

STRATEGIES FOR CURBING CHILD TRAFFICKING IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT.....

Trafficking especially in children has gathered considerable momentum over the past years. The magnitude of the problem and the dangers posed by the phenomenon require drastic solution. Thus the study examines the strategies for curbing child trafficking. A total of one hundred and thirty two counsellors were sampled from nine universities in south East State, Nigeria. Data were collected with the use of researchers developed questionnaire. Two research questions were raised and answered using frequency counts, simple percentage and mean scores. One hypothesis raised for the study was tested at 0.05 alpha level. The results indicated that all the items are the causes of child trafficking. Also, all the items were identified as ways to solve the problems of child trafficking. Based on the findings the researchers recommended that the government should sensitize all citizens to basic ethical values, formulate policies that should bring pressure on parents and guardians to inculcate in their curricular the urgency for children to be given adequate training and care. Guidance counsellors should be posted not only to schools but to various communities to organize seminars and workshops for parents on the activity of child trafficking.

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INTRODUCTION

Trafficking especially in children has gathered considerable momentum over the past years. There has been increasing awareness regarding the phenomenon as illustrated by the adoption of international standards and important commitments undertaken in international conferences (UNICEF, 2000). ILO (2000) defines child trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of person, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception of the abuse of power or of position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payment or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

Trafficking of children for sexual exploitation and forced labour constitutes a growing international criminal enterprise of epidemic proportions (Adimula, 2007). UNICEF (2002) notes that the root causes of child trafficking are complex and often interrelated to poverty, weak governance, armed conflicts or lack of effective protection against discrimination and exploitation.

Children's vulnerability is being taken advantage of by traffickers who see children as commodities, more easily manipulated, in high demand and vulnerable to exploitation over a long period. Hidden from views and often from legal protection, children are lured by promises of a good education or a better job and smuggled across borders, far from home in a foreign country. UNICEF (2003) observes that children are taken to unknown environment, forced into prostitution, domestic servitude, early marriage or hazardous and hard labour.

In Nigeria, lack of birth registration today fosters an environment prone to trafficking due to state of powerlessness it imposes on the individual (Harrison, 2003). Wilder (2007) observes that a child who has no official recognition of his or her name and nationality and no official registration of births is much more likely to be trafficked between countries. Lack of birth identity can have a consequence, that trafficked children can not be traced to their country of origin and thus not easily be returned to their communities (UNICEF, 2000).

Recently, the links between poverty, violence and trafficking have been compounded by the effects of HIV/AIDS. UNICEF (2001) notes that women and girls trafficked for prostitution are among the vulnerable groups exposed to HIV infection. Insufficiently informed, seduced or forced to have unprotected sex with one infected with HIV/AIDS, they are often left without care and support. Ebigbo (2008) also states the impact of trafficking as loss of lives, increasing prevalence of STD's including HIV/AIDS, increase in violence, crime rate, increased school dropouts, impaired child development, poor national image and massive deportation of Nigerian girls. Adimula (2007) states that no matter how refined the practice child trafficking exhibits, that some people are suppressing the bright future of others especially children, to enhance their own financial and material gains.

According to Ugwu (2008) Nigerian children mostly girls between the ages of 10 and 18 years were used for forced labour and as sex toys in Garbon, Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon. Nwoye (2006) observes that child trafficking has psychological effects and could be devastating and traumatic. ILO (2002) classified

child trafficking as one of the worst forms of child labour. Desey and Pallage (2002) and Rogers and Soinnet (2002) lamented the alarming rate of child trafficking in the world. They noted that an estimated 35 percent of all trafficked persons globally are children

Child trafficking has a lot of negative effects not only on the child, but also the society at large. The child's destiny, potentials, which could have been brought out if the child is properly educated will be destroyed as a result of the negative effects of child trafficking and so instead of the child to help build the society, will destroy it with many anti-social behaviours. Worst still, Idia (2000) notes that many of the children are killed by ritualist for money making power and protection. He stressed that something really need to be done to make sure that child trafficking is completely eradicated from the society.

In view of the magnitude child trafficking has assumed in our society, curbing it permanently is needed. There is the need to evolve a solution to solve this problem of child trafficking. Therefore, the objective of this study is to find out the perceived causes of and solution to child trafficking hence this study is set to find out what counsellors consider as the causes or factors contributing to child trafficking in South East State of Nigeria. Find out counsellors suggested solutions to the problem.

Research Questions

Based on the objectives the following research questions are postulated.

1. What are the causes or factors contributing to child trafficking from the view point of counsellors in South East State.
2. What are the likely solutions to combat child trafficking in south east States?

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the perceived causes of child trafficking among counsellors in South East States on the basis of experience.

Method

The study employed the descriptive survey method. The sample consisted of 132 counsellors drawn from the nine universities in South East States of Nigeria. The instrument was based on the causes of and solutions to child trafficking. The questionnaire was validated by experts in the department of Guidance and Counselling Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, it was pilot tested among counsellors in Abraka State University. The test-retest method was employed in establishing reliability for instrument. The reliability co-efficient of 0.82 was found and this was considered appropriate for the study. For the administration of the instrument, the researchers visited the counsellors in the company of trained research assistants. The responses were collated and analyzed for results. Frequency counts and simple percentages were used to answer the research questions while the t-test was used to test the hypothesis

Results

The results of the study are presented in the table below:

Table 1: Causes of child trafficking as perceived by counsellors

S/N	Causes of Child trafficking	Frequency	Percentage	Remark Decision
1.	Poverty	89	67.4	Agree
2.	Lack of birth registration	101	76.5	Agree
3.	Size of the family	112	84.8	Agree
4.	Peer pressure	90	68.1	Agree
5.	Weakness of the law	107	81.1	Agree
6.	Having unwanted baby	115	87.1	Agree
7.	Vulnerability of the child	77	58.3	Agree
8.	Tradition and culture	98	74.2	Agree
9.	Break down of values	95	71.9	Agree
10.	Poor state of the nations economy	115	87.1	Agree
11.	Societal preference on get rich quick	112	84.8	Agree
12.	Porous nature of the borders	90	68.1	Agree
13.	Weak governance	107	81.1	Agree

Table 1 shows the frequency counts as well as the percentage of the respondents on the causes of child trafficking. The respondents identified all the items as the causes or factors of child trafficking in South East Nigeria. The items were above the cut off point which is 50% and above.

Table 2: Counsellors perceived ways of solving or combating child trafficking.

S/N	Ways of solving child trafficking	Frequency	%	Decision
1.	Through sensitization and awareness by government	129	97.7	Agree
2.	Child trafficking should be reported to protective agencies	105	79.5	Agree
3.	Legal protection of child can play important role in protecting the child in the society	115	87.1	Agree
4.	Enlightenment of parents on adverse consequences of child trafficking	108	81.8	Agree
5.	Providing free primary and secondary education	99	75	Agree
6.	Law enforcement agencies should be up and doing	100	75.7	Agree
7.	Proper registration of children at birth	105	79.5	Agree
8.	Proper persecution of the offenders	113	85.6	Agree
9.	Formulating policies on child trafficking	108	81.8	Agree

10.	Use of radio and television in disseminating information on the dangers of child trafficking	107	81.1	Agree
11.	Organizing seminar and workshops in various communities by counsellors	115	87.1	Agree
12.	Restoring discipline in every facet of our national life	129	97.7	Agree
13.	Human right advocacy is required to combat child trafficking	95	71.9	Agree

In table 2, the analysis of what counsellors perceived as the ways of solving or combating the problems of child trafficking is shown. The table shows that all the items were accepted.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 3: Means, standard deviation and t-value experienced and less experienced counselors.

Experience of counsellors	N	X	SD	df	Cal-t value	Crit-t value
1 – 5 years	28	32.1	5.13	30	1.56	1.96
5 years and above	104	31.4	7.17			

Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference among experienced and less experienced counsellors in their views about the causes of child trafficking. Based on this, the null hypothesis is therefore retained. This is because the calculated t-value of 1.56 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level.

Discussion

The study revealed the causes and the various ways to solve the problems of child trafficking as perceived by counsellors. On the causes of child trafficking the study shows that poverty, lack of birth registration, size of the family, peer pressure, weakness of the law, having unwanted baby, vulnerability of the child, tradition and culture, break/down of values, poor state of the nations economy, societal influence on get rich quick, porous nature of the borders and weak governance are perceived as causes of child trafficking. The aforementioned causes conforms with the ones listed by UNICEF (2002) Harrison (2003) Wilder (2007) and UNICEF (2001).

On the various ways to solve the problem of child trafficking, counsellors felt that child trafficking could be solved through sensitization and creating awareness, reported to protective agencies, through legal protection of the child, through enlightenment of parents on adverse consequences of child trafficking, providing free primary and secondary education, law enforcement agencies being up and doing, through proper registration of children at birth, through proper persecution of the offenders, through formulating policies, used of radio and television on disseminating

information on dangers of child trafficking, organizing seminars and workshops in various communities, restoring discipline in every facet of our national life and human right advocacy is required. It is expected that these measures will help in solving the problem of child trafficking in our society. The problem of child trafficking must be solved, bearing in mind the observations of Idia (2000) who noted that many of the children are killed by ritualists for money making, power and protection. He stressed that something needs to be done to make sure that child trafficking is completely eradicated from the society.

The result of the null hypothesis shows that counsellors do not differ in their perception of the causes of child trafficking. Since both experienced and less experienced had identified the causes of child trafficking, there is every need to solve the problem of child trafficking in our society using these strategies.

Conclusion

The study identified the causes of child trafficking. Child trafficking has a lot of negative effect not only on the child, but also the society at large. The child's potentials and destiny will be destroyed by traffickers. Therefore, child trafficking should be eradicated from the society using these solutions to solve and save these children from trafficking.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations were made:

1. Efforts should be made by the concerned authorities to enlighten parents on the adverse consequences of child trafficking.
2. There is need for the state and federal government to formulate policies that should bring pressure on parents and guardians to inculcate in their curriculum the urgency for children to be given adequate training and care. This will help to minimize the rate of lukewarmness on their part especially as it concerns taking care of the children.
3. The law enforcement agencies should be up and doing as regards enforcing the law on any offender.
4. Counsellors should be posted not only in schools but to the various communities, where they will organize seminars and workshops for parents on the activities of traffickers and the consequences of child trafficking.
5. Government should make education free up to senior secondary school level for every child.
6. The media such as the radio, television and newspapers should help to do a lot of work by enlighten the society on dangers of child trafficking.

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