

Gender Issues in Human trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria

Clementina O. Osezua

Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife
Nigeria

Email: tinaosezua@yahoo.com
tinaosezua@oauife.edu.ng

Abstract

This study examined the predominance of human trafficking within a social cultural milieu in Nigeria, by taking into account gender issues that have reinforced the phenomenon in the region. The paper relied on primary data generated from an anthropological fieldwork conducted in the affected area. A total of 120 household heads were purposively selected and interviewed in order to capture family dynamics and power relations and women status in contemporary Benin society. In addition four key-informants were interviewed to appreciate the historical and cultural context of the Benin people. Furthermore, eighteen (18) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted among males, females and youths with a view to capturing the insiders' perspective of the perceived gender issues precipitating human trafficking. Findings revealed that the presence of classical patriarchy as shown in high prevalence of polygyny, male-child preference, inheritance and succession systems and highly controlled female sexuality, segregated and unequal access to critical economic resources have continued to heighten the inequality within the social structure in favour of the male child. The paper concluded that efforts targeted towards eradicating existing gender inequality in the region can potentially mitigate the convoluted challenges posed by high human trafficking incidences in the region.

Key words: Human trafficking, Edo State, polygyny, female sexuality, inheritance system

Résumé

Cette étude examine la prédominance de la traite des êtres humains dans un milieu culturel social au Nigeria, en tenant compte des questions de genre qui ont renforcé le phénomène dans la région. Le document s'appuie sur les données issues Primaires d'un travail de terrain anthropologique réalisé dans la zone calls at port. Au total, 120 chefs de ménage ont été choisis you interviewés dessein AFIN à saisir de la dynamique familiale et les relations de pouvoir et le statut des femmes dans la société contemporaine du Bénin. En outre, quatre clés informateurs ont été d'interrogés AFIN apprécier le contexte historique et culturel du peuple béninois. De plus, dix-huit (18) discussions de groupes de discussion (FGD) ont été menées auprès des hommes, des femmes et des jeunes AFIN de saisir la perspective des Initiés sur les ques-

tions de genre perçues comme précipitant la traite des êtres humains. Les résultats révèlent que la présence du Patriarcat classique, comme le montre la forte prévalence polygynie de la, la préférence des mâles et des enfants, les systèmes d'hérédité et de la succession you sexualité féminine hautement contrôlée, l'accès aux ségrégué you inégal ressources économiques critiques ont Continué à l'accentuer inégalité au sein de la structure sociale Faveur de l'enfant mâle. Le document a conclu que les efforts Visant éliminer à l'inégalité entre les sexes dans la région existant pourraient potentiellement atténuer les difficultés compliquées posées par les INCI-DENCES élevées de la traite des êtres humains dans la région.

Mots clés: Trafic d'êtres humains, État d'Edo, polygynie, sexualité féminine, système héréditaire

Introduction

Human trafficking can best be described as a global problem and a modern form of slavery. Women and children are the key target groups because of their unequal socio economic status and their lack of awareness of their legal rights (Onyejekwe, 2005). ILO (2008) estimates indicates, that women and girls make up 98 percent of the overwhelming majority of those trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. This underscores the gender dimension of sex trafficking which is the focus of this paper. Several factors have been explored as the root causes of human trafficking. These include family disintegration (Lazouri, 2003); gender inequality, Hughes, 1999; Bamgbose, 2005; feminization of poverty, (Aina, 1998; UNDP, 1995 and IOM, 2002), feminization of migration (Martins, 2003); globalization (Musaccio, 2004; Osezua, 2012), and patriarchy (Aghatise 2002, Osezua, 2012). Information provided by National Agency for Prohibition of Traffic in Person NAPTIP for the period 2003-2008 also indicate that 2,120 victims of human trafficking were rescued by the Agency (NAPTIP, 2008). Nigeria is currently been described as a leading country in human trafficking with UNICEF classifying her as a leading country of origin for human trafficking (Skogeth, 2006). The preferred destination of those involved in sex trafficking is include Europe and some African Countries like Mali, Benin Algeria and Libya. A notable and distinguishing dimension of the Nigerian version of human trafficking is the active use of voodoo to charm potential and actual trafficked persons (Osezua, 2016) Despite the fact that prostitution has always existed in Nigeria the phenomena of trafficking for the purpose of international prostitution is relatively recent (Onyeonoru, 2003, Nzeogwu, 2004).

Nigeria is also a signatory to many International Conventions. Some of these Conventions have been domesticated. Some of them include: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948; Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW, 1979; Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of Prostitution of Other, 1949 and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, 1981. Others include International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention on Minimum age on Forced Labour, 1999; Convention of Rights of Child,

1989 and United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, 2000. This suggests Nigeria has put adequate legal provisions in place to protect women's rights with regards to human trafficking, but the implementation and enforcement remain a controversial matter altogether. Laws are not implemented in a vacuum, but within a social structure. Consequently, Maus, (1990) affirmed that sexual exchange of girls and women embodies deep cultural practices, which often times requires a historic interrogation of the family and kinship structures.

For instance, in Nigeria, the capital of Edo State, metropolitan Benin City is considered as a major market for cross border commercial sex work arising from human trafficking. (Onyeonoru, 2003, Norli, 2006). Majority of the studies previously conducted in relation to women trafficking and international prostitution in Benin City identified economic depression, occasioned by Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) as the root cause of this imbroglio (Women's Health and Action Research Centre (WHARC), 2002; Osakue and Okoedion, 2002; UNICRI/UNODC, 2003; Onyeonoru, 2003). However, there are however no empirical data, which suggest that the *Benin* are the most adversely affected by the economic downturn in Nigeria. Also, all the studies (WHARC, 2002; Osakue and Okoedion, 2002; UNICRI/UNIDOC, 2003) identified the involvement of close relatives or family members. These studies however attribute the Benin family involvement in illegal trafficking for sexual exploitation to poverty (Long, 2004) observed that trafficking for sexual exploitation though a world -wide phenomenon, implicates a cultural practice within the given society.

The objective of this paper is to document cultural practices that has resulted gendered imbalance within the Benin Society that has made the region more vulnerable to human trafficking activities. While no nation functions in isolation of macro forces like the political economy, globalization, liberalization policies, insufficient attention has not been given to socio- cultural factors within the Benin Society. The paper argues that these factors have continued to precipitate gender inequality, which engenders systemic inequality and vulnerability to trafficking incidences, hence this study.

Importantly, previous studies have utilized macro theoretical perspective in explaining the phenomenon of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Micro theoretical method like ethnography, has the potential of capturing emic perspectives of people and give greater attention to the cultural environment of the study area. Existing social dynamics of a particular society differ from another. This accounts for the reason why some nations are "sending communities" (that is those who traffic) while some are "destination nations" (WHARC, 2002; Mussaccio, 2004). This study bridges the gap in terms of by paying greater attention to the gender issues within a socio-cultural context.

Operational Definition of Concepts

Gender: This refers to culturally defined ways of acting as a male or female that becomes part of a person's sense of self. In other words, children's feelings of being a boy or a girl are defined more by how they are treated by their parents than by their actual biological characteristics (Stockard and Johnson, 1992). Gender draws attention to socially constructed aspects or differences between male and female.

Sex: This refers the biological differences between male and females including primary sex characteristics that are present at birth, which is the presence of specific male or female genitalia and secondary sex characteristics that develop later. Oakley (1974) introduced the term "sex" and "gender" into Anthropology and also defined sex as the biological division into male or female.

Trafficking: Since various agencies have radically addressed the subject of trafficking from different vantage positions, arriving at a definition is an uphill task (Ucarer, 1999). When viewed as a process, trafficking entails several processes of recruitment, transportation and control of victims in final places of destination. Trafficking usually does not occur on its own as there are constituent elements. Hence a definition of trafficking must include the aspect of servitude of victims of trafficking. However, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime which eventually metamorphosed into the PARLEMO protocol defined trafficking as:

Recruitment, transportation, harboring, receipt of person by threat or use or force, or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud or deception of the abuse of power of position of vulnerability or of giving or receiving payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include as a minimum, the exploitation of others or other forms of sexual exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced abduction or services, slavery practices similar to slavery servitude or the removal of organs.

Exploitation: This is one of the contested concepts in the protocol since it is what distinguishes prostitution by choice from forced migration, or trafficking for the purpose of being sexually exploited. Exploitation therefore implies the process of trafficking, which a person undergoes and then ends up being taken advantage of. Tyldum, Tveit and Brunovski (2005) observed that this is what distinguished the trafficked victim into guilty and innocent; the first being those who engaged in prostitution before their involvement in trafficking incidence while the latter are those who were forced.

Patriarchy: The term 'patriarchy' is being used to refer to the systematic organization of male supremacy and female subordination (Kamarare, 1992; Stacey, 1993; Aina, 1998.).

Patriarchy is therefore a system of male authority which oppresses women through its social, political and economic institutions. Literally patriarchy means rule of the father.

Polygyny: This is a form marriage where a man marries more than one wife at a time.

Gender inequality: Gender inequality refers to the social, cultural, economic, and political disparities between men and women. It describes how men and women are given different opportunities because of their gender. Gender inequality has resulted in the marginalization of many women which in turn perpetuates the inequalities between men and women in society. Due to gender inequality, women all over the world are poorer than men. This has compelled many women to engage in behaviour that are risky to their health. Indeed, there is a relation between the low economic status of women and their involvement in prostitution. (Conseil du statut de la femme, 2002).

Literature Review

Trafficking Women and Sex Slavery

In evaluating the global trend in trafficking activities all over the world, Kempadoo (2005) argued that the interest in trafficking waned globally, for a while, but was greatly resuscitated during the Vietnam war when feminists began to highlight the predominance of sex tourism, militarized prostitution and the attendant development of sex industries. By the beginning of the twenty first century, the United Nations Protocol to Prevent Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons especially women and children, shifted focus towards criminalization and illegal migration (Kempadoo, 2005). Be that as it may, available data suggest that illegal trafficking usually involved some degree of coercion or even deception by traffickers. For example, the Human Rights Watch (2001) likened the phenomenon to slave-like practices. Even the studies conducted in Benin City on human trafficking for the purpose of sexual transactions have established significant forms of coercions and deception (UNICRI/UNDOC, 2003). Furthermore, Malthazan (2001) disclosed that women are sold like commodities, many times over, thereby increasing the profits realized by traffickers. He further revealed that less risk is involved in sexual trafficking of women, with the excessive profits associated with it has continued to make trafficking for sexual exploitation more attractive to human traffickers than illegal drugs or arms transactions.

Another perspective to the phenomena of human trafficking and highlighted is the issue of consent. Bhabha (2005) observed that the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime had two distinct protocols; the Trafficking Protocol which came into force in December, 2003, and the Smuggling Protocol which came into force in January, 2008. Since our focus is essentially on the phenomena of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, then not much attention would be paid to the protocol on smuggling.

Generally there is a paucity of accurate data on trends and magnitude of human trafficking around the world. Due to the clandestine nature of trafficking, volumes of women trafficked in Nigeria for the purpose of international prostitution is very limited. Several studies suggest that Nigerian women make up the largest percentage of illegally trafficked workers in Italy. Loconto, (2002) discloses that in Italy, between 1994 and 1998 alone, about 116 Nigerian girls were killed in sex-related violence.

Young women, who are potential victims of sex-trafficking, are usually recruited by organized syndicates, which have both local and international network (Giwa -Osagie, 1999). She states these syndicates, through some of the known family members, enticed the victims with material benefits of traveling 'abroad'. She also reveals that desperate parents have sold property to enable their children travel to Europe for prostitution. The traffickers usually procured traveling documents for these women, which are usually confiscated as soon as the victims arrived at their destinations (Parrandang, 1999). This was to ensure compliance to the directives of the traffickers and the *madams* (Onosode, 1999).

There is a consensus among researchers that the amount of money, which the trafficked victims are required to remit to their *madams*, is usually outrageous. This is further exacerbated by the oath of compliance and secrecy, which the victims have been previously subjected to. Abhulimen (1999) discloses that pubic hair, fingers or toe-nails of trafficked victims were used by traffickers for rituals or '*juju*', prior to their departure from Nigeria. Studies have also revealed that due to the involvement of rituals in trafficking and international sex slavery among the *Benin*, disclosing the identities of the traffickers and the *ritualists* by victims is usually very difficult (UNICRI/UNDOC, 2003). The study further reveals that while some of the traffickers had loose net-works, other trafficking syndicate had formidable and well organized networks. Most of these networks of traffickers cut across international boundaries, with membership drawn from highly placed indigenes of Benin and some prominent Nigerians. The study concludes that most of the people charged with human trafficking in Benin City, were not often prosecuted due to lack of evidences.

Gender and Benin Culture: The *Benin* are in Edo state of Southern Nigeria, which was carved out of the former Mid- Western State (1963-1976) of the defunct Western Region, and later known as Bendel State (1976-1991). The total area of Benin speaking people covers over 4000sq/km (Bradbury, 1957), with a population of about a million people (Federal Office of Statistics, 1995). Benin City is located approximately 250 km east of Lagos, the former capital city of Nigeria. It is the ancestral home of the *Benin* people who trace their genealogy to a common ancestor. There are different ethnic groups currently living in Benin City, but these people are different from the *Benin* since they do not share a common ancestral history. Benin City is called "*Edo*" by its inhabitants and individuals who are from Benin City refer to themselves as "*Oviedo*", child of Benin, or "*Ovioba*", subject of the *Oba* (Bradbury, 1957). While *Benin* served as a territorial label, with the advent of the colonial contact *Benin* has been adopted to

represent the territorial label in recent times as in Benin Division, Benin City, Benin Kingdom. However, both "Benin" and "Edo" serve as ethnic and linguistic labels for the indigenous inhabitants of Benin territory (Okpoko and Agbontaen, 1993). The people of Benin were historically referred to as *Benin* or *Oviedo*. This also means therefore that people who are indigenes of Benin City are referred to as the *Benin*. For the purpose of this study, the pre-colonial label "Benin" would be adopted except when there are direct references to the current capital of Edo State, Benin City.

The Benin people have been described as a typical example of a patriarchal society (Egharevba, 1949, Ebohon, 1996). For instance, it is customary for women to be subjected to series of oaths (Ebohon, 1996). For example, Ebohon (1996) reveals that married women in Benin are made to swear oaths of marital faithfulness in the family shrine. Also, in the event of the death of a man, his wife or wives are also made to swear at the village shrine 'ogwedion' to establish innocence over their husbands' death. The law of inheritance recognized the primogeniture which privileges the males from each door. "Ubro" as eldest son of each woman in a polygynous marriage represented a 'door'. Girls were generally perceived as less important to male children and are described as "half current" depicting that it is with less virility of manhood that the female child is conceived, while the male child is the apt expression of man's sexual strength and prowess, thereby seen as "full current." Women are culturally related to as "transitory beings" that have no significant portion in the family's estate (igiogbe) and also considered less preferred beneficiaries of Western education when a choice is to be made has a result of scarce economic resources.

Evidently, the review highlights the veracity of giving attention to context in understanding the phenomenon of human trafficking even though it is a social problem with global magnitude.

Theoretical Frame Work:

I engage two theoretical analyses, the unified gender kinship model that examines more critically, elements within the social structure which generate gender inequality with a specific cultural context and radical feminism.

Unified Gender Kinship Model

According to Yanagasiko and Collier (2004) in analyzing social whole, the model is relevant when studying facts. They argued that 'facts' are socially constructed, which therefore underscores the importance of investigating the underlining symbolic meanings. There is also an assumption of 'systemic inequality', which suggests a prestige structure that calls for analysis. This is crucial considering the sensitive nature of the phenomenon under investigation. Yanagasiko and Collier (2004) explain that cultural analysis involved gaining insights into the nature of social relationships within specific contexts. They explicated on the need to adopt a historical and comparative analysis in understanding relationships between gender, kinship and change.

They further posit that systemic inequality will enable one understand subjective meanings of given 'facts' as well as structural location of the respondents. Yanagasiko and Collier (2004) maintained that cultural analysis, involved interrogating the nature of social relationships within specific context; the people's evaluation of prestige models, which are usually encoded in their description and interpretations of events or social relationship. They concluded by stating the need to adopt a historical and comparative analysis in the light of the fact that meanings attached to words or events which they argued cannot be a- historical.

This theoretical model is relevant to the current study in that it emphasizes a culture-specific gender relation analyses. This no doubt provided adequate insight to the specificity of illegal migration and international sex transaction among the people of *Benin*. In this case, cultural meanings, which the *Benin* identifies as family, roles and expectations, obligation, and values, are brought to the fore. Among the Benin people, prestige structure is indicative of the value system in the society. For instance, the prominence of a Benin man is rooted in his relevance and relationship to the palace. Hence Curnow (1997) observed that virility and regal display of wealth and relatedness to the palace characterized the concept of *ukponmwan* that is a real man. Also primogeniture gives the eldest son access to the family inheritance known as *igiogbe*. This has implication on wealth distribution in the Benin Society. Inequality in wealth distribution privileges the males and places greater value for male children especially the eldest son in a family. As observed by Osarumwense (1999) the concept of *igiogbe* is very crucial to the traditional Benin Society. Another element within the Benin society which is suggestive of systemic inequality is access to land which is an important economic resource. Traditional Benin City was basically agrarian, which again placed those who could own land in position of advantage. Arguably, this lack of access may not be synonymous with just Benin women, but the inheritance system continually eliminates women from ownership of vital economic resources, which compels dependence and powerlessness. Again, just like Yanagasiko and Collier (2004) posited, the need for a cultural analysis within specific context which involves examining the relationship within specific context is crucial. Hence among many people of this extraction, being polygynous has traditionally been perceived as a measure of wealth and prominence. Women were therefore to be acquired as physical acquisitions rather than seen as partners. Consequently, colonial contact only bequeathed to women the legacy of owning property (Osarumwense, 1999). At this point in time, things began to change as women who owned property became less dependent on their husbands who most times had several other wives. Competition, rivalries and suspicion are typical characteristics of many Benin traditional families. Expectedly, the cultural element of *ubro* known as gate, other factors like ancestral worship which has a very close affinity with and with the status of the woman in the Benin Society.

Secondly, the model takes systemic inequality as given and therefore emphasizes the need to appraise the value structure of the *Benin*. In this case, cultural meanings attached

to gender roles, obligation, are vital in appreciating the gender issues. Among the Benin Society, the wife is seen as an inversion of the ideal Curnow (1997). Women are made to swear to oaths of fidelity before family shrines. A married woman was placed under very many rules of sexual restrictions which are considered sacrosanct. Violation of such sexual rules was usually sanctioned by the affinal kins and the ancestors would have to be appeased. Ancestral worship is still very common in Benin despite the upsurge in the establishment of several Pentecostal churches in the city. (Osezua, 2016). However, colonial contact has altered the status of women as many have begun to own businesses and build their own houses. This apparent "freedom" arising from financial empowerment may have given women of this extraction greater impetus to clamor for more wealth.

Generally, the society is stratified on the basis of class. Class distinction was also portrayed in the patterns of dressing among the Benin people. Okpokunu, Agbontaen-Eghafona and Ojo (2005) explored the relationships between various classes in tradition Benin and dress patterns. They explained that Benin dress patterns reflected the social hierarchy which was characteristic of the Benin people with the Oba at the apex.

. With the advent of colonialism, corresponding social changes had occurred in the style and patterns of dress worn by contemporary Benin. However, dressing is still very important to an average Benin man who pays great attention to what he wears. As Curnow, (1997) succinctly puts it, clothes make men in Benin and yardages and exorcism are badges of wealth. Dress is therefore a major avenue through which class distinction is maintained and perpetuated. For instance, certain coral beads and ivory are still the exclusive preserve of the Oba, while the chiefs can wear only certain designated attire (Curnow, 1997).

Thirdly, the theory accommodates gradual or drastic change, which is buttressed by the adoption of ahistorical analyses and a comparative viewpoint in order to verify the sequence and causes of change. One of the critical elements of changes witnessed in pre-colonial Benin was their contact with the Portuguese in the eighteenth century as reported by Igbafe (1979). That altered significantly, the belief systems with the reported conversion of the then Monarch to Christianity and the visit of the crown prince to Portugal. In addition, the language pidgin English was an inevitable outcome of the indigenes' relationship with the Portuguese.

Many of the economic transactions were conducted at the Oba's discretion and prerogative. It is noteworthy that there were obvious trajectories in the economic activities which led to a high demand placed in cultivation of rubber for the exportation purposes.

Although, many studies have identified poverty as the root cause of human trafficking, the systemic inequality leading to gender discrimination has been touched on very casually. In conclusion, this model supports Maus' (1990) declaration that sexual exchange of girls and women embodies deep cultural practices and is historically embedded in

many family and kinship systems. In conclusion, the shortcoming of this theoretical analysis lies basically on its limited application and specificity to context which are highly variable, making generalization impossible.

Radical Feminism: The central argument of radical feminism is the consensus among these theorists about the structured and systematized operation of patriarchy in all human societies, carefully orchestrated and facilitated by the economic, ideological, emotional and legal structures in these societies. This scenario places women at the receiving end, making them barely able to resist patriarchal control and oppression both at the individual level and sometimes at the group level. Consequently, women are generally perceived as sexual objects met to satisfy the unbridled sexual desires of men. They are also viewed as ornamental signs of man's status and power (Ritzer, 2000). Radical feminists therefore seek to abolish this perceived patriarchy (Willis, 1984). They argue that the way to deal with patriarchy and oppression of all kinds against women is to attack the underlying causes of these problems and address the fundamental components of society that support them. Radical feminists believe that eliminating patriarchy, and other systems which perpetuate the domination of one group over another, will liberate women from an unjust society.

The utility of this theory lies in its ability to paint an apt picture of the Benin traditional society and its social structures. The degree of patriarchy has also been observed by radical feminists to vary from one society to another. As has been observed by various scholars (Egarevbha, 1949; Igbafe, 1979; Curnow 1997), Benin has been described as a clear example of a highly patriarchal society. Some of the critical indicators of patriarchy are the institution of primogeniture, the excessive sexual restrictions placed on women on chastity; gender segregated utensils and poor status of women in the Benin society except those who are blue blooded, that is those of royal parentage. Also polygynous marriages are highly prevalent as the number of wives a man has is seen as status booster. Divorce or separation is generally frowned at as women are expected to learn to be totally subservient to their husbands. This study proposes that classical patriarchy is a critical factor that has resulted in the phenomenon of sex trafficking among the Benin.

Study Area:

Benin City, the capital of Edo State has an enviable history on pre-colonial West Africa based on its expansiveness and the density of rich cultural heritage. The region had the first contact with the Europeans in the mid-15th century and a sustained commercial intercourse which largely influenced the Benin culture and language. Till date, Pidgin English is still widely spoken in the region, representing the vestiges of this contact. The arrival of the Portuguese was a very significant aspect of the Benin history (Bradbury, 1957). Although the Portuguese sought to Christianise the *Benin*

people on the contrary, the Benin were more interested in a commercial intercourse with the Portuguese (Igbafe, 1979). Igbafe added that the great demand for slaves by the Portuguese became a valuable means of wealth for the *Benin*, with the Oba of Benin being the royal monopolist in the sale of slaves to the Portuguese.

Males constituted the bulk of slaves sold in this region as they were in higher demand than the female slaves. With the abolition of slave trade, pre-colonial Benin Kingdom had benefitted tremendously, and the social class between the ruling class and the ordinary citizens had widened. Benin though an agrarian economy was traditionally known for brass casting, blacksmithing and carving which were male dominated tasks.

The women were usually part of traditional guilds that made beads and clothes, locating them in the domain of providing aesthetic significance to the Oba and his chiefs. The introduction of a monetized economy served to erode the privileges of the dominate class of the haves and led to the emergence of a new class of men who could attain to the highest level of significance if they had money.

In terms of post-independence experience, Benin City had its fair share of the Structural Adjustment Policy popularly referred to as SAP, which some scholars argue led to the emergence of human trafficking for international prostitution in the region (Oyeonoru, 2001). Presently, Benin City can be described as a civil service town (Omorodion, 2004). Ancestral worship is still dominant despite the presence of several Pentecostal churches which also is dominant. It is the home of the Late Archbishop Benson Idahosa, who is reputed to have turned the face of Christianity in Nigeria with the introduction of the gospel of prosperity. This gained wide acceptance based on the natural display of flamboyance reminiscent of prosperous empire of pre-colonial Benin..

Methods:

This paper relied on the ethnographic data generated from a fieldwork survey carried out in Benin City, and two other neighbouring communities/Local government areas; Egor and Uhumwode in 1999 (March-May). This selection was based on the researches that have classified the region as the hub of human trafficking in Nigeria (Onyeonoru, 2003, WHARC, 2002). Oredo and Egor Local government areas located in city of Benin while Uhumwode is the largest local government area of the Benin people in the suburb. Since this is an ethnographic study which sought to understand the depth of social phenomena within a specific historical and social-cultural context, the study therefore employed an array of qualitative data collection techniques. These include; (i) household/ family based interview, (ii) Focus Group Discussions using Vignette stories, (iii) Key -informant interview, ((iv) Observation method

Forty (40) households were purposively selected from each local government (Oredo, Egor and Uhumwode) based on two criteria; ethnic origin and socio- economic status. A

total of 120 household/ family based interviews were conducted in all. Household heads were targeted to provide information on their households. Data obtained through these avenue provided information on the changes within the family structures and gender relationships among the Benin. A total of 18 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) using vignette stories were conducted on three categories of people; adult women, adult men and youths. Each FDG category consisted of 7-12 participants. The vignettes¹ stories were in two parts; (a) the story of trafficked victim that ended on a “happy note” and (b) the story of a trafficked victim that ended on a “tragic note.” In each local government, the three categories of participants were exposed to both the “happy” and the “tragic” stories. This added up to six (6) FGDs in each local government area. Data obtained through this method helped identify and analyze and document the gender issues precipitating trafficking incidences of sex trafficking in Benin women and their family structure. Four (4) key- informants which included a male and a female who are versed in Benin culture and the family institution, a representative of a Non -Governmental Organization (NGO) who had done extensive work in trafficking among the Benin people, and an opinion leader were targeted. Information sourced through this technique provided insight to the cultural factors that precipitated trafficking and international prostitution among the Benin. These methods were complemented with observation of social events like wedding and burial ceremonies in order to document the gender issues associated with human trafficking among the Benin people. In all, 120 household interviews, 4 key-informants interviews, 18 FGDs were conducted.

Ethical Consideration

Due to the sensitive nature of the study, participation was voluntary. Attempts were made to explain the objectives of the research to the various categories of participants included in this study and their decision for anonymity was respected. All participants were duly informed of their right to withdraw at any time from the study.

Data Analysis: The data were analysed using the content-based approach as suggested by DeVault (1990); Woods, Priest and Roberts (2002). Since all the interviews were recorded, all of them were transcribed verbatim and checked for accuracy. The transcripts were rereads several times by the author and thematic patterns which emerged from the participants perspectives were documented. Hence, all the transcribed data were reviewed line-by-line to analyze the main concepts, and these concepts were given codes. Relationships between codes were organized into thematic categories. Common themes which emerged through this process reflected a shared understanding among all participants in the FGDs, household heads and the key informants. To provide an indication of the accuracy of theme generation and allocation, three well experienced

social researchers in qualitative techniques were approached to participate in the data coding process as suggested by Woods, et al (2002). From the transcripts coded in this manner, a resulting level of agreement (70%) was achieved.

Discussion of Findings

Table 1: Socio-demographics of Household Heads:

	Local Government of Origin							
	Egor		Oredo		Uhumwode		Total	
	N=40	%	N= 40	%	N=40	%	N=120	%
Marital Status of family heads								
Married	31	77.5	32	80.0	30	75.0	93	77.5
Separated/Divorce	5	12.5	4	10.0	2	5.0	11	9.2
Widower/Widow	4	10.8	4	10.8	8	20.0	16	13.2
Occupation of family heads	5	12.5	4	10.0	10	25.0	19	15.8
Artisan								
Civil Servant	10	25.0	9	22.5	10	25.0	29	24.2
Professionals	5	12.5	6	15.0	2	5.0	13	10.8
Retirees	10	25.5	12	30.0	12	30.0	34	28.3
Self employed	20	40.0	9	22.5	10	25.0	19	15.8
Religion of Family Heads	32	80.0	29	72.5	31	77.5	92	76.7
Christianity								
Muslim	2	5.0	-	-	-	-	2	1.6
Traditional Religious Beliefs	6	15.0	11	27.5	9	22.5	26	21.7
Family Head Monthly Income								
Less than N10,000.00	9	22.5	9	22.5	12	30.0	30	25.0
N10001, -N35,000	21	52.5	18	45.0	16	40.0	55	45.8
N35,001 – N65,000	07	17.5	10	25.0	10	25.0	27	22.5
N65,001- N100,000	2	5.0	2	5.0	2	5.0	6	5.0
# 100,000.00 or more	1	2.5	1	2.5	0	0	2	1.7

Socio-demographics of Key Informants and Focus Group Discussion Participants:

All the key informants fell within the age range of 41 – 85years of age. All except one are Christians. The least qualification that key informants had was a Nursing and Midwifery certificate while the highest qualification obtained by the key informants is a doctor of philosophy (PhD) degree. The age category of the FGD participants across

the three locations ranged between 15 and 68 years, with the adult male groups ranging between 40 and 68 while the female adult group ranged between 35 and 60. The youth group age ranged between 15 and 30 in all the locations. In the adults category, (male / female) FGD group comprised of professionals like teachers, architects, social workers and lawyers and non- professional such as clerks, salon /hair dressers, market women, artisans, vulcanizers, among others. The youth group comprised of artisans, bus conductor, *okada* riders, but majority of them were students in public Senior Secondary classes. Majority of the participants are Christians with some claiming to be traditional belief adherents. The FGD conducted in each location was done by reading out the vignettes which were in two parts; a story of trafficked victim that ended on a tragic note and the second one was a vignette of a trafficked victim that ended on a positive and apparently successful note.

Study Findings

Social Cultural Factors Precipitating Gender Inequality among the Benin People:

Prevalence of Polygyny: Findings from the fieldwork showed that a total of 74 households representing 64.1% of the entire households in the study area are still polygynous. This goes to highlight the pervasiveness of polygyny among the Benin despite the strong westernization influences arising from early colonial contact. The number of wives ranged from 2-7 wives. Incidence of polygyny is relatively higher in Oredo local government area despite its metropolitan status. Furthermore, marital status of household heads revealed that divorced or separated is relatively low in that only 9.2% of the total number of household interviewed are divorced or separated. This further buttresses the value placed by the Benin on marriage institution. However, more cases of separation and divorce were recorded in Egor (12.5%) and the Oredo (10.0%) the urban areas.

The implication is that such marriage practice is also closely associated with having many children. Many of the female children became exposed too early as a result of the economic downturn in Nigeria. Many are made to source for viable means of livelihood. This was aggravated because most of these young females were not sent to schools because in the times of scarcity economic resources, the girl child is usually the one who suffered neglect and then is withdrawn from school so that the male child would attend school.

b) Male-Child Preference

Among the Benin, the study revealed that there is greater preference for the male child based on two basic reasons: inheritance system in Benin which recognized or reckons with descent only through the male line and the concept of *urho* "door". The door is used to depict the kind of polygynous relationship in existence in Benin. For instance, a male house-hold in Oredo opined;

If a woman is producing only female children, take another wife to get a male child.

Male, 37, Civil Servant (Oredo)

On the contrary, a female member of a household interviewed in Oredo argued thus: *It is God that gives children and no matter the type or the sex of the child. These days family could go extra mile to do anything to change the sex through herbal means, but I believe that God knows the best for you.*

Female, Trader, 53, (Oredo)

Whereas, another female member of a household in Egor was ambivalent in her views *A child is a child, whether boy or girl.*

Female, Primary School Teacher, 45, (Egor)

In what could be considered as a departure from the norm among the Benin, one of the household heads in Uhumwode observed a change in the perception of the society towards the girl-child, largely due to the fact that she is considered as a potential economic good. She explained;

The mothers of girls now have more voice and are been accorded more respect. When they are more than one wife the competition becomes very tough.

Female, Market woman, 47, (Uhumwode)

Moreover, despite the presumed fortunes, which the female children have been synonymous with in Benin, there is still strong preference for male children in the region. Most of the household heads (males) are still of the opinion that male children's place of cultural importance cannot be eroded, no matter the level of social change that the Benin society is currently witnessing. Many of the men rejected a situation where their son would have all females' children without a male child, stating that it was totally unacceptable. Most men considered the option of marrying another wife for their sons, if their wives failed to have male children. They insisted that such woman would be sent away. Others felt that they would go and do something about the situation, which is, engaging the means of the Supernatural intervention to have a male child.

Social Inequality within the Benin Society:

Understanding the social structure in place is vital in appreciating the context in which human trafficking incidences is embedded. The view of this key informant was instructive and aptly described the context. The informant, a highly revered chief in Benin City and widely acknowledged for his versatility in Benin culture, disclosed:

Great Benin kingdom was one of the greatest empires with great sense of organization. The early European, that is the Portuguese whom the natives referred to as 'Kpotokin' (the corrupted indigenous versions the word, Portugese by the Indigenes) till date were greatly amazed at the level of socio-political organization which distinguished the empire. If you have ever been to Ring Road, Benin city you would

notice that it is an intersection of nine roads which lead to different parts of the country, to Warri, Asaba, Gele Gele, Abuja and even Lagos. Moreover, you would also notice the settlement patterns of the people, highly organized, the blacksmith, sculptors, weavers and even the those who work with iron have their own quarters. This simply amazed the early Europeans. As early as the 18th century, the Benin had ambassadors in Spain. The long relationship which the Benin had with these Europeans was profound. Our cultural roots are very deep and this was a psychological boost for the Benin. The Benin man is very proud: he had this self-sufficient posture. So are the girls.

Based on the knowledge of the context, the type of relationships within the context as posited by Yanagasiko and Collier (2004), exploring the such relationships provided insight into systemic inequality and trajectories in the society, hence another male key informant, a renowned chronicler of Benin History further explained:

Traditionally, a wife was economically self-sufficient in that she provided for her children from the piece of land given to her by her husband to cultivate. Also women were exposed to different informal schools like poultry, animal husbandry, music or even traditional medicine. Some of them understood human physiology. This is because a woman was said to be very close to nature in Benin philosophy. Hence, in Benin, a married woman could not shake hands with another man. She could not stretch her legs out for another man to cross over, if a man were to stare at her lecherously, then she was expected to report the incidence to her husband; otherwise she would incur the wrath of the ancestors. Adultery incurred the wrath of the gods which could ultimately lead to the death of the husband by the gods. The women were put under traditional oaths of allegiance since this was the only means to ascertain fidelity of a woman for reproductive purposes.

This view was corroborated by an octogenarian female key informant, who is a Princess. She described the status of Benin woman:

When a woman came into a family, whatever the family forbade is what she forbade. When the woman was menstruating, she could not reach the apartment of the husband. She must not cook or even touch anything that belonged to her husband. She could not even greet the husband. She would need an intermediary to do so. In the palace, as at today, all these practices are still in operation. The man and his wife cannot use the same bucket for bathing.

The findings further accentuate the state of women in Benin Society which has significantly gone through changes mediated by colonial contact, introduction of wage economy, neo-liberal economic policies, migration among many other factors.

Changes in Traditional Belief System and gender implication:

The data obtained from the household interviews conducted suggest that traditional beliefs were still pervasive even though many claimed to be Christians. Ancestral worship served as a key institution of regulating social behavior. It is also important that ancestor worship is the underlying factor that helps perpetuate the rule of primogeniture among the Benin. Hence, the males are usually the custodians of the family shrines community shrines and other traditional worship centres.

A consideration of the changes in Benin traditional family structure showed that ancestral worship was still pervasive with 76 (63.3%) out of the 120 households claiming that it is still an integral aspect of life in Benin. Reasons identified for such practices included the preservative/protective functions the ancestors are believed to play in the affairs of the living kinsmen. Consequently, a cultural practice which has a gender dimension is the oath swearing which has been incorporated into the human trafficking acts in the region. For instance, a male key informant disclosed that oath taking of an integral part of admitting a won into the family. It was a symbolic representation of loyalty and allegiance to her family of procreation.

“Every family had ritual restrictions that were observed by the females. For example, “*emanode*”{previous day pounded yam} was “*awaa*”(forbidden) in many families. A woman had to abide by these rules. When she entered into a family she had to swear by that family’s shrine that she would not spoil that home (i.e. cause any havoc or bring about disaffection among the agnatic kins. In the event of husband’s death, she also has to swear that she is not guilty

Majority of household heads (who were largely males) agreed that ancestral worship served to regulate the sexual activities of family members especially the female members; and ensured compliance to community mores, family traditions and customs. Hirschson (1984) has observed that in societies where classical patriarchy is endemic, older men controlled women and children but usually ensured that the honour of a family was significantly tied to the honour of the females in that society. This explains one of the reasons why several restrictions were usually targeted towards the women in order for that family to enjoy certain prestige within the society. For instances, reasons for such sexual restriction was identified by one of the male key informants as posited;

Traditionally, a wife was economically self- sufficient in that she provided for her children from the piece of land given to her by her husband to cultivate. Also women were exposed to different informal schools like poultry, animal husbandry, music or even traditional medicine. Some of them understood human physiology. This is because a woman was said to be very close to nature in Benin philosophy. Hence, in Benin, a married woman could not shake hands with another man. She could not stretch her legs out for another man to cross over, if a man were to stare at her lecherously, then she was expected to report the incidence to her husband; otherwise she would incur the wrath of the ancestors. Adultery incurred the wrath of the gods which could ultimately lead to the death of the husband by the gods. The women were put under traditional oaths of allegiance since this was the only means to ascertain fidelity of a woman for reproductive purposes.

These extracts further helped to underscore the critical gender inequality inherent within the social structure. Another female key informant described the conservative disposition of Benin culture in regards to the sexuality of the females. She noted:

When a woman came into a family, whatever the family forbade is what she forbade. When the woman was menstruating, she could not reach the apartment of the husband. She must not cook or even touch anything that belonged to her husband. She could not even greet the husband. She would need an intermediary to do so. In the palace, as at today, all these practices are still in operation. The man and his wife cannot use the same bucket for bathing.

The octogenarian female key informant resonated in line with the earlier observations made by the previous key informants:

A man then was the head of the home and with wife or wives and children supporting all the decisions of the man. Whatever the man decided was final and could not be questioned. This continued for a long time and even now, modernization is changing things. A woman was seen as a property just like any other patriarchal set-up in Nigeria. She was seen as a property as soon as the bride price was paid. The wives were subject to the husband in all things and the husband’s wish overpowered everything she did. The woman could not call her husband by name. She could not even stay in the same apartment with him during her period.

Identified Factors of Causes of Human Trafficking among the Benin People

A total of 18 Focus Group Discussions were conducted. One of the questions was to know the involvement of parents in trafficking female minors. A culture that was completely averse to sexual promiscuity of any degree can be permissive to the point of playing active roles in the process of trafficking. Find below the table and the key FGD participants views as follows

Table 2: Perceived Reasons why Mothers' support their daughters' involvement Sex Trafficking

Responses of Categories	Oredo						Egor						Uumwode					
	Ma	Mb	Fa	Fb	Ya	Yb	Ma	Mb	Fa	Fb	Ya	Yb	Ma	Mb	Fa	Fb	Ya	Yb
1. Wickedness	+	-	+	-	++	-	++	-	+	-	+	-	++	+	++	-	++	++
2. Desire for liberty (freedom)	++	++	+	++	-	-	+	++	+	++	-	-	+	++	++	-	-	-
3. Desire to acquire property	++	++	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	++	+	++	+	+	++	-	+	++
4. Greed	-	-	+	-	-	-	++	-	++	-	-	-	++	-	+	-	++	-
5. Competition and rivalry in the family	-	-	+	+	+	+	++	+	++	+	-	-	-	++	++	-	++	-
6. Women's belief that children are a means to an end	+	++	-	++	+	-	-	++	-	+	++	+	-	++	++	++	++	+
7. Loss of cultural values	++	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	++	-	-	-
8. Ignorance of hazards of prostitution	=	=	++	=	=	++	=	=	++	++	++	++	=	=	++	++	=	=
9. Poverty	-	++	-	+	++	++	+	++	++	++	++	++	+	+	++	++	++	++
10. Societal Pressure	-	++	-	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	+	++	++	++	++

KEY

Ma – Male FGD group that was exposed to vignette A: The story of a trafficked victim that ended on tragic note.

Fa –Female FGD group that was exposed to vignette A: the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a happy note

Ya–Youth FGD group that was exposed to vignette A, the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a tragic note.

Mb–Male FGD group that was exposed to vignette B: The story of a trafficked victim that ended on tragic note.

Fb–Female FGD group that was exposed to vignette A: the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a happy note.

Yb –Youth FGD group that was exposed to vignette B, the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a happy note.

++ Where opinions were strongly expressed by four or more participants in the FGD)

+ Where opinions were mildly expressed by participants three or less participants in the FGD

- Where opinion was not expressed by any of the participants

Table 3: Perceived Status and Role of Fathers in Trafficking in the Study Areas

Responses of Categories	Oredo						Egor						Uumwode					
	Ma	Mb	Fa	Fb	Ya	Yb	Ma	Mb	Fa	Fb	Ya	Yb	Ma	Mb	Fa	Fb	Ya	Yb
1. Fathers are generally lazy and do not want to work	+	-	-	-	+	-	++	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. Fathers encourage it when they are ultimate beneficiaries	++	+	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
3. They are threatened and can no longer control women	+	++	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	++	+	-	-	-	++	-	-	-
4. 4)Fathers have lost control over the family due to economic hardship	+	++	++	+	-	-	++	-	++	-	-	-	++	-	+	++	+	-
5. Polygyny and too many children have affected fathers control over the family	++	++	++	-	-	+	++	+	++	+	-	-	-	++	++	-	++	-
6. Women are no longer controllable	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	++	-	+	++	+	-	+	++	+	-	-

Key:

Ma – Male FGD group that was exposed to vignette A: The story of a trafficked victim that ended on tragic note.

Fa –Female FGD group that was exposed to vignette A: the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a happy note

Ya–Youth FGD group that was exposed to vignette A, the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a tragic note.

Mb–Male FGD group that was exposed to vignette B: The story of a trafficked victim that ended on tragic note.

Fb–Female FGD group that was exposed to vignette A: the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a happy note.

Yb –Youth FGD group that was exposed to vignette B, the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a happy note.

++ Where opinions were strongly expressed by four or more participants in the FGD)

+ Where opinions were mildly expressed by participants three or less participants in the FGD

- Where opinion was not expressed by any of the participants in the FGD session.

Table 4: Perceived Roles and Status of the Trafficked female Victim in the Family

Responses of Categories	Oredo						Egor						Uumwode					
	Ma	Mb	Fa	Fb	Ya	Yb	Ma	Mb	Fa	Fb	Ya	Yb	Ma	Mb	Fa	Fb	Ya	Yb
1. The victim did not have a choice due to family pressure	+	-	+	-	+	-	++	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	+
2. Victim was a good girl and wanted to salvage her family. (Sacrificial Lamb)	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	+
3. She was a victim of circumstances	-	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	++	+	-	-	-	++	-	+	-
4. She had no fear of God	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	-
5. She was fortunate and her destiny was good	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+
6. She was greedy.	+	-	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	-	++	+	+	-
7. She is usually worshipped like demi-gods in the family when the succeed	-	-	-	+	+	++	-	+	-	++	-	+	-	+	+	+	-	++

Key:

Ma – Male FGD group that was exposed to vignette A: The story of a trafficked victim that ended on tragic note.

Fa – Female FGD group that was exposed to vignette A: the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a happy note

Ya – Youth FGD group that was exposed to vignette A, the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a tragic note.

Mb – Male FGD group that was exposed to vignette B: The story of a trafficked victim that ended on tragic note.

Fb – Female FGD group that was exposed to vignette A: the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a happy note.

Yb – Youth FGD group that was exposed to vignette B, the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a happy note.

++ Where opinions were strongly expressed by four or more participants in the FGD)

+ Where opinions were mildly expressed by participants three or less participants in the FGD

- Where opinion was not expressed by any of the participants in the FGD session.

Table 2 shows participants' reaction to mothers' roles and involvements in trafficking of their female children are directly related to outcome of trafficking and the gender of the participants. So when trafficking ended "successfully", participants observed that the mothers were quietly or subtly commended but when it ended on a tragic note, she was often derided and described as "wicked" "heartless" or "bad". However when trafficking ended on a successful note like the case of the story in vignette B, she was hardly derided before her face. Even if people resented what she was doing, many people would never ridicule her directly.

FGD participants sought to explain the reasons why mothers may have played active roles in offering their daughters to be sold in the international sex market. Factors like poverty, desire to acquire property which are not accessible to the women folks and desire to be liberated from dominant patriarchal control of men were identified. On the other hand, all the male participants in all the local governments were of the opinion that the women's desire for freedom is what has necessitated connivance between them and their daughters for the purpose of trafficking. This observation was made by these male participants only when trafficking outcomes were tragic as the case of the story in vignette A. It is important to clarify that the freedom or liberty that is referred to by the male adult participants in the FGDs conducted is the one freedom associated with a master servant or a teacher –apprentice relationship which infers a power relation. The word "freedom" used by the males adults in the FGDs are therefore uncomplimentary and an indication of their reservation about the changes in the status of women.

In Oredo, the desire for liberty by women was expressed with greater strength in the two categories of FGDs conducted among them, than was the case in Uhumwode. Here are some of the factors identified by FGD participants as to the present role of mothers' involvements in trafficking of their female children among the Benin people of Edo State. These factors highlighted by the participants can be categorized into three main broad themes- socio-cultural factors, psychological factors and economic factors.

Liberty is seen here as a freedom from culture's oppressive influences over the women. Evidences from literature have established that women are generally conceived as inversion of the ideal and that patriarchy was essentially hegemonic in both colonial and post -colonial Benin. Below is an excerpt from an FGD participant (female) in Oredo where there was a very strong opinion in favour of women's liberty

Liberty is what she wanted. She wanted to be able to own property and do what she wants. Let her eat the property now (She stated this with sarcasm). This is because of our crave for property. (Referring to the Benin). No matter what, there is a reward. Prostitution always ends on a bad note one day.

This view is corroborated by one of the female key informants' views stated below:

The issue is that women think that proceeds from trafficking and international prostitution bring liberty. It is not true. When the girls look at their mothers and their lives they don't want to be that relegated. The issue is that these women want to be visible and have a voice. They see the culture as it relates to them (women) as oppressive and hence they want to be seen and not heard

It will be instructive to mention here that even there is a convergence of opinion with respect to liberty being sought by women. While the female participants in the FGD were of the opinion that seeking liberty at the expense of their children was a great price to pay for liberty, the males however derided the women for taking such extreme position, viewing it as a direct challenge on their authority. Hence some of these remarks:

Since this event of trafficking to Italy women's eyes have opened. They are simply uncontrollable and this has affected the home. When dollar comes, it affects the home. The wife conspires with the daughter against their fathers.

Male FGD in Oredo in response to vignette A).

This position was also reaffirmed in all the FGD conducted among men using vignette A. Another issue classified as a psychological factor as identified by the female FGD participants exposed to the tragic story (vignette A) is 'greed'. Greed was identified by the FGD participants in Oredo and Uhumwonde LGs as the main reason why mothers would allow their children to be involved in trafficking for the purpose of international prostitution. Also, in Uhumwode, the youths who were exposed to vignette A, observed that there were other jobs that young girls could do outside prostitution if the victims of trafficking and their parents were not greedy. One of the participants stated:

Eki's mother and her daughter are greedy. Eki's mother could have asked her daughter to do sales girl at least. At least if you walk around this town, you will definitely see many places where there are signs of "Sales Girl Wanted" I think that woman was greedy and just wanted to make it the quickest way.

In the FGD held with the youths in Uhumwode, a female secondary school students also affirmed the earlier views expressed by the previous FGD participant. She opined:

I will not listen to my mother. That was a bad advice for her to go and prostitute. She should have gone around for other jobs to do. There is no way you walk around this entire community that you will not see a sign board requesting or the services of a sales girl. It is better to do such things because God hates prostitution, it is a big sin".

Another psychological factor is the perceived ignorance of the women who encouraged their daughters' involvement in international prostitution. A number of the FGD participants especially those who responded in defense of Eki's mother (the trafficked victim that ended on a happy note) stated that these women may have been oblivious of the degree of inhuman denigration which trafficked victims are sometimes subjected to. This view was more pervasively discussed. These respondents were of the opinion that there were a lot of deceptions associated with trafficking. Also they reiterated that traffickers often prefer to work through relatives of unsuspecting victims with promises of large remittances. This often served as baits to the parents and a good insensitive to motivate their female children to comply.

Moreover, based on the findings from the FGDs and family based interviews, there are changes in the family structure in relation to husband and wife/wives relationship. Most men who practice polygyny, when their daughters have been trafficked with the support of the mothers, there is a general feeling of suspicion and unhealthy rivalry between these men and the other wives. Sometimes the level of rivalry might be too much that the children who become very unsafe and eventually seek ways to fend for themselves.

Also, findings have actually shown that these women who have children abroad are economically empowered and quite a number of them are able to own landed property which ordinarily could not be accessed by them. Therefore, this has further threatened the relationship with their spouses. This we can see from the FGD when a man disclosed that that dollar that is "hard currency" has come to put the hitherto peaceful Benin family asunder.

Men from this extraction especially those of low socio-economic status generally perceived by the women folks as less concerned with their fatherly role and responsibilities since a number of them have been alleged to depend primarily on the proceeds which are realized from international prostitution. For instance, from the findings, a number of men have had to support the decision by their own wives to travel to Europe to earn "hard currency" without jeopardizing the marital relationship. In such a case, the husband is a major beneficiary. This is a departure from the primordial era when the husband was expected to provide a farm land for the woman to cultivate. They were also

expected to protect their offspring from negative external influence which would be detrimental to the family name.

Another change in the family structure occasioned by these phenomena is the apparent dependency on a minor (usually in their teens) or a female child whom many of them described as the “sacrificial lamb” by all members of the family for economic survival. The terminology used to describe the role of the female child in the contemporary Benin family, is suggestive of role ascribed to Jesus Christ in the Christian faith, his decision to lay his life down for the salvation of mankind. This is well buttressed by the illustration made by the female key informant, of how large extended polygynous families now depend on the sexual servitude of a sixteen year old girl to meet the daily needs of the family member, conduct burial and wedding ceremonies for the family.

From observation carried out in this study, Benin weddings are usually elaborate and expensive with massive display of wealth. Also it was usually an opportunity to show the other perceived competitors (who may be co-wives) or other extended relatives what stuff they are made of. Hence there are usually many imported clothes, exotic laces, designers’ shoes from first class designers in Europe and custom made outfits. High patronage was given to those who had the “*acatarian*” touch that is, those who have are abroad. Many of these young women are highly revered when they spend their money for such family events, since it enabled intergenerational mobility. This is an obvious departure from what was in place were co-operation by all members of the family was the norm in the traditional pre-colonial Benin family structure. The female members were expected to work closely with their mothers and assist in domestic chores. Even married women were not allowed to travel outside their homes except there was a disagreement between her and the husband (Ebohon, 1990).

Discussion of Findings:

Data from house- hold interviews about male-child preference corroborate earlier findings made by Egharevba (1949); Bradbury, (1957) and Igbafe (1979). Out of the 40 households interviewed in (Oredo, 28 household, 29 in Egor and 30 in Uhumwode) all claimed that they would not accept a situation if the wife of their son had all males. Only a few household which in such cases were females member of household interviewed and a few household heads claimed to be born-again Christians agreed that they would accept an all -female children if it so happened. The pervasiveness of ancestral worship gave impetus to male children preference where the eldest male son occupies a strategic role in performing the family roles such as burial and ancestral worship. Also, the custom of primogeniture as emphasized by Igbafe (1979) among the Benin is still the order of the day in contemporary Benin families.

With the advent of trafficking and international sex trade, the traditional belief system that was used to enhance social order and support compliance with existing norms have been transmogrified to become the tools for taunting and threatening trafficked victims who have been conscripted by syndicates or traffickers (Osezua, 2015). Extant literature suggests strong involvement of traditional religious activities like engaging oaths of secrecy before a family shrine (UNICRI/UNDOC, 2003; Skogeth, 2006). What was previously used to protect the integrity of women’s sexuality within the family and the society has become the same agency mediating and perpetuating the trafficking of females for the purpose of trans-border sexual transaction (Osezua, 2010). Consequently, the fear of breaching the contract between the traffickers and victims further heightened the depth of secrecy surrounding the phenomena since many victims are afraid of the consequence of violating the agreement. The difficulty of obtaining accurate data on traffickers is explained by the degree of secrecy in which the whole process of recruitment and subsequent trafficking are enmeshed.

Nigeria is among the 30 of the countries in the world with highly unequal income distribution (Gender Report, 2012). This is evidentially proven from the findings of this study. Women constitute a larger chunk of the informal sector, which is highly unregulated and least economically rewarding. 54 million of the 80.2 million of women in Nigeria are in the rural areas. There is a huge differential between rural and urban women. Rural women are usually poor with little or no level of education, poor access to credit facilities and other critical resources. These women serve as a huge reservoir for intending traffickers (Osezua, 2011). Poverty creates a level of invisibility powerlessness and voicelessness, while money bestows social significance to its possessor. This has continued to create positive incentives to traffickers, women and young girls (who are perceived and sometimes perceive themselves as potential economic messiahs).

Again, 60 -70% of rural women constitute the labour force of rural Nigeria (Gender Report, 2012). Yet it is 5 times easier for a man to own a land than a woman. It becomes increasingly difficult for poor uneducated women to raise finance and start a business. The proclivity to engage in sex trafficking becomes irresistible to many.

So much attention has been given to combating trafficking incidences, which have been described as embarrassing to the Nigerian Government. Much money is being spent on organizing training for migration personnel’s, the police, NGOs, prosecuting traffickers and other third party offenders. Yet the root cause of the phenomenon is deeply rooted in cultural fabric of the Nigerian people, which encourages gender inequality. Granted that globalization and liberalization policies have enabled the illicit trade, but the root cause is endemic within the patriarchal structure that continues to privilege the males. There is a dire need to give attention to the highly skewed gender structure that has made women particularly receptive to the gimmicks of traffickers whom many perceive as economic liberators, which makes combating the phenomenon in the region a convoluted one.

REFERENCES

- Aghatise, E. (2002). Trafficking for prostitution in Italy: Concept paper. Presented in Expert Group Meeting on "Trafficking in women and girls", Glen Cove: New York, 18-22 Nov.
- Aina, O. (1998). "Women, culture and Society" in Amadu Sesay and Adetanwa Odebiyi (eds). *Nigerian Women in Society and Development*. Ibadan: Dokun Publishing House.
- Abhulimen, P. (1999). *Trafficking in women in Nigeria: The modern slavery*. Paper presented at the National Workshop on trafficking in women in Nigeria: "The Modern Day Slavery", Lagos, 2 Dec, 2002.
- Bhabha, J. (2005). Trafficking, smuggling and human rights. Migration fundamental. Available Online at <http://www.migrationinformation.org/feature/display.cfm?ID=29> {accessed on 7/8/2007}
- Bradbury, R. (1957). *The Benin kingdom and the Edo speaking people of South-Western Nigeria*. London: International African Institute.
- Conseil du Statut de la Femm (2002) <http://www.csf.gouv.qc.ca/teecharg/publication/synthesisIProstitutionWorkonExploitation.pdf> {accessed 28/07/07}
- Curnow, K. (1997). Prestige and gentlemen: Benin's ideal man. *Art Journal*, 56 (2): 75-81.
- DeVault, M. (1990). Talking and listening from women's standpoints: Feminist strategies for interviewing and analysis. *Social Problems*, 37, 96-116.
- Ebohon, O. (1996). The Life of an African Woman: The Benin Woman in Focus. Lecture Delivered on Black Solidarity Day. New York, 4th of November.
- Egharevba, J. (1946). *Benin laws and customs*. Port Harcourt: C.M.S, Niger Press.
- Giwa-Osagie, F. (1999). *Trafficking in women: the modern slavery-police perspective*. Paper presented at the National Workshop on trafficking in women in Nigeria: "The Modern Day Slavery", Lagos, 2 Dec 2002.
- Gender Report in Nigeria (2012). Improving the lives of Girls' and Women: Issues Policies and Action. British Council of Nigeria.
- Hirschson, R. (1984). Introduction to property, power, and gender relations. In Hirschson (Ed.) *Women and property, women as property* (pp1-2). New York: St Martins press.
- Igbafe, P. (1979). Slavery and emancipation in Benin (1897-1945). *Journal of African history*, 15(3): 409-429.
- International Organization for Migration (2002). *Trafficking in Women and Children for Sexual Exploitation*, Republic of Moldova Chisinau: International Migration for migration.

- International Labour Migration (2008) Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, ILO: Geneva
- Kempadoo, K. (2005). From Moral Panic to Global Justice: Changing Perspective on Trafficking in Kamada Kempadoo, ed., *Trafficking and Prostitution Reconsidered: New Perspectives on Migration; Sex Work and Human Rights*. Boulder; Paradigm
- Loconto, A. (2001). The trafficking of women into Italy, *Ted Case Studies*, No 656, January.
- Long (2004) Anthropological perspectives of trafficking of women for sexual exploitation. *International Migration*. 42 pp5-31
- Malthazan, K. (2002). *Trafficking in women for prostitution*. Paper presented at the "Australian Women's Conference", Canberra, 28, August 2000.
- Martins, S. (2003). *Women and Migration*, Report Presented at the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (PAW) Consultative Meeting on "Migration and Mobility and how this Movement Affects Women". Malmö, Sweden 2-4, December, 2003.
- Maus, M. (Ed.), (1990). *The gift, the form, and reason for exchange in archaic societies*. London: Routledge.
- Musacchio, V. (2004). Migration, Prostitution and Trafficking in Women: an Overview *German Law Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 09.
- NAPTIP (2008) <http://www.naptip.gov.ng/docs/National%20Policy%20-%20June%202008.pdf> Retrieved 12/02/13
- Norli, B. (2006). (Foreign Prostitution in Oslo-Knowledge and Experience gained by Pro-Centre. Currently Available on <http://www.prosentret.no/images/storeis/prostitution/uterland%20prostitution%20ioslo%202005.pdf> (accessed 1st August, 2006).
- Nzegwu, N. (2004). The epistemological challenge of motherhood. *Jenda: A Journal of culture and African women studies* (1-27)[Journal online]. Retrieved September, 2006, from the World Wide Web: <http://jendajournals.com/issue5/nzegwu.html>
- Oakely, A. (1974). *Women's Work, Veritage*. New York
- Okojie, C. (1992). Widowhood practices and socio-cultural restrictions on women's behavior in Edo State of Nigeria" *Women in Africa and Africans in Diaspora: Building Bridges of knowledge and power, Religion and knowledge and power*, Vol 1X. Pp199-218
- Okpokunu, E., Agbontaen-Eghafona K. and P. Ojo (2005). Benin Dressing in Contemporary Nigeria: Social Change and the Crisis of Cultural Identity *African Identities*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Pp. 155-170.
- Omorodion, F. (2004). The impact of petroleum refinery on the economic livelihood of women in Niger- Delta region of Nigeria. *Jenda: A Journal of culture and African women's studies*, Issue 6, 1-11.

- Onosode, E. (1999). *Social implication of trafficking in women in Nigeria*. Paper presented at the National Workshop on trafficking in women in Nigeria: "The Modern Day Slavery", Lagos, 2 December.
- Onyejekwe, C. (2005). Influences of Global Human Trafficking Issues on Nigeria: A Gender Perspective *Journal of International Women's Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2.
- Onyeonoru, I. (2003). "Push Factors in Girl Trafficking for International Commercial Sex Work and the Gender Implication: A Study of Bamn, Edo State" *African Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies*. Vol. 1, No. 3.
- Onyeonoru, I. (2001). "Globalization and Labour Migration: The Socio-Economic Context of Nigerian New Bread Commercial Sex Workers' *Journal of Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Association*, Vol. 2, No. 1, October.
- Osakue, G. and Okoedion, B. (2002). *Trafficking in girls: the way forward*. A research report on Delta and Edo States, Benin City: Girls' Power Initiative (G.P.I.).
- Osarumwense, N. (1999). The Benin customary law of inheritance of a woman's property(ies) in retrospect. *Benin Studies Newsletter*, April-Aug. 4(2): 2-3.
- Osezua, O.C (2011) Cross-border sex trade, Transnational Remittances and changing family structures among Benin women of Southern Nigeria. *Gender and Behaviours*. Published by Ife Psychologia and the Psychological Studies of Women Issues. University of Ibadan. Vol. 9 No 2. Pp4276-4297
- Osezua, O.C. (2012). The Woman's Body, a Man's Field: The Commoditization of Female Sexuality among the Benin People of Southern Nigeria in *Challenges of Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria at 50: Issues and Policy Options* Eds. E.A. Akinlo, O.I. Orimogunje, A.I. Akinyemi and J.O. Aransiola Faculty of Social Sciences, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. Pp 168-185
- Osezua, O.C. (2013) The Transmogrified of religious systems and the phenomenon of human trafficking among the Benin People of Nigeria. *Journal of Arts and Humanities*. Haramaya University, Dire Dawa Ethiopia. Vol2 (3) pp..20-35
- Osezua, O.C. (2016) "Gender and Religious Dimensions of Human Trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa" in *Religious Diversity Today: experiencing Religion un the Contemporary World*. Vol 3. Religion Transforming Societies and Social Lives. Eds. Jean -Guy Goulet, Liam Murphy and Anastasia Panagakos. Praeger publishers, United States of America. Pp. 303-322
- Parrandang, D. (1999). *Modern day slavery: immigration view*. Paper presented at the National Workshop on trafficking in women in Nigeria: "The Modern Day Slavery", Lagos, 2 Dec 1999
- Ritzer, G. (2000) *Sociological Theory*. Macgraw Hills, New York
- Skogeth, G. (2006): Fact Finding trip to Nigeria (Abuja Lagos and Benin City) 12-26 March 2006. Oslo: Landirifo June. Available from www.landinfo.no (accessed 29 June, 2007).

- Stacey, J. (1993). "Untangling Feminist theory" in Richardson D. and RoBeninson V. (eds.) *Introducing women's Studies: Feminist Theory and Practice*. London: Macmillan
- Tyldum, G. Tviet, M. Brunovskis A. (2005). Taking Stock A Review of the Existing Research on Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation Norway: Fafo.
- Ucarer, E. (1999). "Trafficking in Women: Alternate Migration of Modern Slave Trade?". In M. Meyer and E. Prugal (Eds.), *Gender Politics in Global Governance London: Rowman and Little Field*.
- United Nations Interregional Crimes and Justice (UNICRI) / United Nations Office for Drugs and Crimes (UNODC), (2003). *Trafficking of young women and minors from Nigeria into Italy for the purpose of sexual exploitation*. Report of field survey in Edo State.
- Willis R. (1982). The Direction of Intergenerational Transfer and Demographic Transition. The Cadwell Hypothesis Re-examined, *Population and Development Review* 8, 207-234.
- Women's Health and Action Research Centre (WHARC) (2002). Sexual trafficking, a challenge to reproductive health in Nigeria. Special issue: *Women's health forum*, 17(1):12-22. April
- Woods, Priest and Roberts (2002). An overview of three Different Approaches to the Interpretation of Qualitative Data. Part 2: practical illustrations. *Nurse Researcher*. 10 (1) pp.43-51.
- Yanagisako, S. and Collier, J. (2004). Towards a Unified Analysis of Gender and Kinship. In R. Parkins and L. Stones (Eds.), *Kinship and Family* (pp275-293). United Kingdom: Blackwell.

The author acknowledges the generous support of the Council for Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and the African Regional Sexuality Resource Centre (ARSRC) graciously provided generous funding for this research.

Strategic Objective 55 of the Beijing Platform of Action calls for an increase in the productive capacity of women by providing "access to capital, resources, credit, land, technology, information, technical assistance an Strategic Objective 55 of the Beijing Platform of Action calls for an increase in the productive capacity of women by providing "access to capital, resources, credit, land, technology, information, technical assistance and training so as to raise their income and improve nutrition, education, health care and status within the household".

Much of the work women do is unpaid. Data from the Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ) show that, whereas one in every two men spends time doing pursuits that earn them an income, one in every two women spends time doing unpaid work (Angel-Urdinola and Wodon, 2008: 381).

d training so as to raise their income and improve nutrition, education, health care and status within the household”.

Much of the work women do is unpaid. Data from the Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ) show that, whereas one in every two men spends time doing pursuits that earn them an income, one in every two women spends time doing unpaid work (Angel-Urdinola and Wodon, 2008: 381).

Strategic Objective 55 of the Beijing Platform of Action calls for an increase in the productive capacity of women by providing “access to capital, resources, credit, land, technology, information, technical assistance and training so as to raise their income and improve nutrition, education, health care and status within the household”.

Much of the work women do is unpaid. Data from the Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ) show that, whereas one in every two men spends time doing pursuits that earn them an income, one in every two women spends time doing unpaid work (Angel-Urdinola and Wodon, 2008: 381).