by traffickers.

Human trafficking is fuelled by the demand for cheap labour and commercial sex. It is a global crime that violates human rights and has a significant impact on individuals and communities. Efforts are being made globally to combat human trafficking and protect the rights of victims. By raising awareness and understanding the different types of human trafficking, we can work towards ending this modern-day form of slavery.

Academic Impact of Human Trafficking

Education plays a crucial role in preventing human trafficking. Gardner (2023) discloses that when students have access to quality education, it reduces their vulnerability to trafficking. Schools provide a safe and stable environment for children, and they also teach important life skills

and social skills that can increase confidence and resilience. Unfortunately, lack of funding for schools can lead to decreased student engagement and increased vulnerability to human trafficking. That's why it's important to advocate for adequate funding for schools and educational programs. By addressing the inter-section of human trafficking with education, health, and financial stability, we can strengthen communities and prevent trafficking.

Thus, in the United States of America teachers, counsellors, educational leaders, and support staff have daily contact with children and youth who are vulnerable or could already be subject to varied forms of commercial exploitation, including trafficking. Educators are mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect, which in many states now incorporates human trafficking as a form of abuse (Taxes House Bill, 2013). Research on Texas education policy found that legislators and a range of policy actors viewed teachers and educational leaders as being on the front line of human trafficking prevention and as primary to intervening on behalf of minors, or those under the age of eighteen (18) (Lemke, 2015). Through policy mandates, task force efforts, and/or local curriculum programming, six U.S. states have involved education in multi-sector trafficking prevention efforts (Lemke, 2015). These state educational efforts include Maryland House Bill 674, which required the Departments of Education and Health and Mental Hygiene to provide human trafficking training for student services directors in local education agencies. Massachusetts Chapter 178 of the General Laws (2011) created a state task force to recommend human trafficking resources, curricula, and training for educational personnel. Ohio House Bill 59 (2013) mandated that elementary and secondary teacher in-service training and curriculum include content on child abuse, dating violence, and human trafficking.

Aimee and Macias (2014) contend that calls for educational Training about human trafficking multiple health professional organizations have issued calls for their member physicians to receive educational training about human trafficking. These organizations including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the American Medical Association-Medical Student Section, the Christian Medical and Dental Associations, and the American Academy of paediatrics have been joined by similar calls from allied health professions, including nursing and social work. In a study conducted by Baylor University (2018) researchers found that a curriculum on human trafficking helped high school students identify risks and advocate against trafficking. The curriculum included videos, survivor stories, and discussions to educate students about the issue. After completing the curriculum, students showed a considerable increase in knowledge about human trafficking. This shows that education can make a difference in preventing trafficking and empowering students to take action. Daniel (2019) reveals that the number of weekly hours dedicated to work, and the presence of work scheduled in the morning negatively affected the academic performance of child labourers under the condition of human trafficking. According to Zimmerman and Borland (2023) the trauma of trafficking can cause cognitive impairments, impacting memory, concentration, and decision-making abilities, further hindering academic performance. To Basile, Chen, and Walker (2023) human trafficking disrupts the educational trajectory of victims, leading to decreased school attendance, higher dropout rates, and limited access to higher education.

Being a victim of trafficking can have serious long-term impact on children and youth. It can cause them to drop out of school, experience mental health issues, and face serious health and

safety risks. That's why educators are committed to fighting against the exploitation of children and youth. Schools are safe places for students, and educators are in a unique position to identify and support students who may be at risk. Certain groups of students, like those who are homeless, or have a history of abuse, are more vulnerable to trafficking. It's important for educators to remember that any student can become a victim, and not to make assumptions based on stereotypes (National Education Association, 2022).

Methodology

A survey research design method was used for this study and structured questionnaire. A total of one thousand and nine (1,009) copies of the questionnaire were administered using research assistants to ensure effective administrative and retrieval of the copies of the questionnaire. To this end, nine hundred and fifty nine (959) which is ninety-six percent (95 %) were found to be successfully completed and valid for the study. To find out the impact of human trafficking on the academic pursuit of Christian students in tertiary institution in Edo state, Nigeria, a number of items were suggested on which the respondents expressed their views. Table 1 shows the frequencies and percentages with mean scores computed on the four modified Likert scale.

Table 1: Opinions of the Respondents on Impact of Human Trafficking on the Educational Pursuit of Christian Students of Tertiary Institutions in Edo State, Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std
1	School enrolment is low due to involvement in human trafficking	391	369	120	79	3.1	0.92
2	Many students have contemplated dropping out of school for a get rich quick human trafficking	347	397	111	104	3.0	0.95
3	Those in school are becoming less interested with schooling due to success stories of human trafficking	360	407	104	88	3.1	0.91
4	Schools are silent in condemning human trafficking	439	355	76	89	3.2	0.93
5	Students of higher institutions are encouraging each other to serve as agents of human trafficking	275	435	152	97	3.0	0.91
6	Students' performance tends to fall due to poor interest on academics to involvement in human trafficking	131	262	244	322	2.2	1.05
7	Schools at all levels are against human trafficking in the state	295	462	101	101	3.0	0.91

8	Educational sector specifically seeks to put forth possible framework for advocacy and relevant ways to fight human trafficking	278	449	146	86	3.0	0.89
9	Many parents are not interested in encouraging their wards to go to school due to human trafficking	238	444	168	109	3.0	0.92
10	Students are being kidnaped in schools to be a forced victim of human trafficking	320	495	78	66	3.1	0.82
Total						3.0	0.92

There was agreement among respondents on item 1 of Table 1, school involvement remains poor due to human trafficking. This is because three hundred and ninety-one (40.8 %) and three hundred and sixty-nine (38.5 %) of the respondents strongly agree and agree with the item, while only one hundred and twenty (12.5%) and seventy-nine (8.2 %) disagree and strongly disagree with the items. With a mean score of 3.1, and this implies that most Christian students shared similar view on the items.

The same negative impact is seen in item 2 of the table where three hundred and forty-seven (36.2%) and three hundred and ninety-seven (41.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the view that many Christian students contemplated dropping out of school to engage in human trafficking. Only one hundred and eleven (11.6%) and one hundred and four (10.8 %) of the respondents expressed divergent opinions on the item. With a mean score of 3.0.

The same negative educational impact is seen on item 3 of the table where three hundred and sixty (37.5%) and four hundred and seven (42.4 %) of the respondents strongly agree and agree respectively with the suggestion that, Christian students are becoming less interested in schooling due human trafficking. But one hundred and four (10.8%) and eighty-eight (9.2 %) of the respondents disagree and strongly disagree with the item. The mean score of 3.1, this strongly reflects that educational activities were seriously affected in Edo State.

Item 4 on the table suggests on schools being silent about human trafficking. In the table, four hundred and thirty-nine (45.8%) and three hundred and fifty-five (37.0 %) of the respondents strongly agree and agree with the item. The mean score for the item is 3.2. In furtherance of this, overwhelming educational impact seventy-six (7.9%) and eighty-nine (9.3%) of the respondents disagree and strongly disagree.

Item 5 is hinged on some Christian students encouraging each other to serve as agent of human trafficking, two hundred and seventy-five (28.7%) strongly agree and four hundred and

thirty-five (45.4%) agree, while one hundred and fifty-two (15.8%) and ninety-seven (10.1%) strongly disagree on the item. The item has a mean score of 3.2 which implies that there is a major agreement with the item.

Item 6 on the table revealed the opinions of the respondents on Students' performance tends to fall due to poor interest on academics to involvement in human trafficking. One hundred and thirty-one (13.7%) strongly agree and two hundred and sixty-two (27.3%) agree on the item, while two hundred and forty-four (25.4%) disagree and three hundred and twenty-two (33.6%) strongly disagree on the item, with a mean score of 3.1.

Item 7 on the table disclosed how school at all levels are against human trafficking in the state. Two hundred and ninety-five (30.8%) and four hundred and sixty-two (48.2%) strongly agree and agree with the item, while one hundred and ten (10.5%) disagree and strongly disagree respectively, with a mean score of 3.0.

Item 8 is on the educational sector putting forth possible framework for advocacy and relevant ways to curb human trafficking. Two hundred and seventy-eight (29.0%) and four hundred and forty-nine (46.8%) strongly agree and agree. Thus, one hundred and forty-six (5.2%) and eighty-six (9.0%) disagree and strongly disagree on the item, having a mean score of 3.0.

Another item that depicts educational impact of the human trafficking is item 9, two hundred and thirty-eight (24.8%) and four hundred and forty-four (46.3%) strongly agree and agree on the item. However, one hundred and sixty-eight (17.5%) and one hundred and nine (11.4%) have disagree and strongly disagree on the item. The item has a mean score of 3.0.

Item 10 on the table is on students being kidnapped and forced in to trafficking. Three hundred and twenty (33.4%) and four hundred and ninety-five (51.6%) strongly agree and agree on the item, while seventy-eight (8.1%) and sixty-six (6.9%) disagree and strongly disagree on the item, with a mean score of 3.1. looking at the cumulative mean of score of 3.0 which is greater than 2.5 decision mean is an indication that there is unanimous view on the part of the respondents on the impact of human trafficking on academic pursuit of Christian students in tertiary institutions in Edo state, Nigeria.

Test of Null Hypothesis

Table 2: Two Sample t-test Procedure on impact of Human Trafficking on Academic pursuit of Christian Students in Tertiary Institutions in Edo State by Location

Location	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std.error	t-value	DF	t-crit	P-value	Remark
Urban	442	138.96	15.15	0.72	2.46	957	1.96	0.01	Sig
Rural	517	136.59	14.53	0.63					

(t-critical at 1.96 DF=957 at P=0.05)

The result in the table discloses that Christian students in urban and rural areas were significantly different in their opinions on the impact of human trafficking on their academic pursuit in Edo state. The observed t-value (2.46) obtained at 957 degree of freedom is higher than the critical value of 1.96 at the same degree of freedom. The observed level of significance (0.01) for the test is lower than the fixed probability of 0.05 ($P < 0.05$). With this observation, there is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis that, there is no significant difference between the opinions of urban and rural students on impact human trafficking on the academic pursuit of Christian students in tertiary institutions in Edo State, Nigeria. The hypothesis is hereby, rejected.

Discussion

The data from the hypothesis discloses that, there is significant difference between the opinions of urban and rural students on impact of human trafficking on the academic pursuit of students in tertiary institutions in Edo State, Nigeria. The finding from the hypothesis disclosed that those in school are becoming less interested with school due to success stories of human trafficking, and school enrolment is low due to human trafficking in Edo state. Thus, this is in agreement with the report of Daniel (2014) agrees with the present findings that, labour conditions, the number of weekly hours dedicated to work, and the presence of work scheduled in the morning negatively affected the academic performance of child labourers. These results show that the relationship between child labour and academic performance is based on the conflict between these two activities. Interviewee reveals in an interview on August, 3rd 2023 that, many were lured in the name of scholarship, however the interviewee would like to go abroad but not under the guise of fraudulent scheme. In an interview conducted with Interviewee on August, 10th 2023 contends that, he is still going to school with the hope of graduating some day and have something good to do. Thus, another Interviewee reveals in an interview that, many of his friends left school calling it a scam, that it is a waste of time and resources in a Nigerian society.

Conclusion/Recommendation

From the findings of this study, the following conclusion is drawn.

It is concluded that, human trafficking made many Christian students less interested in schooling as a result of success stories from human trafficking agents. The following recommendations is made: Parents in collaboration with Government should give information about the activities of their wards to government where necessary and encourage them to acquire pragmatic education in the state.

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