



THE HORRENDOUS EFFECTS OF CHILD TRAFFICKING: A CASE STUDY IN ABAKALIKI URBAN AREA OF EBONYI STATE OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The concept of child trafficking remains one of the quagmires facing Nigeria in recent times. This study, which was carried out in 2019, empirically examines the perceived effects of child trafficking on children in Ebonyi state of Nigeria. The objectives are to ascertain the different forms of child trafficking in Abakaliki urban of Ebonyi state; identify causes; determine the effect on the behaviour of the children, and suggest plausible ways of curbing the crime. The study employed an empirical survey. The population of the study which is 120,173 (NPC,2018) was extracted from Abakaliki Urban area and the sample size of the study which is 400 was computed using Taro Yamane statistic. Questionnaires and interviews were used as instruments for the gathering of data. Frequency tables/percentages were used to analyze the data as presented in this paper and to test the hypotheses of the study, the Chi-Square (X²) statistic was employed. The research reveals that child trafficking exists in Abakaliki urban of Ebonyi state. The research reveals further that the major causes of child trafficking in Abakaliki urban area of Ebonyi State are the quest for more income and greed. The research reveals further that child trafficking significantly affects the emotional state of children in Ebonyi state. With the proper measures put in places such as the creation of more job opportunities, persecution of offenders and proper monitoring of suspected cases of child trafficking, the case of child trafficking in the Abakaliki Urban Area can be curbed.

Keywords: *Abakaliki, Child-trafficking, domestic work, human trafficking, slavery, street hawking*

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INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking, which is the third-largest criminal activity in the world after arms and drug trafficking (Tola, 2012), can be termed 'a modern-day slavery' which, in its complexity and dynamism, ends up in the exploitation of the victims for personal gains of a person or group of persons or, in some cases, of some businesses (Aronowitz 2001, p.172). The understanding of human trafficking in the modern form includes all forms of business transactions with women and children, in which their vulnerable situation is exploited by another who has power over them (Nnebedum, 2017).

Child trafficking is a social illness that is sometimes attributed to the extreme poverty faced by some parents. Children are trafficked to far-off unknown areas in very deplorable conditions for gain (Tola, 2011). In the last decade, child trafficking has considerably increased throughout the world and Nigeria in particular. Some children are traded as commodities within and beyond the shores of their countries for different purposes. The victims are usually from low-income families and mostly from rural areas. The traffickers use illicit means such as coercion, abduction, and deception to lure their victims into forced labour, marriages, and domestic servitude. Some victims end up in the sex industry (Jacqueline 2006). Families are ensnared by false promises of a better life for their children under the tutelage of some foster families by whom the children will live in the urban areas and, in some cases, abroad. The enticements are enormous and tempting enough that parents would most often succumb. As a result, numerous children are given away as mere commodities each year. Most often, the survival and development of these children are threatened, and their rights to education, health, protection from exploitation and abuse are denied (O'Nelill, 2015). In trafficking a child, the child is likely to be adversely affected. Based on the preceding, this study aims to investigate the horrendous effects of child trafficking on children in Ebonyi state.

THE CONCEPT OF CHILD TRAFFICKING

According to the Palermo Protocol, human trafficking encompasses the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, using threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse of power of a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for exploitation (United Nations 2000). According to this definition, for an act to constitute trafficking, it must involve forced labour or services, slavery practices, removal of organs, prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation (Michael, 2013).

Child trafficking can be defined as the illegal recruitment and transportation of young individuals from one geographical area to another through deception, violence, Kidnapping, and other similar acts. The victims are usually the children of low-income families who live in poor communities in the provinces. They often end up in exploitative, hazardous, and abusive work conditions. Being more vulnerable to sexual abuse, girls bear the most appealing consequences of child trafficking (UNICEF, 2002).

Child trafficking, in general, involves taking vulnerable children out of their known and protective environment for exploitation. It is challenging to get the precise figures of the child victims because of the unwillingness of the victims to open up and the refusal of parents and guardians to talk. Globally, it was estimated that 63 million girls and 97 million boys were in forced labour in 2020, which is around 1 in 10 of all children worldwide (Unicef/ILO, 2021). In sub-Saharan Africa, 16.6 million children are in child labour (Unicef/ILO, 2021).

The demand for cheap labour is driving child trafficking both nationally and internationally. The labour forms include domestic work, street hawking, drug couriership and sexual exploitation. Apart from kidnapping the children for the same purpose, traffickers could trick the parents of the children with false promises. In some cases, parents hand over their children, not in exchange for money but hoping that their children will have more opportunities for a brighter future.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Many children fall victim to child trafficking. "Worldwide, almost 20% of all trafficking victims are children. However, in some parts of Africa and the Mekong region, children are the majority (up to 100% in parts of West Africa)." (UNODC, 2009). An estimated 5.5 million children are trafficked worldwide every year (ILO Geneva, 2017). This crime of child trafficking brings globally a market value of over \$12 billion each year (ILO Geneva, 2009). Child trafficking remains one of the problems facing Nigeria in recent times.

The experiences associated with trafficking can lead to lasting psychological challenges. Children experience physical and emotional trauma associated with removal from their families, homes, and communities; their subsequent encounters involve substantial harm through physical, emotional, and sexual abuse (Mitchels, 2004). Furthermore, trafficked children are robbed of the few educational opportunities available to them and, thus, a chance to improve their future economic situation.

Many children in Nigeria are forced to roam the streets and cities to do either hard or menial jobs, while others do domestic work under some hard conditions (Agbo, 2017). They work for about nine (9) to sixteen (16) hours per day, having no time or day for rest (Anyannwu, 2015). In Nigeria, children of primary school age (6 to 16 years) are mostly the target of trafficking, and when trafficked, they will be deprived of so many of their rights, including the right to acquire education. Trafficking in children, mainly for domestic service or prostitution, is a relatively new phenomenon that has received comprehensive media coverage in Nigeria but has been the subject of few research studies. Given the clandestine nature of child trafficking, accurate and reliable information on the phenomenon is scarce.

Therefore, the study is motivated to analyze the public perception of the effects of child trafficking on the personality of children in Ebonyi state. Ebonyi State already has a law against child abuse that bans child trafficking. Unfortunately, few cases have been fully prosecuted.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In the course of this study, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What are the different forms of child trafficking in Abakaliki urban of Ebonyi state?
2. What are the causes of child trafficking in Abakaliki urban of Ebonyi state?
3. How far has child trafficking affected children's behaviour in Abakaliki urban of Ebonyi state?
4. How can child trafficking be curbed in Abakaliki urban of Ebonyi state?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study's objectives stem from the questions that the paper poses and intends to answer. Many people are not aware of the fact that many children are being trafficked in the Abakaliki area of Ebonyi State. In the light of this, the study intends to uncover this crime; identify its root causes, their effects on the general wellbeing of child-victim, and proffer solutions and measures to curb the trafficking activity. Thus, in its practical and theoretical significance, this paper will add to the knowledge of child trafficking within the Abakaliki environs and provide helpful information to the stakeholders and policymakers to fight child trafficking.

THEORETICAL APPROACH

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory developed by Albert Bandura states that learning occurs mainly by modelling one's behaviour towards those traits one observes in others. In social learning, people emulate others they watch. After that, when the situation is fit, those observed behaviours can be repeated. This theory helps us understand why child trafficking is rampant in Abakaliki urban areas. Families and people observe the frequency of such crimes and tend to do the same because of the foreseen gains involved. Social learning theory has some mediational processes that motivate behaviour to be acquired:

Attention - one has to pay attention to a particular behaviour to imitate it. It may take time and energy to learn, but the intended reward will motivate one to focus more on such behaviour to learn and imitate it.

Reproduction - The ability to imitate a behaviour one observes will influence one's decision on whether to perform the behaviour or not. This ability includes physical and social abilities.

Social learning theory weighs the rewards and punishment of any potential behaviour to be emulated. If the perceived rewards are greater than the punishment, then there is the likelihood that the behaviour observed will be imitated. Closely related to Sutherland's theory of differential association is the work of Robert Burgess and Robert Aker (1966), popularly called operant conditioning which is a social learning theory (Hugh 1990:76). According to this theory, certain behaviours are learned because past examples have been rewarded. Thus, people engage in certain crimes because they have seen others succeed. Therefore, the position of this theory is that people choose to commit or not to commit a crime based on their convictions. The same can be said of those who traffic humans and other kinds of crime. Social learning theory claims that behaviour is reinforced not only by reward and punishment as in operant learning but also by observing the behaviour of others.

Rational choice theory

The rational choice theory originated in the 18th Century through the work of Adam Smith, who introduced a set of guidelines that moderates economic and social behaviour (Boudon 2003). In explaining why people make certain decisions and follow well on specific enterprises, rational choice states that people weigh the risks involved and check the cost and benefit before deciding to embark on any action. The rational choice theory states that individuals use rational calculations to make rational choices and achieve outcomes that are aligned with their objectives (Ganti, 2021).

Thus, the decision is supposed to be rational once taken because cost and benefits have been calculated, even when such a decision appears irrational. A choice that may seem irrational to one person may be viewed as being perfect or beneficial to another. It is all a matter of desire and interest. This theory is critical in this work because it explains why people decide to traffic children. While making such a decision, the risks and benefits have been calculated. The assumption of rational choice theory provides that when the value of the benefit diminishes below that of the cost incurred as a result of a decision taken, people tend to end that action or practice. Thus, understanding and applying this theory will help the stakeholders tailor their strategies in the right direction in their fight against child trafficking.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

H₀₁: Child trafficking is more likely to affect the emotional state of children in the Abakaliki urban area of Ebonyi State than the non-child trafficking situation.

H₀₂: Strong measures will likely reduce child trafficking significantly in the Abakaliki urban area of Ebonyi State than soft measures.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design for this study was the cross-sectional survey method. This method involved eliciting information directly from different categories of respondents either through observation, questionnaires, or interviews.

AREA OF STUDY

This study was conducted in Abakaliki urban of Ebonyi state. Abakaliki is located 64 kilometers (40 mi) southeast of Enugu. Igbo people generally populate Abakaliki urban. Abakaliki urban comprises twenty-three layouts found within Abakaliki Local government area and Ebonyi local government area: Abakpa layout, Agbaja Azumili layout, Azuiyokwu layout phase 1, Kpirikpiri layout, Ntezi-aba layout, Azugwu layout, Residential/commercial layout, Mile 50 layout, New Mile 50 layout, Freedom layout, Nkaleki layout, Inyimagu layout, Government residential layout (Aguogboriga), Ezza road north extension layout, Onwe road extension layout, Rock-view layout, Establishment layout, Federal low-cost layout, Hilltop pocket layout, New GRA (Edda-Echara) layout, Secretariat layout, Ochudo city layout, and Mgbabor Echara layout. This area was chosen for the study because of its dominance in children and child trafficking that elicits from the area.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is limited to the children (both male and female) residing in Abakaliki urban. The rural Abakaliki and all categories of people outside the afore-mentioned do not fall into the category selected for this study. Also, any other issue that affects children is not within the scope of this study.

Population of the Study

According to the National Population Commission (NPC, 2018), the projected population of Abakaliki urban in Ebonyi state is one hundred and twenty thousand, one hundred and seventy-three (120173). The study population is distributed in the table below according to the sub-regions in Abakaliki.

Table 1: *Population Statistics*

Abakaliki Urban	Population Size
Abakaliki Local Government Area	85828
Ebonyi State Local Government Area	34345
Total	120173

Source: National Population Commission Ebonyi State (DataBase Figures)

SAMPLE SIZE

The Taro-Yamane (1967) formula was applied to determine the sample size:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \quad (1)$$

Where:

n = required sample size

N = Population Size

1 = Fixed Numerical factor

e = margin of error usually 5% (0.05)

To derive the optimal sample size, we have:

$$n = \frac{120173}{1 + 120173(0.05)^2} \quad (2)$$

$$= \frac{120173}{1 + 120173(0.0025)} = 400 \quad (3)$$

This entails that the study's sample size comprises four hundred respondents (400).

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for this study. First, Abakaliki urban is clustered into twenty-three layouts, namely Abakpa layout, Agbaja Azumili layout, Azuiyiokwu layout phase 1, Kpirikpiri layout, Azugwu layout, Ntezi-aba layout, Residential/commercial layout, Mile 50 layout, New Mile 50 layout, Freedom layout, Nkaleki layout, Inyimagu layout, Government residential layout (Aguogboriga), Ezza road north extension layout, Onwe road extension layout, Rock-view, layout, Establishment layout, Federal low-cost layout, Hilltop pocket layout, New GRA (Edda-Echara) layout, Secretariat layout, Ochudo city layout, and Mgbabor Echara layout. Using purposive sampling, five layouts were selected – Abakpa layout, Kpirikpiri layout, Mile 50 layout, Azuiyiokwu layout, Government residential layout and Azugwu layout. This is in consideration of the time constraint facing the researcher. Secondly, 80 respondents were selected from each layout using the disproportionate sampling technique to administer the questionnaires using the convenience sampling technique.

INSTRUMENTS FOR DATA COLLECTION

The primary instruments for the gathering of data for this study were the questionnaire and in-depth interviews with key personnel. The interview elicited information from crucial personnel who know the effects of child trafficking on children - a school principal, a social worker and a religious leader.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

In analyzing the data, simple descriptive statistics were utilized with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 20. The Chi-Square (X^2) statistic was employed to test the hypotheses. The qualitative data from the interview were analyzed thematically. Four hundred (400) questionnaires were distributed. 320 (80%) were returned, while 80 (20%) were not recovered. Out of the 320 returned, 285 were filled correctly, 3 respondents, including a principal, a social worker and a religious leader, were in-depth interviewed. The analysis of the research questions is made based on the 285 questionnaires that were adequately filled out.

Research Question 1

What are the different forms of child trafficking in Abakaliki Urban Ebonyi State?

Interpretation/Conclusion:

The result of table 2 above showed that out of 285 respondents, 203 respondents, representing 71.2%, reported trickery decisions as to the major form of child trafficking in Abakaliki urban. This is followed by 52(18.2%) respondents who reported force/coercion; 19(6.7%) respondents reported the administration of the oath. However, 10(3.5%) respondents reported indebtedness, while 1(0.4%) respondent indicated other reasons. Therefore, trickery decisions and force/coercion appear to be the major forms of child trafficking. According to the in-depth interview conducted with selected respondents in the urban areas, it was observed that child labour, deceit and abduction of children are major forms of child trafficking in Abakaliki urban. These forms align with the earlier findings that trickery decisions

and force/coercion are major forms of child trafficking obtainable in Abakalki urban.

Table 2: Respondents Responses on the different forms of child trafficking in Abakaliki Urban Ebonyi State

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent
Valid	Forced/coercion	52	18.2	18.2
	Trickery Decision	203	71.2	71.2
	Administration of Oath	19	6.7	6.7
	Indebtedness	10	3.5	3.5
	Others specify	1	.4	.4
	Total	285	100.0	100.0

Research Question 2: What are the causes of child trafficking in Abakaliki Urban Ebonyi State?

Table 3: Respondents' Responses on the causes of child trafficking in Abakaliki Urban Ebonyi State

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent
Valid	Greed	100	35.1	35.1
	extra income	113	39.6	39.6
	Ignorance	43	15.1	15.1
	Poverty	29	10.2	10.2
	Total	285	100.0	100.0

Table 3 result above showed that out of 285 respondents, 113(39.6%) respondents indicated that extra income is the primary cause of child trafficking in Abakaliki; 100(35.1%) indicated greed; 43(15.1%) indicated ignorance; while 29(10.2%) indicated poverty. This finding implies that the quest for extra income causes child trafficking. This finding agrees with the result of an in-depth interview conducted, which showed that the poor Nigerian economy, financial gain, unemployment, poverty, causes child trafficking. However, the interview result added that ignorance and illiteracy were equally major causes of child trafficking in Abakaliki urban. Therefore, there is a need to educate the poor masses, including the helpless children, on the danger of child trafficking.

Research Question 3: How far has child trafficking affected children's behaviour in Abakaliki Urban Ebonyi State?

Table 4: Effects of child trafficking on the behaviour of Children in Abakaliki Urban

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent
Valid	withdrawal from people	144	50.5	50.5
	sexual abuse	93	32.6	32.6
	verbal abuse	18	6.3	6.3
	disobedient to authorities	30	10.5	10.5
	Total	285	100.0	100.0

Table 4 result above showed that out of 285 respondents, 144(50.5%) indicated withdrawal from people as the effect of child trafficking on the behaviour of children in Abakaliki; 93(32.6%) indicated sexual abuse; 18(6.3) respondents indicated verbal abuse as the effect of child trafficking; while 30(10.5%) indicate disobedience to authority as the effect of child trafficking. Therefore, the finding implies that child trafficking significantly causes withdrawal

behaviour in affected children in Abakaliki urban. The in-depth interview also indicated some effects of child trafficking as poor health and psychological state, poor feeding, low self-confidence, poor in academics, socially withdrawn, development of depression and lack of trust.

Research Question 4: How can child trafficking be curbed in Abakaliki Urban Ebonyi State?

Table 5: Ways of curbing child trafficking In Abakaliki Urban

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent
Valid	Substantial punishment for the offender	88	30.9	30.9
	employment opportunities	97	34.0	34.0
	free education up to SSCE	82	28.8	28.8
	conducive environment for small and medium scale business	17	6.0	6.0
	Others	1	.4	.4
	Total	285	100.0	100.0

Table 5 result above showed that out of 285 respondents, 97(34.0%) indicated employment opportunities as a way of curbing child trafficking; 88(30.9%) indicated substantial punishment for offenders; 82(28.8%) indicated free education up to SSCE; 17(6.0%) indicated conducive environment for small and medium scale business; while only 1(0.4%) indicated other ways of curbing child trafficking. Therefore, the finding implies that when there is employment opportunity, punishment for offenders and free education for young children, the challenge of child trafficking will be drastically addressed. The result of the in-depth interview also supports the above findings in curbing child trafficking. In addition, there should be welfare programmes for the less privileged, church sensitization, family planning to reduce having too many children, and parents should try and care for their children other than sending them out for money-making.

Test of Hypotheses 1

Table 6: Child trafficking will significantly affect children's emotional state in Abakaliki Urban.

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Yes	82	94.7	-12.7
No	124	94.7	29.3
I do not know	78	94.7	-16.7
Total	284		

Statistical test

	Item9
Chi-Square	13.718 ^a
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.001

The Chi-square result indicated that the differences among the responses of the respondents on the effects of child trafficking on the emotional state of children are significant [$\chi^2 (2) = 13.718, p = 0.001$]. Hence, the alternative hypothesis that child trafficking will significantly affect children's emotional state in Abakaliki Urban was accepted. This finding implies that the presence and continuous existence of child trafficking have a severe negative impact on the health condition of children, especially emotional. As one of the primary causes of health, societal and psychological challenges faced by children, families, individuals and the Nigerian society should avoid all forms of child trafficking.

Test of Hypotheses 2

Table 7: Strong measures will significantly reduce child trafficking in Abakaliki Urban.

Item 16

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Yes	78	95.0	-17.0
No	118	95.0	23.0
I do not know	89	95.0	-6.0
Total	285		

Test statistics

	Item16
Chi-Square	8.989 ^a
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.011

The Chi-square result indicated that the respondents' differences in responses on the relationship between strong measures and reduction of child trafficking are significant [$\chi^2 (2) = 8.989, p = 0.01$]. Hence, the alternative hypothesis that strong measures will significantly reduce child trafficking in Abakaliki Urban was accepted. This finding implies that measures such as strong punishment for offenders, employment opportunities, free education up to SSCE, and a conducive environment for small and medium scale businesses and other relevant measures have profound positive impacts in curbing or reducing child trafficking. Hence, since children are the future of our dear society and are paramount in family proper existence, all forms of child trafficking should be stopped, and efforts channelled towards better development of children for a better society generally.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This research work revealed several findings. First, the study sought answers to the forms of child trafficking in Abakaliki urban in Ebonyi state. Corresponding analysis to this was reported in table 6, and it revealed that out of 285 respondents, 203 respondents, representing 71.2%, reported that trickery decision is the major form of child trafficking

in Abakaliki urban. This is followed by 52(18.2%) respondents who reported force/coercion; 19(6.7%) respondents reported the administration of the oath. Nevertheless, 10(3.5%) respondents reported indebtedness, while 1(0.4%) respondent indicated other reasons. This clearly shows that trickery and coercion are major forms of child trafficking in the investigated area. To a large extent, this is empirically justifiable because they appear to be the conventional ways an average child can be trafficked. This finding is in line with the assertion of Wahlberg and Jagefjord, (2010) and Martens, Pieczkowski van Vuuren-Smyth (2003).

The second research question was to explore the causes of child trafficking in Abakaliki Urban Ebonyi State. Table 7 was dedicated to supplying answers to this question, and it was discovered that out of 285 respondents, 113(39.6%) respondents indicated that extra income is the major cause of child trafficking in Abakaliki; 100(35.1%) indicated greed; 43(15.1%) indicated ignorance; while 29(10.2%) indicated poverty. This clearly shows that the majority of the respondents subscribed to the claims that extra income is the major cause of child trafficking as it yielded the highest entry (113(39.6%)), followed by greed which recorded 100(35.1%). This reflects the loss in human value in favour of money. This shows that most child traffickers are more concerned with the money they will make from child trafficking than the dignity of childhood. However, these findings are supported by the assertions of Anderson (2011) and Fred (2015), who posits that craving for extra income caused by poverty mindset and greed contributes significantly to child trafficking in developing economies.

The third research question was to know how far child trafficking has affected children's behaviour in Abakaliki Urban in Ebonyi State. Table 8 analysis which addressed this question, revealed that out of 285 respondents, 144(50.5%) indicated withdrawal from people as the effect of child trafficking on the behaviour of children in Abakaliki; 93(32.6%) indicated sexual abuse; 18(6.3) respondents indicated verbal abuse as the effect of child trafficking; while 30(10.5%) indicate disobedience to authority as the effect of child trafficking. Therefore, the finding implies that child trafficking significantly causes withdrawal behaviour in affected children in Abakaliki urban. This finding shows objectively that children, as a consequence of child trafficking, withdraw from people and the pre-eminence of child abuse. This is indeed absurd and demands urgent policy intervention. However, Adesina (2014) sees the consequence of child trafficking from a health dimension when he asserts that trafficking has several health implications for the public, including physical, mental, and sexual.

Finally, the study also sought answers to how child trafficking can be curbed in Abakaliki Urban Ebonyi State. This was addressed in table 9, which showed that out of 285 respondents, 97(34.0%) indicated employment opportunities as a way of curbing child trafficking; 88(30.9%) indicated substantial punishment for offenders; 82(28.8%) indicated free education up to SSCE; 17(6.0%) indicated conducive environment for small and medium scale business; while only 1(0.4%) indicated other ways of curbing child trafficking. Clearly, the lack of jobs and lenient punishment of offenders has contributed immensely to child trafficking. Hence, creating jobs and gruesome punishment for offenders are major strategies to curb child trafficking in Abakaliki urban in Ebonyi State. However, Willis and Levy (2002) proposed using the "PREVENT" model, whose acronym stands for Psychological Counseling, Reproductive health services, Education, Vaccine, Nutrition, and Treatment, which should be adopted and implemented by the Nigerian Government.

CONCLUSION

This study presents the reality of the existence of child trafficking in Abakaliki urban area of Ebonyi State and maintains that responses and strategic actions from the government and stakeholders are needed to combat the crime. Based on the findings, it can be observed that trafficked children are mostly forced, coerced, or tricked by the traffickers with the consent of their parents, who are ignorant of what awaits their children at their destination. Trafficked children are subjected to hard labour, street hawking and in some cases, prostitution. Poverty, craving for extra income, greed, and lack of education are among the root causes of trafficking in Children in the Abakaliki area of Ebonyi State. Many of the children trafficked are from poor backgrounds. Based on the understanding of the vulnerability of the child victims and the economic situation of the families, some comprehensive preventive policies could be developed to fight the crime. With capacity building and effective preventive strategies backed by law, the crime of child trafficking in the Abakaliki urban area could be adequately curbed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were articulated based on the findings of the study:

- Poverty alleviation programmes: Craving for extra income caused by poverty is identified as one factor that enhances child trafficking. Programmes such as - skills and craft training acquisition, granting soft loans for businesses, agricultural training, and forming cooperative societies are recommended.
- Creation of jobs: The provision of employment opportunities will go a long way in preventing the crime of child trafficking in the Abakaliki urban area of Ebonyi State.
- Public enlightenment campaigns: Governmental agencies, media, non-governmental organizations and stakeholders should embark on massive campaigns to create awareness of the crime.
- Workshops and Seminars: This should be organized periodically to disseminate information on the crime and explain the consequences of child trafficking.
- Churches and Schools connection: Religious leaders and teachers should utilize their different platforms to alert society of the crime of child trafficking in Abakaliki area of Ebonyi State and the risks involved. These leaders can enforce laws and influence families positively against traditional practices that encourage child trafficking.
- Strict punitive measures: The lack of severe punitive penalties against child trafficking has been a significant reason the social ill thrives. Therefore, through legislation, the government should put stiff and severe penalties for offenders, and all legal constraints militating against the prosecution of child traffickers checked.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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