



The Implications of Child Trafficking on Society, A Case Study of Westland Sub-County Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This paper uses data collected for an MA Thesis on the implications of child trafficking on society, a case study of Westland Sub-County, Kenya. The study has been motivated by increased cases of child trafficking in Kenya, especially within Kituru, though with little research activity in this area. The study was guided by the following research objectives; to determine the prevalence of child trafficking cases, to establish factors responsible for child trafficking to examine the effects of child trafficking on victims and finally to assess impact of child trafficking in Westland-Sub-County, Kenya. This study was grounded by Bronfenbrenner's (1994) Ecological Systems Theory. The study used mixed method design and a purposive sampling design model. The main method of data collection was the interview. In addition, FGDs were used to collect data from the victim respondents. The sample size comprised of 50 respondents that included; DCI Officers, Employees from; HAART Kenya, Kabete Remand Home, Children Department and Parents of Trafficked children. Data was coded and analyzed using NVIVO software, computer software for managing qualitative and quantitative data. The first objective established prevalence average, of about 11 children that are trafficked every month in Westland's Sub County. The study further established frequent information tips of 10s of children being clandestinely trafficked outside the country though without arrests, indication a possibility of very intricate web of organized informers for child traffickers. The second objective established the factors responsible for child trafficking in Westland Sub-County, Kenya. These included; high demand for women in sex trafficking (60%), economic hardship (90%), demand for cheap domestic and agricultural labour (80%) poverty (100%), and demand from human organ harvesting sector (50%). In all this the underlying factor is the temptation of poverty. The third objective established the effects of child trafficking on Victims in Westland Sub-County, Kenya from both the perspectives of adult respondents and from the victim respondents. These include; Low self-esteem and self-worth, inability to trust and build meaningful relationships in later life, substance misuse, and post-traumatic stress disorder all

rated at 90%, fear, anger and hostility, sexualized behaviour, pseudo maturity and self-harm all rated at 80 percent. The fourth objective established the impact of child trafficking in Westland's Sub-County, Kenya; educational impacts, economic impacts, health impacts, societal impacts and national security impacts that are likely to ground the country's economy, trap families and communities into cycles of poverty amongst other impacts. Amongst other major recommendations, the government should first treat as a national disaster and hand it as such.

Keywords: Child trafficking, Prevalence, Interlocking Impacts on Society.

INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking has been identified as a large remunerative industry across the world with women and children being the most affected perhaps due to their vulnerability and to a larger extent, ignorance of their human rights (Alvarez & Alessi, 2012; Chincholkar, 2016; Rafferty, 2013). Similarly, even though the international labour organization (ILO) report (2008) singled out trafficked victims to generally include men, women and children alike, women and children form a greater proportion of those who are victimized into trafficking largely due to their susceptibilities which is perceived to be related to social-economic and cultural factors. Gouty (2015) avers that human trafficking can either occur domestically or across borders, with the victim's movement trend indicating to be mostly from underdeveloped areas to developed countries or from rural to urban areas in the case of domestic trafficking (Gouty, 2015; Miko & Park, 2001; Rahman, 2011; Zhang & Pineda, 2008). Further, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2008) argued that a country for example, Kenya may serve either as a source, transit and/or destination of trafficked victims.

Human trafficking or 'Trafficking in person' (TIP) is defined by the United Nations as "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of person by use of; threats or use of force or other form of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or position of authority or giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation" (UNODC, 2008). However, the definition of child trafficking in international standards, differs from the overall definition of TIP in two critical ways. First, the Palermo Protocol (2000) defines trafficking in children as "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation." No violence, deception, coercion or other fraudulent means are required for a child to be considered a victim of trafficking. Second, the concept of exploitation in child trafficking is broader. Besides the Palermo Protocol (2000) defined a child to be any person under the age of 18.

Child trafficking violates human rights standards as defined by international law, like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989). Trafficked children are usually denied education and salary, but they are also physically, psychosocially and sexually exploited, exposed to harmful working conditions, diseases and early pregnancy (U.S. Department of State, 2007). They are exposed to inhumane living conditions, poor sanitation, inadequate nutrition, poor personal hygiene, occupational hazards and general lack of quality health care (Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). Hence, child trafficking is extremely harmful for the children and their human development. According to End of Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism (ECPAT) Report, (2005) trafficked children suffer

from physical and psychological health issues such as fear, depression, low self-esteem and self-worth, poor social skills, anger and hostility, inability to trust and build meaningful relationships in later life, blurred roles and boundaries, pseudo maturity, sexualized behaviour, guilt, shame, substance misuse, self-harm (including suicide), post-traumatic stress disorder and physical disabilities (ECPAT, 2005).

According to the ILO (2015) the impact of child trafficking is wide-ranging and long-lasting on the community and on the country's development as a whole. Further, ILO (2015) pointed that there are severe social and economic impacts on national level, on the community, as well as on the child and her/his family. Trafficked children lack education and even if they are rescued they have physical and psychological injuries or diseases and as a result unable to study and develop their skills for their later life. The implication here is that potential productive workers are lost from economy retarding the development of the nation and communities. The children may also need health care and rehabilitation which needs resources and funding from their communities and the government. ILO (2015) as argued that victims of child labour are more prone to become less skilled, poorly paid workers, or alternatively remain unemployed. In countries like Kenya unemployed youths are also subjected to radicalization and thus child labour might negatively correlate also with security (ILO, 2015).

Most people are lured out of their communities as a result of multiple interrelated factors including social, economic and cultural at the personal, community and or national levels. This makes trafficking require a comprehensive and human right based approach to manage it (Chuang, 2006; UNODC, 2008; Kraemer, 2013; Rafferty, 2013; Adesina, 2014). In addition to the fundamental factors, the growing levels of global networks and markets contribute to the fueling of trafficking across the globe for known reasons, notably abuse and exploitation (Gallagher, 2009; Huang, 2017; Smith, 2017). This is because of how globalization tends to make criminals stronger through networks, giving them an upper hand over systems that fight them (Danailova-Trainor & Belser, 2006).

International Organization of Labour (2008) estimates that 1.2 million children are trafficked every year worldwide, but there are no exact numbers of trafficked children. UNODC (2008) argued that human trafficking may either be; cross-border or Internal trafficking. Further, even though there relatively much data on trafficking in human beings in South Eastern Europe there is far less documentation available on the European Union and other Western European countries, and even less information on Central Asia. Equally important is the fact that it is extremely difficult to quantify how many children are affected, given the challenges in identifying children who have been trafficked and the lack of reliable data-collection systems. An analysis of the flows and patterns of cross-border trafficking indicates that European countries are important destination countries in the trafficking chain, but are also countries of origin and transit (UNODC, 2008)

Generally, not much attention has been paid to addressing human trafficking and more so child trafficking issues in Africa (Zimmerman, Hossain & Watts, 2011). This is despite the implication that this problem may have had on individual victim's lives, their immediate families, their communities and even the in their countries. According to UNODC (2016), in the numerous trafficking flows within and across these Sub-Sahara African countries, majority of victims (64%) are children (UNODC, 2016).

The U.S. Department of State (2013) estimates that in Africa between 600,000-800,000 people, are trafficked every year and 80% are women. Africa has high levels of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment making the population vulnerable to exploitation and especially human trafficking and crime and traffickers are usually ready to exploit them. Poverty, lack of employment, education opportunities and insecurity are main push factors while availability of employment, education opportunities and economic wellbeing are the main pull factors Child trafficking is a widespread and rampant problem in Eastern Africa where Kenya is a source, transit, and destination country for children subjected to trafficking (U.S. Department of State, 2013). Kenya is affected by both domestic and international child trafficking, but domestic trafficking is more rampant (CRADLE, 2014).

Domestic labor is the main form of human trafficking in Kenya, with 41.3% of Kenyan children ages 10-14 years of age being exploited for cheap labor within the country. Once taken, these children are put to work in industries such as agriculture, fishing, cattle herding, street vending and begging. Kenyans are also frequently lured to the Middle East and Europe with the promise of well-paid employment. After their arrival, their passports and identification documents are often confiscated and their wages withheld, leaving them at the mercy of their employer (HaartKenya, 2022). In 2020, an international NGO reported there are between 35,000 and 40,000 victims of commercial sex, including child sex tourism, in Kenya, of which approximately 19,000 are children; most perpetrators are Kenyan and, to a lesser extent, foreign tourists (U.S. Department of State, 2021).

Kenya Police annual report (2016) noted the increase of people who have been trafficked in Mombasa, Busia and Eastleigh where girls are forced into prostitution. Vehicles carrying Miraa (Khat) to Somali often come back with young girls who end up in Eastleigh either forced to early marriages, prostitution or domestic labour. Further, 70.5% of trafficked children for domestic labour are sourced from the rural areas while 21.6% are from urban areas. (National Crime Research Center, 2015). Assessment conducted in Nairobi Mathare and Mukuru indicates that children are trafficked for various reason like domestic work i.e to work as house helps, wash clothes for a fee in the neighbouring areas. Further more victims also engage in prostitution where they are strategically placed in Chang'aa dens to attract customers. Some parents and guardian also gave out their children for early marriage and sexual exploitation for money. Other reasons why children were recruited was street begging, petty crime, carrying guns on behalf of criminals, street vending and scrap metal collection (Child trafficking in urban Kenya, 2014).

Despite this observation there is little that has been done by way of research to ascertain the implication of this problem to either, victims, their immediate families, the community in which they live and to the whole country, hence, the rational for this study.

PROBLEM ANALYSIS

Kenya has become a source, transit, and destination country for children subjected to trafficking, whether domestically or internationally. Despite the available legal frameworks such as Counter Trafficking in Persons Act (2010) and the Kenya's National Plan of Action for Combating Human Trafficking 2013-2017 (Ministry of Labour, 2015), which implement Kenya's obligations under Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, child trafficking is still rampant in various forms. This study

however intends to dig deeper and establish the prevalent forms of child trafficking in Westland Sub- County in Nairobi County, Kenya. Further, even though this problem is on the rise, the victim rates in Kenya are still unknown. Besides, few studies that have been conducted in this area however have not been able to pull out the implication of this problem only at societal level. It is upon this background that this study is out to fill this gap, hence the rationale for this study.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a mixed method design paradigm. According to Kothari (2010), a mixed method design is best used in contexts involving reporting, analyzing and describing the phenomenon under the study. Further, the design can be used to examine, retrospectively, the effects of a naturally occurring phenomenon. The study comprised of 45 adult respondents and 5 children's respondents who purposefully selected to inform the study based on their knowledge and experience of security issues in South Sudan. Interview method was used to collect data from the respondents (Silverman, 2001).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Prevalence and Forms of Child Trafficking Cases in Westland Sub County

The first objective sought to determine the prevalence and forms of child trafficking in Westland Sub-County, Kenya. First, the study looked at the Prevalence of the problem then looked at the different forms of child trafficking. On average, the study indicated a monthly mean of 11 trafficked children. According to the study however, the number could even be more. As a respondent for example indicated,

"Child trafficking is a crime which is clandestinely run by cartels. More often than not we get reports of even more than 10 children suspected of being trafficked and locked inside a building somewhere but before our intervention, the traffickers detect so fast and transfer their residence to unknown destinations. It is like they also have very organized informers. It is possible that they were destined to another country. This is because Kenya is said to be a source, transit and also a destination for trafficked children in East Africa"

The above finding lends support to CRADLE, (2014) report that child trafficking is a widespread and rampant problem in Eastern Africa where Kenya is a source, transit, and destination country for children subjected to trafficking (U.S. Department of State, 2013). Kenya is affected by both domestic and international child trafficking, but domestic trafficking is more rampant (CRADLE, 2014). Additionally, the above finding supports Smith et al., (2009) assertion that due to its hidden nature, it is almost impossible to get the exact statistics or appreciate the full scale and scope of the problem though this does not negate the fact that the exact global statistics of trafficked victims may be alarming.

Forms of Child Trafficking Prevalent in West Lands Sub County:

The study established two major forms of child trafficking; Domestic and international. However, according to 70% of the respondents the most prevalent form of child trafficking in West lands Sub County is domestic child labour. Further, according to 90% of the respondents, the main forms of child trafficking in West lands Sub County include; labour exploitation, Child sexual exploitation, early or forced marriages and begging. As explained by 80% of the respondent, Girls, and also younger boys, are mainly trafficked to domestic work. Girls are

forced to do domestic work such as cleaning, cooking and older boys are trafficked to work in farms doing jobs such as tilling, harvesting, milking, herding. Children are also trafficked to collect scrap metal or to work in service industries; small shops, matatus industry and working in restaurants. Children, both girls, and boys, who are trafficked for sex work, prostitution, and also to produce pornographic materials. Majority are taken to Kenyan coast in sex tourism industry. Girls are trafficked as brides inside their own regions or to other regions nationally and internationally. Early marriage of children and adolescents below the age of 18 is still a common cultural practice in Kenya. Girls are trafficked as brides especially from communities where female genital mutilation is practiced. Children are trafficked to earn money for others by begging or selling goods on the street in urban areas. This practice is rampant across the country whereby children with disabilities are exploited by being forced to beg the whole day and the money they collect is taken away. A significant number of respondents (5%) cited other forms of child trafficking. For example, a respondent stated, in some cases children, especially albinos, are trafficked for organ removal. The organs are used for transplants or for ritual purposes. Accorded to them, children are also trafficked for illicit adoption usually informally, both, nationally and internationally. As argued by HAART Kenya (2015), the main form of child trafficking was child labour. Other forms included; sex work, prostitution, and also to produce pornographic materials; forced marriages, street beggars and organ harvesting. Children are also trafficked to collect scrap metal or to work in service industries; small shops, Matatus or restaurants.

Factors Responsible for Child Trafficking in Westland Sub-County

The second objective sought to establish the factors responsible for child trafficking in Westland Sub-County, Kenya. Several factors were said to responsible for child trafficking in Westland's Sub County. The factors included; high demand for women in sex trafficking (60%), economic hardship (90%), political instability (20%), demand for cheap domestic and agricultural labor (80%) poverty (100%), and demand from human organ harvesting sector (50%). Main drivers however, were; poverty, economic hardship, demand for cheap domestic and agricultural labour, and high demand for women in sex trafficking. As most respondents stated, Trafficking is a complex phenomenon that is often driven or influenced by local conditions that make populations want to migrate in search of better conditions. These conditions include such as poverty, oppression, lack of human rights, lack of social or economic opportunity, dangers from conflict or instability and similar conditions. Some parents sell their children, not just for the money, but also in the hope that their children will escape a situation of chronic poverty and move to a place where they will have a better life and more opportunities. The parents also hope the child will get some income and send some assistance back home. If children are not attending school due to lack of school fees such children are easily lured by traffickers to urban areas with a promise of education. Lack of adequate legislation and of political will and commitment to enforce existing legislation or mandates are other factors that facilitate child trafficking in Kenya".

Arguably these factors may be broadly categorized into macro level factors of Social, Economic and political as postulated by Bales and Trodd (2009) and Weissbrodt and Collins (2006) that traffickers look for people who are susceptible to coercion into the human trafficking industry. They further aver that those people tend to be migrants, fleeing their homes either because of economic hardship, natural disasters, conflict or political instability.

Effects of Child Trafficking on Victims in Westland Sub-County, Kenya

The third objective sought to establish the effects of child trafficking on Victims in Westland Sub-County, Kenya. The study sought both the perspectives of adult respondents and from the victim respondents. According to both perspectives that were sought, the effects on victims include; include Low self-esteem and self-worth, inability to trust and build meaningful relationships in later life, Substance misuse, and post-traumatic stress disorder all rated at 90%. Other effects of child trafficking on victims include; fear, depression, poor social skills, anger and hostility, blurred roles and boundaries, sexualized behavior, pseudo maturity and self-harm all rated at 80%. The above finding indicates that besides the irreparable social and psychological damage done on children the society is likely to be losing a whole generation. These findings indicate a trend of an opaque future for child trafficking victims. The implication here is that child trafficking has infringed on victim's basic human rights particularly their rights to socio-economic life and also that of education to those who were to drop out of school because of poverty to seek for gainful employment to support their poor families. As indicated by most respondent's child trafficking infringe on the basic human rights of the victims such as the right to liberty and security, right to freedom of association and movement, right to adequate standard of living, protection from degrading or inhuman treatment or punishment, right to be free from gendered violence and slavery. These finding lends support to findings by Fitzgibbon (2003), ILO (2008), Alexander, (2015) Omelaniuk (2005), and Usman (2014) who argued that child trafficking infringe on the basic human rights and robs off their self-identity and dignity that may also harm their human development.

The Impact of Child Trafficking in Westland Sub-County, Kenya

The fourth objective sought to assess the impact of child trafficking on victims in Westland's Sub-County, Kenya. The variables of interest that were examined include; educational impacts, economic impacts, health impacts and societal impacts and national security impacts. The Key informants were the strongest voice in this.

Educational Impacts:

According to 98% of all the respondents, child trafficking destroys children's lives that end their education. Consequently, they end up being illiterate and unable to acquire decent jobs due to lack education and marketable skills. Once deprived of an education, they get trapped in a life of poverty and slavery. As a consequence, their families and communities perpetually suffer the consequences of illiteracy. This finding lends support to finding by ILO, (2008) that because some trafficked victims spent most of their childhood begging and other forms of domestic labour instead of being in school, they are robbed of their education. Families therefore perpetuate their own poverty by discouraging intellectual achievement which is necessary for upward mobility (crockenberg, 1983). Trafficking of children therefore end up illiterate and unable to acquire decent jobs due to lack education and marketable skills.

Economic Impacts:

According to the respondents, through child trafficking potential productive workers are lost from economy retarding the development of the nation and that of communities. Further, trafficked children are who most often than not are victims of child labour are more prone to become less skilled, poorly paid workers, or alternatively remain unemployed. They return home old, exhausted and or tired, and also without skills to support their economic growth. They end up in a cycle of poverty, where poverty causes poverty" This finding lends support to

ILO, (2015) report that as a result of child trafficking countries lose productive workers, or lose skilled labour and as such affect the development of a country. Further, the government spend more money in anti-trafficking measures and also in rescuing, care, protection and repatriation of victims of trafficking. This is too costly to Kenya's economy.

Health Impacts:

According to this study, there are significant health impacts for victims while they are being transported and when they have reached their destination. At times the journey exposes trafficked victims to injury and even death. In some cases, overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, and shortages of food and water increase the risk of spreading infectious disease. Some who are trafficked for the sex industry also experience increased risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STIs) because they are denied the choice to use condoms. Trafficked HIV victims in the long run introduce HIV to the broader population. This finding concurs with ILO, (2015) report and GSDRC, (2011) report that trafficked HIV victims put at risk wider populations, which according to this study this may lead to decimation of the whole population in the community.

Societal Impacts:

According to this study, child trafficking results to broken society's social bonds; attachment to social and emotional ties; commitment of both time, energy and self to community values; involvement to conventional activities of the community and family; and finally encroaches on the belief system of the victims interfering with some of their legitimate value systems. This leads to the breakdown of families, neglect of children, vulnerable members of the society and the aged. Because of diffusion of strange behavior patterns victims of trafficking are stigmatized when they return home and most of them are looked down upon. Most often than not they end up in depression, substance and drug abuse. This finding lends support to social bond theorists (Schroeder, 2015; Hirschi, 1969 & Bellocchi, 2019) that the more the individual is separated from the groups to which s/he belongs, (family) the less he depends on them, the more he consequently depends only on himself and recognizes no other rules of conduct than what is founded on his private interests. The result may be irreparable social damages on the person or victim that led to deviance and other forms of unacceptable behavior.

National Security Impacts:

According to this study, trafficked children are often recruited into criminal enterprises like terrorism and drug trafficking. In addition to human rights violations, the traffickers form armed criminal syndicates to protect their illegal business thwarting government efforts to protect its vulnerable members of the society especially women and children. By implication, traffickers' armed criminal syndicate eventually may undermine the safety and security of our security forces and that of a nation. As agreed by 98 % of the respondents, human trafficking was revealed to have a complex and interlocking negative impacts across human, social, political and economic arenas with regard to financial consequences in deterring crimes and all forms of insecurity especially those related to border security controls (Morrison, 2002; Clark, 2006; Shelley, 2003).

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the prevalence of child trafficking in Westland's Sub County and its net effects on Kenya as a source, transit and destination Centre for trafficked children, Law enforcement officers and Interpol should scratch deeper and up their game in order to crash the cartels and cut the problem at the nib. Whereas the main driver of child trafficking is poverty, the government in partnership with NGOs and donors should fight poverty at all costs. This may be through wealth and job creation. Due to the irreparable social and psychological costs of child trafficking on children the society is likely to be losing a whole generation, that paint an opaque future for child trafficking victims. At this rate the government should look for ways to partner with other stake holders; churches, community health workers, and mental health experts in a bid to assist in psychosocial treatment and rehabilitation of victims of child trafficking. Last but not least, to mitigate on the problem of child trafficking and its impacts the government should first treat as a national disaster and hand it as such.

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