



Perception of Illegal Migration And Sex Trafficking In Europe Among Younger Women Of Oredo Lga, Edo State, Nigeria: The Social Work And Ethical Considerations

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ABSTRACT

The movement of human populations across the planet has characterized human societies throughout history. However, the increasing rate of such movements across National borders has been in such a way that violates the immigration laws of the destination country, put trafficked persons at risk and has given birth to modern day slavery. This study was therefore designed to ascertain the perception of illegal migration and sex trafficking in Europe among young women in Oredo, Benin City, Nigeria. The study used a multi stage random sample of 90 women aged 18-40 years whom were interviewed using in-depth interviews (20) and Focus Group Discussions guides (7). The qualitative data generated were content analyzed and the results indicate that majority of the women perceive illegal migration and sex trafficking in Europe negatively. They however would not discourage anyone who wishes to engage in the act, partly due to the socio-economic benefits derived therein. Given that illegal migration and sex trafficking in Europe is inimical to human and societal well-being, it therefore

becomes necessary for social workers and ethical practitioners to advocate the formulation of policies and programmes focusing on ethical migration practice and women empowerment with aim to rehabilitate and reduce human sex exploitation.

Keywords: illegal migration, sex trafficking, ethics, social work, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Illegal migration and human sex trafficking are acts closely intertwined. Universally, it is ethical for persons to migrate from place to place and freely associate with others; provided they follow the given procedures for migration (Yacine, 2015). It is in same vein that social work professionals are committed to human rights and social justice particularly on behalf of people who are vulnerable, oppressed and/or may be at risk (NASW, 2003). Given both professional values stance on migration and human wellbeing, it is perhaps surprising that scholars of ethics and social work have raised very scanty literature on issues on migration and human wellbeing (Hodge, 2008).

Migration is traceable to mankind's history. Humans have always gotten involved in movement activities. This has been a major feature in the history of Africa and the world in general (Akanji, 2012; Ebri, 2017). Retrospectively, the desire of man to go in search of food during various famine seasons and the desire of standing out from the crowd as well as seeking for independence gave rise to migration (Lynette, 2007). Generally, migration consists of the Internal and international types. Internal migration simply put is the movement of individuals within the same geographical location while International Migration has to do with the crossing of borders or international boundaries (Ebri, 2017). Additionally, Migration takes various patterns such as slave trade, colonization, urbanization, industrialization and globalization (Iheanacho & Ughaerumba, 2015). It is on this fore that Swende, Sokpo and Tamen (2008) asserted that international migration as a consequence of globalization has increasingly affected health in migrant source, transit and recipient nations.

The International Organization Migration (2014) reports that, developing countries engage more in International Migration than the developed countries. The reason for this can be traced to the various acclaimed benefits of International migration. These benefits ranges from lucrative job opportunities, international education certifications, interconnectedness, international relations between countries creating avenue for interdependence most especially in the aspect of manpower which has painfully resulted in trafficking in persons (Fayomi, 2013; Ebri, 2017).

Trafficking involves the transfer of human beings particularly women, children and other able-bodied youths from one place to another, at-times across national and international borders by the traffickers for the purpose of subjecting the trafficked persons to prostitution, drug peddling or child labour (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013; Njoku, 2015). Dovydaitis (2010) confirmed that there are approximately 800,000 people trafficked across international borders annually and, of these, 80% are women or girls and 50% are minors. To further compound the problem, Uwa, Okor and Ahmed (2014) reported that estimation by UNICEF has it that over 1.2 million children worldwide are trafficked annually and the Niger delta region is the most susceptible in the country partly due to poverty, lack of opportunities, instability and corruption.

Although the degree of trafficking among countries and continents varies, it is clear that global trafficking has become a growing problem.

Trafficking in human beings is modern-day slavery and has become a widespread phenomenon mostly in Africa. Two hundred years after the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the trafficking of African children continues unabated (Uwa, Okor and Ahmed, 2014). Neha, Deshpande, Nawal and Nour (2013), concurred when they said that human trafficking is seen as a modern day form of slavery because it involves some form of forced exploitation which are illegal with sexual exploitation being the most prevalent therein. UNODC (2016) reported that 54 percent of all trafficking victims in 2014 were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. There are several recurrent tactics of manipulation used to coerce victims into situations of sex trafficking. Most commonly, victims are promised a good job, education, or citizenship in a foreign country or offered a false marriage proposal that is turned into bondage (Neha et al., 2013).

Sex trafficking is an umbrella term that may include commercial sex work such as prostitution, but also pornography, exotic dancing, stripping, live sex shows, mail-order brides, military prostitution, and sexual tourism (Neha, Deshpande, Nawal and Nour, 2013). Specifically, scholars (Sandru, 1996; Bertone, 2000; Okonofua, Ogbomwan, Alutu, Okop, & Aghahowa, 2004) define sex trafficking as the illicit transportation of women into foreign countries for the purposes of sexual exploitation and for economic and other personal gains. Although victims of sex trafficking can be of any age and of either sex, the majority are women and adolescent girls (Dovydaitis, 2010). In the words of Grit, Otterand Spreij (2012) over the last decade, international migration has continued to rise despite the efforts of many countries to tighten their borders.

Most Nigerians who fall victim of human sex trafficking, pass through Niger, Mali, Tunisia, Morocco or Libya en route to Europe (Ojugbana, 2015; Njoku, 2015). Yearly, women are trafficked from Edo state to Europe for the purpose of prostitution. Most women leaving Edo State for Europe to work as prostitutes mostly go to Italy while others go to the Netherlands, Spain, Germany, Belgium and Austria (Women's Health and Action Research Centre, 2002; Okojie, Okojie, Eghafona, Vincent-Osaghae, & Kalu, 2003). Adversely, international migration, which is a supporting component and a consequence of globalization, increasingly affects health in migrant source, transit, and recipient nations (Swende, Sokpo, Tamen, 2008) and also infringes on the United Nations fundamental human rights. Hence, it was no longer news when Rahman (2011) averred that at least 117 nations ratified the UN convention of the year 2000 to outlaw the trafficking of persons; however, the act is still widely prevalent on a global scale with Africa being the highest.

Trafficking of women and children across local borders in Africa has been on the increase despite counter-measures by government agencies and anti-trafficking organizations (Otti, 2011). Ojugbana (2015) stated that, a report on human trafficking and migration to Europe shows an increase as in the year 2014 as 170, 100 persons arrived Italy by sea, compared to 141, 484 migrants that were ferried through the Mediterranean Sea from Libya in 2013. In the case of Nigeria, most of the migrants were victims of human trafficking hoodwinked by syndicates as a result of their desperation to travel to Europe or Asia for a better life. In Benin City, the capital of Edo State, there was traffickers who specialize in recruiting and sponsoring young ladies to Europe especially Italy, Amsterdam and Belgium for prostitution. Consequently, it was estimated that no fewer than 100,000 young Nigerian women had been sold into sex slavery as prostitutes, servicing 'top guns'

and 'big boys' in Europe's flourishing underground sex industry. Confirming sex slavery as a problem in Edo state and Nigeria in extension, Njoku (2005) and Njoku (2015) reported that out of about 90,000 sex workers of Nigerian origin in Italy, 50,000 of them (60%) were from Edo State and the majority migrated illegally. It is on this fore that Gushulak, Weekers, and MacPherson, (2009) asserted that international population mobility is an underlying factor in the emergence of publichealth threats and risks that must be managed globally.

Social work as a profession has always concerned itself with ameliorating issues that threatens public health, human and societal wellbeing. Since Neha, Deshpande, and Nawal, Nour (2013) avers that victims of sex trafficking acquire adverse physical and psychological health conditions and social disadvantages, Hacker, et al. (2011) further show a clear association between immigration policies and mental health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and then, Johnston (2009) and Steel, Momartin, Silove, Coello, Aroche and Tay (2011) established that increased anxiety, depression, and overall stress exist in the conditions for immigration and in immigration detention centers. It is therefore seen that sex trafficking is a critical health issue with broader social implications and ethical consequences yet the case in Edo State has received little or no attention from social work and ethical practitioners. It therefore becomes necessary to fill this academic gap by investigating the perception of younger women in Edo State, Nigeria on illegal migration and sex trafficking in Europe.

This paper therefore sought to address the following specific objectives;

1. To ascertain the knowledge of illegal migration and sex trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria
2. To explore the perception of illegal migration and sex trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria
3. To investigate the factors promoting illegal migration and sex trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria
4. To explore ethical and social work considerations on illegal migration and sex trafficking

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theories are usually employed to explain phenomenon and to create understanding of a particular phenomena. Therefore, the cumulative Causation Theory and the Neo-classical theory anchored this study. The Cumulative Causation Theory was developed by Gunnar Myrdal in 1956. It was further developed by Douglas Massey and his colleagues (Massey, 1990; Massey, Goldring, & Durand, 1994). The theory explains why migration flow begins and continues to grow (Fussell & Massey, 2004). Put simply, the cumulative causative theory describes how the number of outgoing migrants increases over time, since the first migrant provides social capital to relatives, friends and others in the country of origin, which ultimately encourages them to find jobs easily and face minimum risk in destination countries (Jennissen, 2004). This situation stimulates and influences people to migrate more and more. The Cumulative Causation Theory could be subsumed under the System Theory and/or Network Theory. In giving more clarity to the cumulative causative theory, the neo classical theory was therefore used as a compliment explaining the situation behind people's choice to migrate.

The oldest and best-known theory of international migration is Neo-classical Theory. It explains the impact of labour ;migration on economic development (Arango, 2000; Lewis, 1954; Todaro, 1976; van Naerssen, Spaan, & Zoomers, 2008). According to this theory and its extensions, the cause for international migration is the geographical imbalance between demand and supply of labour. In regions where the supply of labour is elastic, but the labour is paid low wages and their marginal

productivity is low, workers tend to migrate to a high-wage country (Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino, & Taylor, 1993). As a result of this trend, remittances generation has become a powerful incentive for labour-sending countries to encourage out-migration.

METHODOLOGY

Study Population

The study was carried out among younger women in Oredo L.G.A, Edo State of Nigeria who were between the ages of 18-40 years. Edo State is one of the 36 States in Nigeria located in the south-south geopolitical zone of the country with Benin City as its capital. Oredo local government area is one of the three LGAs in Benin City metropolis and it comprised of 185, 620 females and 12 wards (National Population Commission, 2006). It is also the administrative headquarters of Benin City, Edo state. Despite its political significance, the city is poorly industrialized and has limited opportunities for meaningful income-earning activities. Consequently, the state has one of the highest rates of unemployment among youths even in the midst of high school enrolment rate (Okonofua, Ogbomwan, Alutu, Okop & Aghahowa, 2004). The above choice of population sufficed for the purpose of this study because the 12 wards in the Oredo local government area are the interplay of the very urban, the semi-urban and the rural dwellers. These mixtures therefore engendered and ensured a comprehensive and balance data from younger women of varied socio demographic backgrounds.

Design and sampling

A multi stage sampling procedure which entails successive selection of community clusters, groups, streets, villages, housing units and respondents was employed. At the first stage, the streets in Oredo LGA were clustered into 12 wards; hence the sampling frame equals 136 streets in Oredo LGA (State Secretariat, 2018). This cluster choice was to help the researcher get varied demographic data that will be used to analyze the respondents' views on the subject of study. Secondly, a simple random sampling technique through simple balloting was applied to choose 3 wards and 5 streets from each of the 3 selected wards out of 12 in Oredo LGA, Benin City, Edo State. Purposive sampling was used next by the researchers to directly choose from the three wards those who not only indicated willingness, but were also eligible to participate on account of their age and sex. Only females aged 18-40 who are economically engaged were eligible for this study. These participants were invited to the FGDs at specific locations. Each of the 7 FGD sessions consisted of 10 participants summing to 70 participants. Lastly, the snowball technique was adopted in identifying 20 IDI respondents (10 each from 2 wards in Oredo L.G.A that did not feature in the FGD study. This was used because of the information-rich subject undergoing research and the need for proper referral to information-rich persons, regarding the research topic. These referrals were done by the persons in charge of each organization.

The researchers all had a uniform FGD guide which helped for standardization, and each of them moderated two FGDs alongside a research assistant who doubled as the note taker in the event of technical failure of the recording device. The Research Ethics Review Board had earlier moderated the instrument so as not to instigate negative emotional reactions from participants on account of the subject matter under discussion. FGDs and IDI were conducted in pidgin and English languages depending on the language proficiency of participants. Participants verbally consented to the audio-recording of their responses and were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity.

Data analysis

Audio-taped responses were later transcribed into English. The researchers then read through the transcripts and established themes that were used for the analysis in line with the demands of this study. Analytical themes were developed from the transcripts as guided by the literature reviewed.

Ethical considerations

The instrument and modalities were approved by the Research Ethics Review Board of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

RESULTS OF FINDINGS

The data present realities of illegal migration and sex trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria. The first theme detailed respondent's knowledge of illegal migration and sex trafficking. Secondly, their perceived views on the positive and negative side on the subject matter were examined while the third theme presented the reactions of respondents toward the effects of illegal migration and sex trafficking. Lastly, governmental interventions and reasons for continuous growth of human trafficking were x-rayed. This was achieved through participants' narrated experiences, which certainly influenced their attitude and perceptions toward the exercise. Generally, their knowledge on these themes was largely influenced by experiences they have had, witnessed, or heard about.

Knowledge of illegal migration and sex trafficking

In terms of participant's knowledge of illegal migration and sex trafficking, all of them indicated that they had knowledge of the phenomenon. According to them the name is not new and does not sound strange to them. However, only the response of a 35 year old woman leader and an 18 year old woman was sampled. They opined thus:

In this community, you must hear of a young lady leaving this place to search for greener pasture abroad. Most women leaving Edo State for European countries such as: Italy, Spain, Germany, Austria, England, Belgium, Netherland etc. go there for prostitution and other meager jobs. Only a few others do decent jobs when they go there. We know they exchange their body with dogs, horses, men and women just to have money to send to their people here at home (IDI, women leader, 35 years old).

I know that illegal migration is the act of leaving Nigeria illegally without the proper permission and passport while sex trafficking is the exchange of sex for monetary gain. I also know that anyone whether young or old can be trafficked to Europe to prostitute so I am always careful with anyone that tells me they can help me leave Nigeria to another country for a better job (FGD, 18 year old woman).

Views on illegal migration and sex trafficking

Positive views

Data from this study revealed that majority of the participants saw illegal migration and sex trafficking from a positive light. Most of them assumed that even if most of these ladies being trafficked stayed back that they were still going to involve in gainful sexual activities due to the high level of poverty and incapacities by the government. Below are responses on the views of illegal migration and sex trafficking:

A 25 year old participant during one of the FGDs conducted with younger women had a positive view to illegal migration and sex trafficking. She linked her response to the reasons why people engage in it. According to her:

...Nigeria is characterized by extreme poverty and people have to do what they do to survive. The level of poverty is evident in the inability to feed or cater for the basic need for survival. Also the level of unemployment creates room for these women searching for greener pastures in foreign countries. There are also issues of bad leadership that has failed to improve the welfare and protection of her citizens. With all these problems anyone who gets an opportunity to run away from Nigeria will always take it without even thinking twice. Just recently, Peter Obi a vice presidential candidate of PDP affirmed this in a presidential debate when he said that at least 90 percent of Nigerians would throw in their passport to leave the country if given the opportunity and this is as a result of hardship in the country presently (FGD participant, 25 year old, self-employed).

Supporting this fact, some other women who were once illegal immigrants and victims of sex trafficking, saw the phenomenon in a positive light and even renamed the act. Through the business they have been able to establish many other young girls and made a living for themselves. Even though they acknowledged the risks involved in the business, they doesn't regret it. In the words of one of such women:

...we call it hustling and I was a baron in the business. I was trafficked for sex until I gained connections and enough capital to start my own business where I helped girls move abroad and hustle also and many who kept to agreement are now madam of their own. Yes, I know it is a dirty and risky job but it pays. It is better than waiting for a government that does not care. You see the house and cars and even that big mall? I own them all thanks to what you call sex trafficking and even though I have left the business to something more honorable, I won't say I regret engaging in it (IDI participant, 40 year old woman).

Similarly, a very young lady aged 18 years already saw women trafficked to Europe as her models and heroes. According to her she wishes to be like them when she grows up and gets the same connection they get. Furthermore, information elicited from her revealed thus:

Any family who has a daughter in Europe is always happy because that daughter has helped them escape poverty. Just behind our house, there is a duplex; it is one aunty from Europe that sent money to her brother to build that house for them. The water we fetch daily for our house use is from their house, if I want to watch television I sneak into their house since they always have their generator on. I love what Europe did for that family and when I get such an opportunity I will take it gladly. You need to see the various businesses they have invested in just because of Europe money. Every day, I pray to be like them because in this community, people respect their families because of the properties, cars, lands and other material things they have achieved in such a short-time of travelling to Europe. Europe pays and it is better than staying in Nigeria, after all if its death, everyone will die someday (FGD with younger women, 18 year old participant).

Negative views

Although majority of the participants had positive views towards illegal migration and sex trafficking, some others however saw it in a negative light. A lot of women who saw the negativity of illegal migration and sex trafficking were guided by their religious and moral values. Some others aver that the health implication for such practice is worse than the gains. Below are their responses:

...these women after wasting their years abroad hustling for their family, most of them end up not having their own family. I know of a 65 year old woman who once migrated to Europe to prostitute; as at then almost all men wanted to have sex with her, but today she is always crying because she has no child of her own as she didn't settle down with any of those men who came her way for marriage. She is so lonely that whenever she looks at the big house she built from the proceeds of prostitution and sex trafficking she can't help but cry. The family she hustled for is dead and she is left to die alone with no one to inherit the material things she acquired (FGD with a 40 year old participant, civil servant).

As a Christian, my faith is against illegal immigration and sex trafficking. I cannot encourage anyone to go into it because hell fire is real. What shall we gain if we get all the pleasures and material things of the world and then miss heaven? During Christmas when most of these women return from Europe to flaunt their asset I try to preach to them. The few who pay attention, repent and by Gods help they break all ties with their old lives and take a new leaf (IDI with 30 year old evangelist).

These people know the bad effect of what they are doing. They know that sex trafficking can give them incurable infection, they know that all the wealth they struggle to acquire can be gone in one day but they still choose to continue. They always use the excuse of poverty like it only them the poverty is affecting Everyone is going through tough time but if we all choose to do international prostitution we will destroy our selves with our own hands (FGD with younger women, 25 year old, student).

Factors promoting illegal migration and sex trafficking

Majority of the participants gave details on factors such as cultural practices which has in no small way contributed in women's preference and practice of illegal migration and sex trafficking. Accordingly, they affirmed that these factors scare women and instead of staying back they prefer to travel out and survive even if it means trafficking sex. A 32-year-old participant recounted thus:

Nigeria is patriarchal society where men are favoured more than women. A man can always survive in this country but women always fall prey to all forms of evil despite local and international laws protecting them. Take for instance: some places practice incest, female circumcision, forced early marriage, debt-exchange marriage, forced sex-work, domestic violence, marital rape and inability to foot their bills etc. which makes women vulnerable and push them into sex trafficking (IDI participant, 34 year old woman).

Confirming truism on such cultural factors serving as a propeller to illegal migration and sex trafficking, other participants also reported that it is only when a woman hustles that she can own lands and other properties and given that their local environment is not economically viable, migration becomes the only feasible way of beating such cultural barrier. Below are direct narratives of a 31 year old woman and a 32 year old women leader on such claim:

Our women are culturally not permitted to inherit the properties of their husbands. Consequently, women are under considerable pressure to create their own wealth to protect their future. These reasons probably account for the high craving among female young adults in the city to seek employment and, sources of livelihood abroad because of their perception, that living outside the country fetches wealth. Right now as I speak, most of the big houses around here belongs to women who have used this medium of sex trading abroad to navigate the cultural barriers (IDI participant, 31 year old woman).

Some women get involved in this unholy act because in their homes and communities they are isolated and ignored unlike their male counter-part. Parents too have not helped issues much by refusing to train them in school due to the misconstrued belief that the girl child won't be around to carry on with the family name. While great importance is placed on the male child, the female children are neglected. Consequently, in order to prove a point our female children engage in illegal migration and sex trafficking for monetary gains and they return back home with an improved importance and respect placed on them (IDI with a woman leader aged 32 years).

Another majority of participants mentioned economic factors and social unrest as the reason why illegal migration and sex trafficking is rampant and has almost no hope of reducing in Edo state and Nigeria in extension. Recounting the situation of the country as factors, a 22 year old woman stated thus "...why do you think that despite governments assumed efforts to curb the problems of travelling yearly we still record people leaving to European countries... Nigeria is under developed thus problems such as poverty, economic deterioration, increased population, crisis, high cost of feeding and survival, under-standardized medical equipment and facilities are at the lowest ebb more especially in this present regime of APC and change. These problems are the factors encouraging illegal migration and sex trafficking among our people".

Why zero illegal immigration and sex trafficking cannot be achieved

Most women who were interviewed averred confirmed that measures are in place to discourage illegal migration and trafficking of persons however the rate of progress recorded has been minimal. Some of the participants mentioned some sensitive reasons why despite all efforts put in place the problem still exist. A 20 year old woman opined thus:

You see this problem of illegal immigration and sex trafficking; only God will help us. These traffickers are powerful and influential; they have links within and outside Nigeria and money generated from the wicked and shameful act have helped cover their tracks. For instance, in this community, a man suspected to be among these traffickers was arrested and a huge amount of bail was required, since they had the money they paid for his bail and that was how the whole matter ended (FGD participant, 20 year old woman).

Some other participant were of the opinion that victims of trafficking willingly give themselves to traffickers and in situation when things go wrong, they lack the courage to report the situation and this has led to so many undocumented cases of trafficking. One of them said "...even if the government likes let them make all the laws they can make to abolish trafficking of persons, if they first fail to build a better society for our welfare, we will gladly jump at the next opportunity to leave the country irrespective of the means. Also if things go wrong, I will take it as my fate and will not

report. If you report, you may be blocking the ways of others whose family welfare solely depend on the act”.

Effect of illegal migration and sex trafficking

Illegal migration and sex trafficking has numerous effect on the individual, the community and the Nation at large. Below are responses of the effect of illegal migration and sex trafficking:

Trafficking of humans has a bad effect on the society, and it gives us a bad reputation among other Nations. Human trafficking displays Nigeria in a bad light and this is the reason most European countries perceive Nigerians as lazy and fraudulent; as such makes it even more difficult for well-meaning citizens of Nigeria to get their visa (FGD, female aged 19 years).

In addition, some other respondents views the effects of illegal migration and sex trafficking as an act of greed which has led so many to their early grave through the acquisition of incurable diseases; the inhumane process of migration and dehumanizing treatments they receive from their traffickers and most times clients.

To me any Nigerian woman you see in Europe especially Italy and Spain without a job is a full-time prostitute; they are mostly from this state (Edo state). Just because they want to build big houses and send big cars homes they do despicable things, they are the ones spoiling our name and image. They are not the only ones suffering it is greed that has made them not to return and struggle like every one of us. Nigeria is a jungle, we are all trying to survive and prostituting can never be the best option, hard work and trust in God is the only way out as our leaders have failed us (FGD participant, 38 years old woman).

Efforts by Government

Participants affirmed that there are various measures put in place by governmental and non governmental bodies to curb the menace of illegal migration and sex trafficking. One participant aged 33 responded on government's efforts on illegal migration and trafficking of persons thus:

“The Nigerian government has established anti-human trafficking units in various parts of the state. However, the approach has been parochial. No measures fight against the factors that make people want to leave the country... she further added with a rhetorical question thus “...why do you think that despite governments assumed efforts to curb the problems of travelling yearly we still record high number of persons leaving for European countries” In Edo state, a law was signed for the Anti-Prostitution Act which includes among others, a 21 year old imprisonment for breaking the law (IDI participant, 33 year old woman).

Additional information from an IDI revealed the national agency in Nigeria charged with the responsibility of enforcing anti trafficking laws and bringing perpetrators to book. Quoting the words of an interviewee, she said thus:

The Federal Government sent a bill to the National Assembly requesting to make trafficking an outlaw. The bill was what established the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, NAPTIP. NAPTIP is committed to prevent all forms of human degradation and exploitation (IDI with a woman aged 32 years old).

SUGGESTIONS/SOLUTIONS

All the respondents mentioned that the reason why people got involved in illegal migration and sex trafficking was because of the high level of poverty and political instability existing in the country. According to them if this is curtailed then most women will remain in the country and the problem of illegal migration and sex trafficking will be over. Below are some responses captured on suggestions for a better society devoid of illegal migration and human sex trafficking:

Government and other well-to-do-bodies should help us and give us small scale businesses to get engaged with. Most times it is poverty and idleness that makes young women get involved in such acts. I am a maid and I'm just 16 years old. Every night I think of ways to escape and go to Europe just like my elder cousin sister. I am sure that there are other young girls like me with such mentality; I know government can help us by sensitizing us and also providing means through which we can provide for our basic needs (FGD with younger women, 16 years old).

Poverty is the reason why most of our young women go to Europe and do so many dirty jobs including prostitution. If the government can be paying women a certain amount of money to help them maintain their style of living and also involve in other businesses that can help them, then the problem of illegal migration and sex trafficking will be a thing of the past. Also, women should be empowered socially, politically and economically. (IDI with women leader, 35 years old).

ETHICAL AND SOCIAL WORK CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct (Encyclopedia, 2018). Ethics seeks to resolve questions of human morality by defining concepts such as good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice, justice and crime and these are all important questions raised in the issue of illegal migration and sex trafficking. On the other hand, social work is a profession and academic discipline which promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships, and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance their well-being using principle a such as human rights and social justice to combat unethical behaviours without losing sight of its professional ethical standards.

The growing interest in ethics and social work in our today's societies is apt especially in developing countries like Nigeria where lack of human welfare and unethical behaviours are pervasive. Onah (2004) concurred when he said that the prevalence of unethical behaviours and breakdown of human rights and welfare in Nigeria; most especially on the issue of migration and sex slavery has called for serious concerns and the need for a more collaborative efforts by ethical practitioners and social work professionals. In retrospect, it has been up to two hundred years since the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, yet the trafficking of African children continues unabated in a new form known as human sex trafficking. This is one of the most horrific violations of the child right act of 2003 and the UN fundamental human rights (Uwa et al., 2014). Hence, questioning the roles of social workers and ethical practitioners and further proving the need for such inter-professional intervention in formulating a working template that would guide policy on migration and human welfare in Nigeria.

For International Migration (Emigration and Immigration) to take place, the sending state, the receiving state and the migrant is involved in the migration process (Ebri, 2017), but in situations

where this process is boycotted, it further raises social work and ethical concerns as to the right process and human welfare therein. Human trafficking is a pressing public health concern which transcends all races, social classes, demographics, and gender. No population is exempt from the ever-present threat of traffickers (Tammy, Toney & Olivia, 2018). Since social workers are concerned with the promotion of social change, human empowerment and human welfare through democratic and human rights principles, this miasma therefore calls for their concern, invitation and intervention (NASWS, 2012). Given the abnegation of human rights, moral principles and societal values necessitated by illegal migration and sex trafficking, the need to set things right, following the laid down principles of migration and moral creed is therefore imperative; thus raising ethical concerns equally.

DISCUSSION

This present study investigated the perception of illegal migration and sex trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria. Findings revealed that the majority of the participants acknowledged that the act is inimical to human health and wellbeing but given the perceived economic and social positives therein, they are doing almost nothing to discourage such unethical and immoral act of migrating illegally and trafficking for sex. Sex trafficking leads to wealth creation and economic gains for women was the most common reason proffered by those wanting the practice to continue. In contrast, the fear of adverse health consequences and the need to maintain social and religious morals were the reasons given by those who perceive it negatively and thus wants the practice to discontinue. Given the surrounding circumstances of the study, findings reveal that this area remains practicable for social work and ethical practitioners, whose concern includes enhancing human wellbeing, promoting social change; ensuring problem solving in human relationships, and protecting the interests of the vulnerable or those who may be at risk and also seeking moral and ethical ways of behaving by individuals.

Specifically, all participants affirmed to be knowledgeable on the subject of illegal migration and sex trafficking as the phenomena is not new in their environment. Such view on knowledge of illegal migration and sex trafficking is not unconnected to the findings of Johnson and Sigler (1996) and Robinson (2011), who averred that people are aware of illegal and forceful migration. They see migration as a social problem which needs to be averted to avoid further problems in the society. Additionally, Dando, Walsh, and Brierley (2016) in their study found out that all the respondents were familiar with trafficking; thus they believed trafficking was the smuggling of humans from one country to another for exploitation purposes.

More so, participants had positive view on illegal migration and sex trafficking as it has been able to help families get their daily needs for survival and security given the rate of poverty, unemployment and crisis in the country. This view coincides exactly with that of Carling (2015) when it was stated that while poverty and unemployment are not unique to Nigeria, the level of peacetime violence, corruption, and organized crime surpasses most other African countries and has forced many Nigerians to seek asylum in Europe.

In addition, findings of this study further detailed negative perception of illegal migration and sex trafficking based on individual and national considerations and most importantly, such negative perceptions are hinged on factors such as religion, culture and morality. Confirming this is the findings of Okonofua, Ogbomwan, Alutu, Okop and Aghahowa (2004) and Njoku (2015).

In understanding the reason women migrate in high numbers, means irrespective; the study found that economic and cultural factors such as lack of employment, poverty and male child preference in the study area has not helped issues. It is in this regard that Bruckert and Parent (2002), Wickramasinghe (2016) and Chand (2008) stated that the fundamental breeding ground for trafficking and exploitation is the economic situation of people in poorer regions of the world which pushes vulnerable people to emigrate and seek better opportunities abroad.

In addition, findings from this study points towards individual, communal and national effects of illegal migration and sex trafficking. Most worrisome is the bad reputation the country gets and the health and mental health effects on victims as some die in the process of being trafficked, others contract incurable diseases having sex with different men alongside inhumane treatment from their boss and clients and they are usually full of regrets during their latter years being without a family to call their own. Corroborating this are studies by Njoku (2005); Emmanuel and Ogbonnaya (2012) and Carling (2015).

As regards efforts to combat the practice of illegal migration and sex trafficking, the study revealed that both governmental and non governmental agencies are not sleeping on the issue, however, such efforts has not helped matters much regarding the unethical act of migration and trafficking. As a solution, it was suggested by participants that tackling poverty and others forms of economic and political mishap is a major things to be done to change the mindset of other women who may want to get involved in illegal migration and sex trafficking. Emmanuel and Ogbonnaya (2012) and Agbu (2003) confirmed that both governmental and non-governmental organizations in Nigeria are indeed taking measures to combat human trafficking

The researchers believe that illegal migration and sex trafficking by women in European countries can be addressed through the formulation and implementation of policies that improve the economy of the nation with specific emphasis to women development and empowerment while advocacy and sensitization will go long way in changing the wrong mindset of younger women as regards illegal migration and sex trafficking in the nation. The study is however, not without some limitations. Such limitations could be connected to the use of a single local government area in Edo State, Nigeria for the study. Thus, it is recommended that related studies should be conducted in other local government area in Edo State, Nigeria to make for quality inferences. Despite these limitations, the findings of the present study should be of interest to all professionals of moral conduct and human well-being.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

Certain problems were encountered by the researchers in the course of this study, and they are likely to have affected the results of the study. Trafficking in females is a sensitive crime because the society sees the female victims as prostitutes. Some of the victims of trafficking in females may have withheld some of the true responses they would have made owing to the sensitive nature of this crime. Also the researchers did not look too deep on trafficking and sex slavery from the perspective of those who engage in the act for fun hence subsequent studies should cover this gap.

CONCLUSIONS

It has been established that human trafficking is modern day slavery. As a global epidemic, it is the fastest growing criminal industry in the world, second only to drug dealing and tied with arms

dealing. An estimated 27 million people are enslaved worldwide today in labor or sexual servitude. Most persons who engage in illegal migration and sex trafficking are poor, therefore, the measures to redress this phenomenon aside the prevention, must also focus on protecting the fundamental human rights of the people. Government should also strive to improve the educational and employment capacities of women to enable them gain financial control and access to means of survival. Social workers and ethical practitioners must give in their best to protect and advocate for women at their level. Community based organizations, NGO's and religious bodies should liaise social workers and ethic regulation personnel to enlighten and dislodge women who may fall victim to illegal immigration and sex trafficking. Finally, social workers and ethical practitioners should advocate for the formulation of policies and programmes that focus on ethical migration practice and women empowerment with. Doing this will go a long way in rehabilitating and reducing the problem of illegal immigration and sex trafficking in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since poverty, crisis and lack of welfare are the reasons people engage in illegal migration and sex trafficking, it therefore becomes ethically desirable for people to live above the poverty line hence, social workers and ethical practitioners should be involved in policy formulation and advocacy that will engender human welfare, skill acquisition for self-sustenance, employment creation and small loans be made available for eligible persons. Ethical awareness is a necessary part of the professional practice of any social worker. His or her ability to act ethically is an essential aspect of the quality of the service offered to clients for apt practice of attaining human and societal wellbeing.

Since this study established that people are less concerned on the issue of illegal migration and sex trafficking in Nigeria, it therefore becomes ethical for people to be re-conscientized to see it as their moral duty and obligation to caution, frown at and report incidences of trafficking vis-à-vis perceiving it as unethical to encourage such actions either by commission or omission. Thence, more awareness campaigns on trafficking in females should be launched in Edo State and Nigeria in general with efforts channeled towards changing the present mind-set of our women.

Policy and program formulation to curb poverty and other social vices which encourages migrants to leave should be made and strictly enforced while appropriate punishments be meted on perpetrators. It will be ethically sound for social workers to advocate for migration policies that will allow for better and smooth ethical migration without the need to resort to being trafficked. Lastly, since article 13 of the universal declaration of human rights documented that it is ethically right for people to have freedom of association, movement and well-being, it becomes incumbent on professionals of ethics and social work to educate the general public on how to navigate migration processes with ease and also assisting them in achieving same.

In addition, other agencies and NGOs should lend supporting hands to NAPTIP in the fight against trafficking in females and there should be timely prosecution of offenders in order to deter intending offenders. The discovery that some females willingly chose to be prostitutes' abroad shows that moral decadence has crept into our society, hence the need for our educational, religious and cultural institutions to take part in the campaign against trafficking in females.

Lastly, the rehabilitative treatments administered by social workers to the victims of trafficking should not be generalized. Those that willingly chose to be prostitutes abroad and the unsuspecting victims suffered harms of different degrees should be rehabilitated separately.

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Ethics

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