



**UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE**

**HUMAN TRAFFICKING ACROSS A BORDER IN NIGERIA: EXPERIENCES OF  
YOUNG WOMEN WHO HAVE SURVIVED TRAFFICKING**

**BY: KEMIFISAYO OYEBANJI (3575899)**

**UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE**

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**SUPERVISOR: DR. SISA NGABAZA**

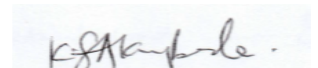
**NOVEMBER 2017**

## Declaration

I declare that “*Human Trafficking Across a Border Town in Nigeria; Experiences of Young Women who have Survived Trafficking*” has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Kemi Fisayo Oyebanji

14/03/18



**Full Name**

**Date**

**Signature**



## **Abstract**

Human trafficking is a global issue that most countries have battled to control and combat in recent times. It is exploitative, abusive and violates human rights. Research showing the prevalence of human trafficking in mostly underdeveloped and developing countries with slack border controls and ineffective immigration activities seem to foreground women as victims in most cases. Although men, women and children are all prone to trafficking, young women and girls are more vulnerable due to political, economic and social factors. This study focuses on the experiences of young women who survived trafficking. Working within a qualitative feminist framework, this study explores the lived experiences of trafficked young women across a border in Nigeria. Five participants aged twenty to twenty-five were selected through convenience and snowballing sampling. Narrative thematic analysis was used as a methodology for data analysis. Findings from this study clearly show multiple factors which contribute to young women's vulnerability to trafficking. Some of the factors included family instability, feminization of poverty and gender inequality, which saw male children preferred over their female counterparts. Low levels of education and lack of care and support from the family further emerged as a source of vulnerability to trafficking for young women due to their low level of education. Gender and sexuality played a role in the reason for trafficking in this case, because all of the survivors were trafficked for the purpose of commercial sex work.

## **Key Words**

Trafficking, Vulnerability, Gender, Survivors, Intersectionality, Exploitation, Nigeria, Feminist, Research, Young Women.

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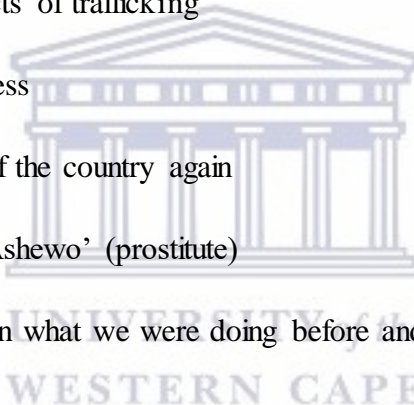
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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE OF STUDY

In December 2009, I travelled to Nigeria for a holiday and paid a visit to my sister who is one of the teachers in one of the secondary schools in the community. As we spoke, she told me a horrid story about a student who was struggling financially and was tricked into human trafficking by going across the border to make quick money. I was interested in this story and further discovered that this was not a new occurrence, especially among young students, and had resulted in many young girls dropping out of school.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) considers Nigeria as one of the top eight countries of origin for human trafficking globally (Cherti *et al.* 2013:4). Although men, women and children are exposed to, and have been victims of trafficking, the prevalent rate of trafficking is, however, higher for young women due to several intersecting factors in the Nigerian society. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is an organisation that provides global assistance to trafficked persons. In 2011, IOM provided individual assistance to 5,498 trafficked persons (IOM 2012). More than half (62%) of these persons were adults aged 18 and over, whereas around 40 per cent of cases (36%) were minors and about two per cent (2%) unknown. Two-thirds (62%) of these individuals were female, a little bit more than one third were males (37%), and the sex of the individual is unknown in just one per cent of cases (1%) (IOM 2011:6).

Although the local, state and the federal government of Nigeria have put lots of efforts in place to address the unending issue of human trafficking in the society, much still needs to be achieved in order to combat the human trafficking phenomenon. Nigeria has acquired the reputation of being one of the leading African countries in human trafficking, with cross-border and internal trafficking constituting the vast majority of illegal trafficking (UNESCO 2006). Most stakeholders such as NGOs and the Government of Nigeria, however, contribute towards fighting against the unremitting act of human trafficking, but focus mainly on the preventive side. There are several awareness programmes in place to raise awareness and educate the general public to prevent future occurrences of trafficking. Despite all of these, human trafficking rates in Nigeria remain high.

The fight against human trafficking is all encompassing, involving several stakeholders, survivors, multilateral organizations, NGOs, donors, academics, and individuals (TIP 2016:17-18). Activists, on the other hand, have also made the global agenda for fighting human trafficking popular. These activists have captured the attention of the general public, government, media and politicians with several stories of innocent women and girls who suffered in captivity, exploited and abused. With such a perception of reality dominating the public understanding of what trafficking is, researchers and data producers have been struggling to keep up with this unending phenomenon (Tydlum 2010:1).

Empirical research of this nature with gender perspectives is essential, because research studies on human trafficking have met with several challenges. Some of these challenges include the unreliability of data and generalized statistics of quantitative studies, which has affected the measures to address human trafficking in the society. Due to the inaccurate data on human trafficking, emphasis should not be attached to the numbers provided by both governmental and non-governmental organizations, as they lack accuracy (Feingold 2011). This clearly indicates that combating human trafficking by using the estimated total number of victims trafficked will not be as effective as addressing the issue from the source. Therefore, research studies on experiences of trafficked survivors will provide a better understanding of the dynamics, processes, and the modus operandi involved in human trafficking.

This feminist qualitative research aims to produce meaning from lived experiences rather than from figures obtained in a quantitative survey. It is common knowledge that, due to the hidden nature of human trafficking, trafficked survivors are often difficult to reach due to their remote location and their marginalized status in society. Research studies on survivors of human trafficking are, however, indispensable because understanding the characteristics, location and the nature of vulnerability is essential to achieve effective anti-trafficking policies (World Bank 2009). Therefore, research studies on human trafficking cannot be considered superfluous because of the continuous rise in reported cases of human trafficking across major borders.

This study is about echoing survivors' voices in the society. Therefore, a feminist qualitative research method is most suitable for this study, as this study seeks to understand the social realities and impacts of lived experiences on survivors and the society. One of the key principles of a feminist approach to research is that it questions or provides an alternative or counter paradigm to traditional positivist methods of research, which exploit and impose

hierarchies between the researcher and the researched. Feminist research is an inclusive research that looks at various kinds of differences that the mainstream research has neglected.

The motivation behind this study was borne out of the fact that young women are the target market in trafficking due to their vulnerabilities and gendered positions in society. Intersecting economic and societal values placed on women shape their vulnerabilities. The rationale behind this study was to bring up the marginalized voices of survivors of trafficking, foregrounding their subjective experiences on how factors such as poverty, lack of access to information, and illiteracy all intersected in their vulnerability to being trafficked. It is therefore essential that trafficking of women becomes a feminist issue. This study seeks to understand the nature of trafficking of young women, explore the diverse reasons of women's vulnerabilities as shown through their lived experiences, as well as theorize these accordingly. While the agenda to prevent human trafficking of young women is an ongoing process, it is also valuable to investigate how and why young women specifically, are more vulnerable to being trafficked. This study focused on lived experiences of trafficking among young women who have survived trafficking.

This feminist study aims to amplify the voices of survivors in order to create awareness around their disempowerment due to trafficking; influence social change towards abating or mitigating human trafficking; educate and improve awareness of the issue and the associated problems in society; and help in generating policies concerned with how to stop trafficking. This study will therefore contribute towards the ongoing discourse, and fight against trafficking of women and young girls not only in Nigeria but globally.

## **1.2. HUMAN TRAFFICKING: DEFINITIONS**

Several scholars have identified various forms of trafficking. These include trafficking for “forced labour, sex trafficking, bonded labour, debt bondage, involuntary servitude, forced child labour, child soldiers and child sex trafficking” (Elezi 2011:77-91). These forms of trafficking have unique characteristics of involuntary servitude or exploitation enforced on victims either by deceit, coercion or force. Due to the different forms and understanding of trafficking, there is confusion in what constitutes the appropriate definition of what human trafficking is or is not by different stakeholders, academics, scholars, researchers and NGOs. Hence, the first complex nature of human trafficking includes its various definitions.

For a group of scholars, human trafficking is a process of recruiting people from their native country to other countries for forced labour and exploitation (Carling 2005; Chukwuma, Osakwe & Ekpeyong 2002; Akeem 2011; World Bank 2009). For other definitions, the purpose of trafficking is categorized and specific. Human trafficking is defined as a process of people being recruited in their community and country of origin and transported to the destination where they are exploited for purposes of forced labour, prostitution, domestic servitude, and other forms of exploitation (World Bank 2009). Other definitions emphasize means of recruitment and the purpose of trafficking. The Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (2009) defines human trafficking as the illegal trade in human beings through abduction, threat, deception, fraud, threat or force, or sexual exploitation, and forced labour.

Human trafficking studies are also being categorized under illegal immigration and migration. This has been described in the context of slavery-like practices which include transit or transfer, and categorizes it under migration issues, thereby silencing its exploitative aspect (Quirk 2012). Of relevance to this study is the definition by Bales (2007) who sees human trafficking as “a relationship in which one person is controlled by violence through violence, the threat of violence, or psychological coercion, has lost free will and free movement, is exploited economically, and paid nothing beyond subsistence” (Bales 2007:1). This definition is all encompassing as it speaks to the act, means, impact and purpose of trafficking.

Although, there are several definitions of human trafficking, this research will adopt the internationally accepted definition in Article 3 of the *United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children*, supplementing the *United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* (Trafficking in Persons Protocol), which defines trafficking in persons as constituting the following three elements:

- (a) “trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other means of the abuse of power of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or forms of sexual

exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (UN 2000:2).

(b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used (UN 2000a: 2).

(c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in persons” even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article (UN 2000a: 2).

This study adopts this definition of trafficking because it is all encompassing. This definition embraces how traffickers recruit their victims, the means in which victims are taken away, and the purpose of trafficking.

### **1.3. A GLOBAL OVERVIEW ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

Human trafficking is a global issue that affects every part of the world. It impacts all the countries involved and this has raised concerns from different stakeholders in order to combat this fast growing and uncontrollable phenomenon. Human trafficking has emerged over the past three decades as an issue of considerable concern for the international community (Pharaoh 2006). Several studies have been carried out to understand its nature and characteristics in order to develop a better understanding of its modus operandi, which will help in developing anti-trafficking strategies and policies (Adepoju 2005; Baykotan 2014; Farrell *et al.* 2008; Kruger 2010; ILO 2013).

Human trafficking, as a flourishing business venture, has prompted concerns from different stakeholders because of its exploitative nature. Trafficking in human beings has been subject to increasing international attention in recent years. Estimates show that several hundred thousand to several million people are trafficked annually, generating billions of dollars in profit for traffickers. Recent studies suggest that a significant percentage of trafficking victims are men and boys but the majority of the victims are women and girls, and these victims are

subjected to both sex and labour trafficking (Marshall 2001; Hyland 2001; Trafficking in Persons Report 2013).

Given the efforts made by different stakeholders to curb human trafficking in the society, one begins to wonder why, despite these myriad efforts, it is still so highly prevalent. Presumably, the war against human trafficking remains challenging because of its complexities and dynamics. To support the latter, conflicting data, coupled with several undiscovered cases, results in unreliable statistics, which hinder policy-makers from effectively addressing this issue (Farrell *et al.* 2008; Kruger 2010). Additionally, difficulties in correctly identifying who are trafficked persons have resulted in a series of confusion from different angles and this has become a challenge to both the law enforcement officers and the communities. Moreover, studies indicate that in some jurisdictions the police were unclear about how to interpret both federal and state definitions of human trafficking (Farrell *et al.* 2015; Farrell & Pfeiffer 2014). Confusion with regards to the proper identification of trafficked victims, therefore, is one of the reasons why research studies in human trafficking is challenging and produces unreliable data.

The complex nature of human trafficking extends to the confusion and ongoing debate between human trafficking and human smuggling. In order to give clarity to this, it has been noted in quite a lot of literature that human trafficking is different from human smuggling and the two should not be confused or interchanged (Salt 2001). Human smuggling is the illegal entry into a country, which involves a smuggler and the smuggled person. Human trafficking, on the other hand, is the movement (legal or illegal) of a person or group of persons within or into another country by abduction or deception involving a third party. In human smuggling, the relationship between the smuggler and the smuggled ends once the smuggled has successfully entered the country of destination. In the case of human trafficking, the relationship continues. Human trafficking further involves the coercion of the person into unknown exploitative conditions (See Campana & Varese 2016; Hosken, 2006; Pharoah, 2006).

Key debates on human trafficking seem to reiterate that deception, coercion, or fraud is used to lure the individual and the purpose for the act is exploitation (See Pharoah, 2006). Most of the literature on trafficking indicates that human trafficking is mostly conceptualized as forced or illegal migration and that human smuggling is not exploitative in nature but rather the human smuggler uses manipulative ways to exploit the smuggled (See Anuhime, 2013). To give

further clarity to these two phenomena, the difference between trafficking and migrant smuggling is the purpose for which a person is recruited.

Trafficking for forced labour has been identified as an unrecognized crime, while sexual exploitation is the most dominant reason for trafficking, according to the Eurostat, European Commission of 2013 statistics. The report further highlighted that 62% of victims were trafficked for sexual exploitation, and 25% for forced labour. This was further corroborated by the UNODC (2012) that 58% of victims were recruited for sexual exploitation globally, out of which Europe has the highest percentage of 62%. Recent studies state that, despite the relentless efforts to combat trafficking, the crime is continuous and growing due to advanced digital communication technology (internet) which the traffickers utilize to their advantage to contact their victims (See Sykiotou 2007; Hughes 2014). This has placed Europe as the largest region for trafficking for sexual exploitation.

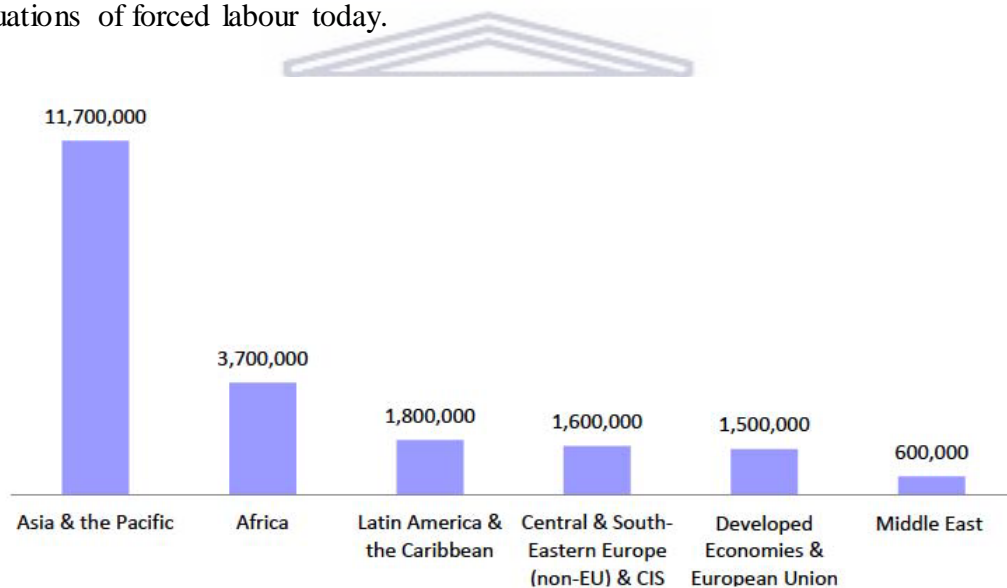
Another complexity of human trafficking globally is that prostitution and human trafficking are clubbed together. This has affected the effectiveness of efforts put into addressing human trafficking globally. Prostitution and human trafficking are two different issues and should therefore not be confused or clubbed together because each of these phenomena will require a different approach to address them. From a feminist's point of view, "prostitution involves a commercial transaction and trafficking is a process whereby a third party facilitates an individual's involvement in sexual commerce" (Weitzer 2011:1343). From an economist's point of view, voluntary prostitutes choose to sell sex because it is lucrative, or find themselves "forced" to do so by economic circumstances, while involuntary prostitutes are coerced into prostitution by traffickers who extort their income (Lee & Persson 2015:3). Clearly demarcating these two phenomena is the voluntary act and consent involved in prostitution, and the forceful and non-conscientious act involved in human trafficking.

Trafficking has been identified as a developmental issue as it affects mostly the poor regions and poor countries of the world. However, trafficking in women has also been identified as the major component of global trafficking. A gender and rights-based approach to developmental issues like trafficking is essential as it promotes general human wellness (D'Cunha 2002). The Social Development Notes of 2009 further emphasized that women are the majority of trafficking victims in Europe and Central Asia, and sexual exploitation is the most common form of human trafficking in this region. Also victims of human trafficking in Latin America and the Caribbean are predominantly girls and adult women who are trafficked for the purpose

of sexual exploitation and domestic servitude. The study therefore concludes that trafficking for sexual exploitation is a common form of trafficking reported, yet trafficking for domestic servitude and forced labour are also noticeable (Social Development Notes 2009).

#### 1.4. HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is the epicentre of human trafficking. In this region, human trafficking can be domestic as well as transnational (Baykotan 2014). Over the past decades, SSA has gained popularity over the issue of human trafficking and has been the field of study for researchers, scholars and several organizations. The ILO's (International Labour Organization) Global Estimate of Forced Labour, which includes cases that could be considered slavery or human trafficking, suggests that as many as 3.7 million Africans may live in situations of forced labour today.



Source: ILO, Estimate of Forced Labour, 2012, p15

The above figures place Africa as the second of the world's regions in terms of forced labour prevalence. This indicates that forced labour practices in Africa are common, and concerted efforts need to be put in place to curb this concern. The general survey of ILO (2012) indicated that forced labour encompasses slavery, practices similar to slavery, debt bondage and serfdom, and trafficking in persons for the purpose of exploitation, as defined by the Palermo Protocol (ILO 2012:19-20; ILO 2013:35). Comparatively, Asia has been identified as one of the most



vulnerable regions prone to human trafficking, especially for sex work. Social inequality, gender inequality and gender-based mistreatment, coupled with poverty, push women and girls into trafficking in Nepal and South Asia. There is also a lack of political commitment and policy, which affect the anti-trafficking interventions in this region (Simkhada 2008).

Although trafficking occurs internally within the border of a country, of high significance is intraregional trafficking in West, Central and South Africa, where victims of the West and Central Africa regions are trafficked to other neighbouring countries such as Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia and Togo (Social development notes 2009). In Southern Africa, the victims identified by the state authorities are from Mozambique, Malawi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Zambia and Zimbabwe as well as from East, South-East and South Asia (Social development notes 2009).

The majority of the countries constituting the Sub-Saharan Africa region are developing countries with economic and political instabilities. These factors increase vulnerabilities to human trafficking. Political situations, conflicts and civil war are determinants of the level of trafficking and reasons for migration in most countries (Donato *et al.* 2006). The International Migration Organization (IOM) studies in 2002 and 2003 in Sub-Saharan Africa concluded that the Southern African region is a fertile ground for traffickers who capitalize on the vulnerabilities caused by war, poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment.

Trafficked individuals from developing regions such as Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, India and Eastern Europe confirmed that they left with their trafficker from their rural, agricultural communities in order to make more money (See Aronowitz 2001; Dottridge 2008; Laczko & Gozdzik 2005; Thanh-Dam 2006). The categories of migrants reported are skilled and unskilled professionals, refugees and displaced persons. These examples emphasize the fact that not only the marginalized and illiterates are vulnerable to being trafficked, but all categories of persons with the quest to seek greener pastures are all affected (Adepoju 2005).

Providing another view, Onuoha (2011) agrees that globalization may be one of the factors of human trafficking in Africa, but not the primary factor that lays the foundation of human trafficking. He concludes that the character of the state in Africa and its leadership lack the capacity to effectively protect the human rights of potential victims. Therefore, the solution to human trafficking and the prevention of violations of human rights has to address the character of the state in Africa and the type of political leadership common in the region. In terms of causality, it is commonly asserted that 'poverty and tradition' are the major causes of forced

labour in Africa, with unscrupulous employers and weak state capacity or regulatory failure also cited as significant (ILO 2013).

Race and class are evident factors in human trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). To exemplify this viewpoint, some authors indicate that the aspect of exploitation of labour and bodies are unpopular in the majority of human trafficking campaigns, as there is a gap in hierarchy that creates an image of “the saviour and those that need to be saved, while bolstering the image of a compassionate, benevolent West” (See Kempadoo 2015:18). Furthermore, it is suggested that the make-believe rescue fantasy, created by the benevolent civilized white subjects in their various rescue interventions in the developing countries, give the ‘rescuers’ a sense of satisfaction due to the psychic investment that is made in the process (Ahmed 2000; Hooks 1992; Kapoor 2013). Sex trafficking is grounded in inequality between the rich and the poor and it is further marked by poverty, gender, and age (Kempadoo 2015) and this will be unpacked in the next chapter.

## **1.5. HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN WEST AFRICA - NIGERIA**

West Africa, one of the developing regions of the world, is greatly impacted by human trafficking. In West Africa, Nigeria has been highlighted or brought into disrepute over the issue of human trafficking. Nigeria is greatly impacted by human trafficking because of its multiple roles as a country of origin, transit and destination for human trafficking (See Maduagwu 2004). The geography of trafficking in West Africa is as complex as the trafficking routes in this region. Destinations for trafficked Nigerians include the neighbouring West African countries and Middle Eastern countries (Saudi Arabia) (UNESCO 2005).

History confirms that human trafficking in Nigeria dates back to the colonial era, which was the slave trade period in the history of Nigeria (See Obadina 2000). Portuguese seamen first landed in Africa in the fourth decade of the fifteenth century. Despite the abolition of slave trade in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, slavery-like practices of moving people are still ongoing, with women in most cases as victims. In its bid to boost its economy, Nigeria, like most African countries in the 1980s, adopted the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). The primary aims of the SAP were to liberalize the markets and create an environment for capital, goods and services in order to meet the needs of global capitalism (Lingam 2005). The population experienced adverse social changes, which affected the institutional and cultural structures that have shaped

the security of their livelihood for decades (Truong 2006). It was a period that witnessed decreased standards of living for most individuals and desperate measures needed for survival. Development of global markets, advancement in technology, communication and transport has accelerated the movement of people, products, money and criminals. The depressed economy of most developing countries like Benin and Nigeria created “a fertile ground for the gestation of crime networks and operations” (Nte 2011:71) and human trafficking is an example.

It is crucial to critically look at the population structure and demography of Nigeria in order to explore the position of women who are mostly affected by trafficking in this context. The table below shows Nigeria’s population at over 190 million (Country Meters Info 2017, Accessed 07/03/17).

Male Population	50.6%
Female Population	49.4%
Total Dependency Ratio	78.8%
Child Dependency Ratio	73.2%
Aged Dependency Ratio	5.6%
Literacy Rates – Male Adults	69.19%
Literacy Rates – Female Adults	49.68%

Data published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics accessed 07/03/17) [http:// available at : data.uis.unesco.org/](http://data.uis.unesco.org/)

As indicated in the above table, the population ratio of male to female is almost equal. It is, however, interesting to note that the dependency rate is unequal with a high children dependency ratio of almost three quarters of the population. A high children dependency rate places a high burden on women due to women’s gendered roles in the society. Women are less educated than men with literacy rates of about 50% in female adults, compared to almost 70% in males. This indicates inequality in education between men and women in Nigeria. With women’s low levels of education, it becomes challenging to compete with men for employment opportunities in the corporate sector, as indicated in the table below.

	Men	Women
Education	74.66%	56.8%
Access to bank loans	78.1%	21.9%
Primary school teachers	49.20%	50.80%
Secondary school teachers	61%	39%
Tertiary lecturers	82%	18%
Federal civil service	68.72%	31.28%
Federal ministry	67.6%	32.4%
Education literacy	74.66%	56.8%
Trafficking	17.56%	82.44%

Source: Patricia Eweama (2009) Presentation on gender statistics in Nigeria issues and challenges at UN Global Forum Accra Ghana.

The table above shows the gender gap in selected major work sectors in Nigeria. There is a low representation of women in formal work sectors of the Nigerian labour force except for primary school teachers with about 51%. The literacy rate in women is about 57% compared to 75% in men, while there is a high tendency of trafficking in women (82%). It is fair appraisal to say that, in the context of Nigeria, unemployment among women is high and labour markets are tightly structured, characterized by gender hierarchies (Truong 2006). The human trafficking rate of women is high in the table above as compared to men due to women's limited accessibility to better opportunities.

The Nigerian government recognizes the trafficking and thus includes it in Section 50 of the *Trafficking Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act, 2003* of Nigeria, defining it as:

...all acts and attempted acts involved in the recruitment, transportation within or across Nigerian borders, purchase, sale, transfer, receipt or harbouring of a person involving the use of deception, coercion or debt bondage for the purpose of placing or holding the person whether for or not in involuntary servitude (domestic, sexual or reproductive) in force or bonded labour, or in slavery-like conditions (Olateru-Olagbegi & Ikpeme 2003:23).

Despite a clear definition of what human trafficking is in the context of Nigeria, there is the misconception and equation of human trafficking with sex work, which has led to the criminalization of sex work in some parts of the country. This misconception has resulted in the misunderstanding of who is trafficked for sex work and who constitutes a sex worker (See Nwogu 2007). Although Section 276 of the Penal Code prohibits trafficking of women into Nigeria, it does not mention women being trafficked abroad from Nigeria (See Nwogu 2007). This section of the Penal Code does not address the issue of trafficking outside the borders of Nigeria, which is one of its flaws.

Human trafficking of women from West Africa (Nigeria) to Europe became visible in the 1980s (Truong 2006). This can be attributed to the pressures and desperation of women to earn more and meet the needs of their families and children's education (Truong 1998; Long 2004). UNICEF Fact Sheet, 2002, also reiterates that over 80% of African prostitutes in the sex trade in Italy are trafficked from Nigeria, and about 20% of the prostitutes working in Norway are Nigerian women (Landinfo 2006). The Central Office for the Fight Against Trafficking in France (OCTRETH), noted that thirty international prostitution rings were rounded up in France in 2006. It was discovered that fourteen rings came from Eastern Europe and the Balkans, eleven from Africa, out of which 8 rings were from Nigeria. In addition, out of 2,859 prostitutes arrested in Paris in 2005, 545 came from Africa, of which Nigerians constituted 63.3% (345 in number) (See Raoux-Cassin 2007).

A number of NGOs, government groups and individuals work towards combating trafficking in Nigeria. Examples include the first NGO, NACATIP (National Coalition against Trafficking in Persons), and the West African Coalition of Trafficking in Persons. These NGOs mainly sensitize, educate, and create awareness among others in addressing trafficking. However, despite all these efforts, young women continue to be among the most vulnerable populations to trafficking in Nigeria (Olajuwon 2008).

The Nigerian government has policies and measures to address this issue, which include tight immigration policies and border control. The control and prevention method has, however, been completely unsuccessful in curbing human trafficking due to lack of training and coordination that make the processes technically impossible (Fong 2004). In addition, the policies are not well implemented (Okojie 2009). The laws and policies in Nigeria are restrictive and seem to further exhibit a patriarchal attribute, which restricts women's movement and favours men as protective over women's movement (Ikpeze & Ifemeje 2015).

## **1.6. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF STUDY**

This study aims to explore the experiences of young women who have survived trafficking across a border in Nigeria.

## **1.7. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The main research question is:

What are the lived experiences of young women who have survived trafficking across a border, in Nigeria?

In attempting to answer this question, this exploration will unpack the following key questions:

- What are the intersecting factors that contribute to young women's vulnerability to trafficking?
- How were they trafficked?
- What were their experiences as trafficked young women?
- How has trafficking reportedly impacted on their lives?
- What were their experiences of reintegration into their families and communities?

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## **1.8. OUTLINE OF THESIS**

Chapter one gave a general background of why this study is of interest to me. The chapter also indicates the rationale and reasons for conducting this study in this particular context. A general context of human trafficking and the several conflicting definitions of what constitutes human trafficking were explored. This chapter also explored a general overview of human trafficking globally, human trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa as well as human trafficking in West Africa, in particular, Nigeria. The chapter further highlighted the research questions and aims of the study.

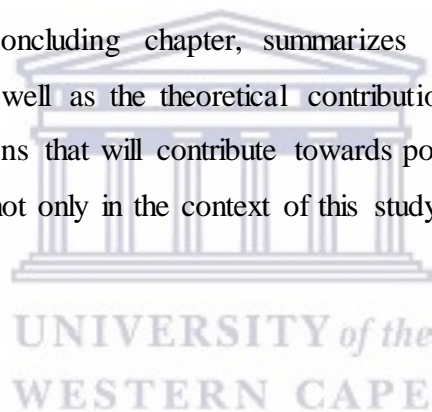
Chapter two critically explores reviews of relevant literature. In order to have a broad overview of scholarly work on human trafficking, an exploration of empirical feminist debates on human trafficking is unpacked in this chapter. As this is a study on young women who were survivors of trafficking, a general overview on young women's experiences of trafficking is explored

with the aim of providing a backdrop to the understanding of the narratives from the interviews. This chapter is concluded with factors that contribute to the exposure of young women to trafficking in Nigeria.

Chapter three considers qualitative feminist research methods as the methodological framework adopted for this study as well as the methodological processes and procedures, including ethical considerations, in the collection of data.

Chapter four presents the research findings from the narratives of the interviewed survivors of trafficking, but also draws on intersectionality as the theoretical framework for this study. The emergent themes are unpacked and discussed in three sections. The first section discusses the factors which exposed the interviewed young women to trafficking, the second section unpacks their experiences of trafficking, and the last section discusses the impact of trafficking on the young women after being rescued.

Chapter five, which is the concluding chapter, summarizes the findings, methodological contribution of the study, as well as the theoretical contribution of the study. The chapter concludes with recommendations that will contribute towards policy intervention efforts in the trafficking of young women, not only in the context of this study, but also globally.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking, in different forms, occurs all over the world with varied contributory factors that adversely affect the victims, their family members, community and countries at large. It is a fact that men, women and children are exposed to human trafficking and are trafficked especially from underdeveloped, and developing countries to the developed world. The movement of bodies is usually a result of seeking improved economic and living conditions. Greater awareness throughout the world about human trafficking has, subsequently, awakened global political concerns about this challenge. Several studies have been done in order to explore and understand the nuances of human trafficking. The findings of these studies indicate that women are more vulnerable than men and children as victims of human trafficking.

The focus of this study is on lived experiences of trafficked young women across a border in Nigeria. Several studies conducted on human trafficking combine the trafficking of young women and children. Despite the fact that women are more vulnerable to trafficking, there are several debates as to why studies and anti-trafficking legislation in human trafficking combine women and children together (See Sanghera 2005). However, it should be noted that women and children's experiences of trafficking cannot be grouped together because they experience trafficking differently. This difference is based on the intersection of factors such as age, gender and what they were trafficked for.

One of the disadvantages of grouping women and children together in human trafficking studies is one of the reasons why there is unreliable data for trafficking, and this negatively influences effective policies to adequately protect victims of trafficking (See Gozdiak 2011). Likewise, the trafficking of men and women cannot be grouped together as well since the purpose and forms of exploitation are also different. Contemporary research studies also indicate that for human trafficking, exploitation of men and women is different due to gender roles and gendered values in the society (See Herzfeld 2002). It is therefore significant that trafficking of women becomes a feminist issue since it seeks to understand the nature of trafficking and explore the diverse reasons for women's vulnerabilities from lived experiences and theorizing these accordingly.



Feminist debates on trafficking of young women will be carefully explored in order to understand feminist standpoints on this issue. Literature on young women's experiences of trafficking as well as factors exposing young women to trafficking will be reviewed. All of these are aimed at providing a clear understanding of issues that have been raised and still need to be raised in order to combat the human trafficking of young women.

## **2.2. FEMINISTS DEBATES ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

### **2.2.1. Trafficking and sex work**

Feminism prioritizes women's issues in the society, therefore, it is important to review feminists' stance on human trafficking. Feminists have risen to the fight against human trafficking as it has been regarded as a gender-based issue (Zimmerman 2005; Russell 2014). The issue of human trafficking of young women has indeed generated several debates among different factions of feminists. Feminist groups commonly agree that human trafficking is a violation of women's rights, but there have been contrasting debates on its several exploitative purposes, what trafficking is and what should not be categorized as human trafficking. It is noticeable that critical analyses of human trafficking by feminists have not been carried out without including sex work in human trafficking discourse. Hence, it has been noted that feminists have constrained efforts in theorizing trafficking because of the different understandings of women's involvement in international sex trade (Limoncelli 2009).

The division in feminists' responses to prostitution and trafficking has generated further debates and arguments from different perspectives. Reviewing some of the contrasting issues, some studies affirm that trafficking and sex work have the same characteristics as their mode of organization, practices and experiences are the same (Weitzer 2014). Other studies disagree, indicating that trafficking is not the same as sex work and these two cannot be equated because there is no negotiation of power or choice in trafficking, and this, violates human rights. To give further clarity, sex trafficking involves force, fraud and coercion, while sex work is voluntary (Human Rights Center 2007) and these three acts make sex trafficking a violent act. Apart from its violent and abusive nature, Pharoah (2006) highlights the use of deception, coercion, or fraud as exploitative in nature.

The radical feminists groups (also known as the abolitionists) and the liberal feminists (also known as the non-abolitionists) will be reviewed for this study. The cause of disagreement

between these feminist discourses is on decriminalization of prostitution and criminalization of sex work (Munro 2005). Several feminist groups are campaigning for the legalisation and acceptance of voluntary sex work, as they see it as a means of female empowerment. Others are campaigning against the trafficking of women for the purpose of involuntary sex work for exploitative purposes. The radical feminists critique sexual labour, saying that it is patriarchal and exploitative in nature. They campaigned against prostitution and sex trafficking seeking to end it as it violates women's rights (Limoncelli 2009; Barry 1995; Dempsey 2010; Shiela 1997).

The dominant theme emerging from several literature sources on the trafficking of young women is the use of women for commercial sex. Radical feminists see sexual exploitation as oppression (See Barry 1995). Sexual exploitation objectifies women and reduces them to sexual instruments and commodities for sale, and sex is given more power over trafficked women (See Barry 1995:1). The gendered aspect of trafficking is clearly pronounced when sex trafficking is identified as a market where women's sexuality is on sale for the sexual benefits and pleasure of men (Segrave *et al.* 2005:14). This study suggests that, in order to understand the complexity of sex trafficking, feminists need to concentrate on women's lived stories and experiences rather than emphasizing theoretical or political agendas.

Liberal feminists, on the other hand, do not support sex trafficking but support sex work as it is believed to be a legitimate occupation and a means of survival for sex workers who should not be seen as victims (See Cho *et al.* 2013). They argue that trafficking is not related to sex work and thereby campaign for the agency, empowerment and labour rights of women in sex work. Proponents of liberal feminism consider sex work as a free choice of employment for women and consequently, sex work as a legitimate occupation (See Chapkis 1997). This group of feminists support women who engage in sex work whether by deceit or coercion and this has been found to promote and encourage sex trafficking by other feminist groups (Aghatise 2004; Jeffreys 2004; Raymond *et al.* 2002; Outshoorn 2005; Limoncelli 2009; Dempsey 2010).

Kathleen Barry (1984), founder of the feminist group, the Coalition against Trafficking in Women (CATW), in her book titled *Female Sexual Slavery*, indicates that there is no demarcation between sex work and trafficking, as they are both forms of female sexual slavery. Sexual domination is the cause of trafficking and it is oppressive in nature, as it violates women's rights through deception or force (see also Usman 2014). The Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW) adds that trafficking is not only about sex work but

also involves several other silent and under-reported forms of labour. Examples of such forms include: trafficking for forced labour, sex trafficking, bonded labour, debt bondage, involuntary servitude, forced child labour, child soldiers and child sex trafficking (Elezi 2011:77-91). Feminists fight the same cause for women in the society, but there are complexities in feminist positions on sex work and trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. One of the complexities revolves around sex work for empowerment and coerced sex work as a result of trafficking. It is therefore necessary to hear the voices of trafficked women to identify several other silent forms of labour experienced by the trafficked women.

Feminist scholarship indeed foregrounds women's rights. However, it is also important to note that women involved in sex work involuntarily and those involved voluntarily are driven into it by several factors in their different geographical locations which can be economic, socio-political or cultural. The concept of structural violence and gender inequality has negatively impacted on women's options for making better choices for themselves due to limited opportunities, which could reduce the number of women going into prostitution (Kelly 2003).

### **2.3. YOUNG WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF TRAFFICKING**

The focus of this study is on the lived experiences of trafficked survivors, hence, it is imperative to review literature on young women's experiences of trafficking as a way of locating the study. The International Labor Organization (ILO) indicates that nearly 21 million people are victims of forced labour, 11.4 million of who are women and girls, although it has been indicated that sex trafficking comprises a small portion of human trafficking (Elezi 2011).

There are different stages to trafficking. Therefore, experiences of trafficking begin from the recruitment stage. Potential trafficking victims would be unwilling to cooperate if they knew what the plans of the traffickers were, therefore traffickers exercise power and control through deceit, abuse of power or vulnerability on the unsuspecting targets for easy recruitment (Shelly 2007; UN 2000). After the recruitment stage, migrating process, and the means of taking the victims to the final trafficked destinations is another process where the trafficked women experience human rights abuse (Truong 2003). The trafficking process is in fact a combination or series of events that occur at places of origin, transit points and destinations, involving potentially both legal and illegal acts (ILO 2001).

Trafficked women face multiple challenges, which make their experiences dynamic once they have reached their trafficked destinations. The complex experiences of trafficked women derive from their working and living conditions, which lead them to develop coping mechanisms to deal with their insecurities, as they may feel they have no other alternative (Baye 2012). Logically, it can be concluded that victims who cooperate with traffickers may not face as much punishment as those who struggle to comply with them. A study in this field also affirms that it rarely takes long before trafficked victims become objects of forced exploitative and hazardous work situations that are harmful to their welfare and development (Aghenta 2005).

As trafficking is a business enterprise, the welfare of the victim is secondary to satisfying the commercial interest of the agents (Owasanoye 2002). Individuals who fall prey to traffickers face several consequences of violation of human rights, physical and emotional torture, which impact on their psychological well-being (Bezabih 2008). The long working hours without rest, limited supply of food, violence and other inhuman treatment experienced by trafficked victims predispose them to a range of life threatening situations (Daro 1993).

The common ground of all forms of trafficking is exploitation: men and women are exploited differently, hence both men and women experience trafficking differently. Women are used for agricultural, domestic as well as sexual purposes (Kara 2009), while the majority of men are used for forced labour. “The various ways in which a person could be abused through sex are forced marriage, sex work, forced pregnancy for the purpose of selling the child, as well as personal gratification” (Lutya *et al.* 2012:7). Other studies emphasize further that victims of sex trafficking are forced into commercial sex-industry pornography, prostitution, stripping, live-sex shows, or illegal massage parlours or escort services (Forte 2006).

Women who are trafficked cannot all experience trafficking the same way. Hence, this research study uses an intersectionality lens as a theoretical framework. Intersectionality is a feminist theoretical tool invented by Kimberley Crenshaw in 1989. It is a theoretical tool used for excavating the voices of the marginalized in order to conceptualize identity and show the interrelation between one’s identity and other different categories that inform such identity (Crenshaw 1989).

## **2.4. FACTORS EXPOSING YOUNG WOMEN TO TRAFFICKING IN NIGERIA**

During the process of seeking greener pastures, intending migrants fall victim to fraud and deceit. Falling victim is not a voluntary act, but it is seen as one of the consequences of desperation in migration. There are multiple, complex and intersecting factors as to why young women are more vulnerable to trafficking than men in Nigeria. Since there is no statistical reason why women are trafficked more than men, it is important to explore these multitudinous factors that place young women in vulnerable positions, which expose them to trafficking. This is also relevant to this study because debates in this regard affirm that research should concentrate on the causes and reasons why people are being trafficked rather than fighting against trafficking (Chew & Jordan 2002).

### **2.4.1. Gender and vulnerability to trafficking for young women**

Simply put, gender here is not about biological traits but rather ascribed and socially constructed attributes to different gender in the society. Gender is not only constructed but it is performative and non-static (Butler 1990), as it shapes and informs what is expected from the two sex categories in the society. Cultural socialization of men and women celebrates masculinity over femininity. What makes this statement significant is that Beauvoir (1949) contends that feminine and masculine traits were the result of learned social roles rather than of biological difference. It cannot be overemphasized that gender plays a major role in the vulnerability of young women to trafficking considering the high number of women involved.

Trafficking is highly gendered. Williams and Masika (2002) indicate that 80% of individuals trafficked across borders are women and girls. Being a woman is seen as being vulnerable and women's bodies are susceptible to being sold and abused exploitatively (Almario 2015). Hence, it is essential that the issue of human trafficking be approached from a gender and rights perspective that will address unsafe and discriminatory contexts and equip women to deal with potential exploitation (D'Cunha 2002).

Gender cuts across all the trafficking processes. In the trafficking industry, sex traffickers and consumers, who are usually male, exhibit acquired gendered behaviour of power and control over women (Henson 2015). Apart from the fact that gender is a factor to trafficking, it is also a determinant factor for the type of job and treatment young women are subjected to at their

trafficked destinations. It is not surprising that feminists' concerns with human trafficking are concerns with the security of women especially because they are more vulnerable to human trafficking.

The vulnerability of young women is further shaped by the intersection of economic and societal values placed on women in the society. The normative traditional roles of gender practices in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized in this regard. Traditional gender roles, gender inequality and customs such as polygamy and child fostering increase these groups' vulnerability (Carling 2006; UNDP 2011). The intersection of gendered attitudes and attributes, such as those that consider women and girls to be inferior and weaker, objectify them and further place women in vulnerable positions of being trafficked.

#### **2.4.2. Power dynamics as vulnerability to trafficking**

It is usually difficult to disassociate gender and power. Power in highly patriarchal societies intersects with factors like gender identities, class and cultural/religious beliefs in shaping experiences of vulnerabilities of men and women differently. Power dynamics are relevant in this study as one of the factors that expose young women to trafficking. Power is a critical issue in feminist research because feminists generally believe that there is a power imbalance between men and women which results in the relegated positions of women in the society (See Tallis 2012). In an attempt to define what power is, Foucault states: "if we speak of the structures or the mechanisms of power, it is only insofar as we suppose that certain persons exercise power over others" (1983:217). In this definition, it is strongly indicated that 'power over' is a reflection of dominance by one party or group over another. In theorizing and conceptualizing power through an intersectional lens, intersectionality analyzes power inclusive of other forms of oppression and subordination and their interconnectivity (Allen 2008).

Traffickers use deceit and lies to lure young women, which in turn is fuelled by intersecting structural organisations in the society, organisations designed to give less power to women. Power, however, cannot be a vulnerability factor in isolation. With an intersectional lens, multiple underlying power dynamics that increase young women's vulnerability to trafficking include low levels of, or lack of education, which has been identified as a major factor that

makes women vulnerable to trafficking. Low levels of education further intersect with other factors such as material poverty (Ojomo 2005).

It can be argued from different angles whether power is a vulnerability factor that pushes young women to trafficking or otherwise. Some scholars have argued that there is no voluntary trafficking (Gajic-Veljanoski & Stewart 2007), while others argue that trafficking can be voluntary (Acemoglu 2011; Lee *et al.* 2015; Lulya *et al.* 2015). A study carried out in Ghana showed that some victims do consent to going away to greener pastures and do consent (voluntarily) in the real sense (Vijayarasa 2010), while others do not. To give clarity to this, it has been noted that voluntary consents can be considered to be ‘assumed voluntary consents’ as the targets to be trafficked are being coerced to do the opposite of what they assume they will be doing at their trafficked destinations (Peasa 2010). In cases of this nature, traffickers wield the power to manipulate victims into trafficking. This study considers the fact that trafficking is not voluntary because the trafficker exerts the power of control of the unknown over the vulnerable young women.

The majority of African cultural settings are structured in a patriarchal way. Culture “also functions to control and limit individual behaviour so that one conforms to the predominant values and norms” (De la Rey 1992:85). Patriarchy is a normalized construction of intersecting cultural and traditional beliefs that give power to men over women in most of the African societies. A patriarchal society normalizes the domination of men over women while celebrating hegemonic masculinity (Jewkes & Morrell 2010). The majority of African women in rural settings are subjected to the patriarchal nature of their environments, their submissiveness and silence is a true reflection of unequal gender power relations (Morrell 2003:50). Gender oppression takes place as the result of direct power relationships between men and women in which men dominate women.

Patriarchy is common in the Sub-Saharan Africa region. Patriarchy is complex and dynamic in nature. Furthermore, patriarchy and gender are relational as they are displayed differently according to cultures and contexts (Prah 2013). In the Nigerian context, patriarchy can be referred to as a system of social differentiation based on sex which gives more privileges to males than females (See Asiyanbola 2005). In Southern Africa, the majority of women in South African communities lack power when negotiating gender issues in traditional patriarchal societies (De Wet 2008).

Hegemonic masculinity can be displayed in multiple ways, which impact women negatively. These displays of hegemonic masculinity give women less power to take charge and make better decisions (Asey *et al.* 2013). Women cannot control their own lives or that of their children. Being a man is equated with autonomy and freedom of living, while women do not enjoy this type of freedom (Kang 2012). The issue of hegemonic power in the immediate environment cannot be over-emphasized in young women's vulnerability to trafficking. Some cross-cultural studies conclude that in society, discrimination against women is a result of, but not limited to, the male authority in the home, gender roles, display of masculinity that results in dominance, economic inequality between men and women, and the use of physical force for conflict resolution (Ezeh & Gage 1998; Morrow 1986). Young women are therefore more vulnerable to trafficking in the majority of third-world countries, because women are held in low esteem and consequently manipulated and controlled by a male-dominated society.

#### 2.4.3. Gender inequality a vulnerable factor to trafficking

Gender inequality seems to manifest in different areas and impact men and women differently. A careful exploration of the issue of trafficking indicates that most trafficked victims are from countries that have a high level of gender inequality and Nigeria is one of them. Environments that promote severe gender inequalities create an ideal environment for traffickers to exploit trafficked victims during the trafficking processes. The identity of individuals in society is determined and controlled by the intersection of socially constructed traditions, norms and beliefs. Intersectionality makes it possible to theoretically understand the various ways in which different gendered groups and their ascribed identities intersect in shaping their experiences of being in advantaged and disadvantaged positions, which place them in vulnerable conditions of discrimination, oppression and exploitation.

Of relevance to this study is structural intersectionality, as human trafficking impacts high numbers of women. Feminists make use of intersectionality in women's studies as a tool to bring to light the invisible or marginalized groups in society by identifying the differences and complexities of their lives (McCall 2005). Structural intersectionality emphasizes the social division of gender, expressing the diverse impact of the intersecting factors on women's lived experiences (see also Monks 2011).



Kabeer's (2003:13) study has shown that "gender inequality intersects with economic deprivation to produce more intensified forms of poverty for women than men. Gender inequality is part and parcel of the processes of causing deepening poverty in a society"... (Kabeer 2003:13). Poverty, in some instances, intersects with gender identity as young women are placed in vulnerable positions which expose them to trafficking. In other cases, poverty becomes a factor as parents place their female children in foster homes in order to ease their burden of childcare. Here, the gender ideology also takes full control as mostly female children are placed in foster homes. Parents who are in agreement allow their children to stay and help and serve others in exchange for the children's education and upkeep (Owasanoye 2005). Girls who are placed in foster homes are exposed to unfavourable conditions as relatives might become abusive and exploitative (Andvig *et al.* 2001; Cohen 2003; Dottridge 2004).

In some cases, it has been reported that young girls in foster homes run away due to ill-treatment and exploitation. In the absence of poverty, there will be a reduction in the vulnerabilities of young trafficked women. For Africa, 69% of the total population of Nigerians live in relative poverty, according to a study carried out by FOS in 2012. Women do two-thirds of the world's work, receive 10% of the world's income and own 1% of the world's means of production (Slusser 2009). Feminization of poverty and trafficking intersect in theorizing young women's vulnerability to trafficking. Feminization of poverty was first used in the late 1970s in the United States when it was discovered that female-headed households were the fastest growing type of family structure (Pearce 1978). In establishing the cause of women's poverty and its implications, discrimination and marginalization of women is the major factor that promotes the impoverished position of women and increases their involvement in human trafficking (Fayomi 2009). Many women get involved, voluntarily or not, in trafficking as they try to escape from social and economic uncertainty (Gajic-Veljanoski & Stewart 2007).

A study by Hernandez & Rudolph (2011) indicates that there are limited privileges to social economic rights and employment in countries where gender inequality is common. These authors also found that female migratory pressure, and thus the likelihood of being trafficked, was more likely where women are economically vulnerable or do not have the capacity to make better decisions for themselves. Women, who are economically disempowered, have more childcare burdens. If women are economically empowered, it will reduce their vulnerability to trafficking (Oshadare 2004).

The majority of women are mainly involved in the informal sector like farming, petty trading, selling wares in the market and street hawking of which their monetary contribution is not much (Makama 2013). Children bear some of the negative impacts of economic struggles by mothers, because these mothers cannot meet the needs of the children and the family. It becomes evident that the limited socio-economic empowerment of women contributes to young women's vulnerability to trafficking. Multiple intersecting factors of inequality are evident in the social and economic contexts; these factors impact women and their dependents more than men.

According to Anderson (2000), polygamy is more common in Africa than anywhere else in the world today. Polygamy, in this context, is a patriarchal culture that is religiously accepted. The family unit is a gendered space where polygamy is a display of men's hegemonic masculinity. Polygamous marriages are common in African countries such as Nigeria, Mozambique, Kenya, Botswana, Malawi and some Asian settings. Polygamy is a traditional practice which governs marriage and the family that is customarily acceptable (Gaffney-Rhys 2011). Although polygamous practice is generally declining worldwide, it remains particularly resilient in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa (Van de Walle 2006) of which Nigeria is one of them.

The unequal treatment of wives results in family instability as the unfavoured wife and children are negatively impacted. Empirical evidence also shows that it is a common occurrence that some men have the tendency to neglect one or more of their wives, particularly the older women, in favour of the newly married wives or younger wives (Lyimo 2011). The inequality in the polygamous home is further affirmed as girls are mostly deprived of basic fundamental rights, and education is one of them (Lyimo 2011; Banda 2008). Some parents attach higher importance to the education of boys than girls; this is always the case when parents do not have sufficient resources to enrol all their children in school (Makama 2013). In other instances, the perception that girls will marry and move to their husband's home makes it less beneficial to invest in girls (Adesina 2014).

The intersections of cultural and traditional beliefs give power to the head of the family to decide the fate and future life of the girl-child in the family. Female children have no power in decision-making about issues that concern them. Young girls' exposure to trafficking in some of the rural Africa settings starts from the immediate families as some of the young girls are not empowered educationally to make informed decisions. An example of this is the Yoruba

community in Nigeria, where educational preferences are given to the male child over the female (Aderinto 2001).

The increase in young women's vulnerability to trafficking in Nigeria is attributed to gender inequality, and patriarchal culture (See Anumihe 2013). As a result of the relegated position of girls in the family, young girls are deprived of equal access to education as opposed to their male counterparts. In most cases, boys tend to identify with their fathers in order to establish their masculinity, while girls identify with their mothers as they are socialized to be feminine (See Lober 1997). It is evident that low levels of education and a high school dropout rate among girls push the burden of household responsibilities on the girls. Their low level of education limits their employment opportunities (Ekesinoye & Okolo 2012).

Traditional, cultural and religious practices in Nigerian society increase young women's vulnerability to trafficking. There is the practice of marrying off young girls who are supposed to be at school to take on the responsibility of taking care of older men, or assist old wives who can no longer meet the sexual needs of the husband (See Odunsi 2011). Young girls are being pushed into early polygamous marriages in the Islamic and polygamous northern part of Nigeria. These practices place young girls in positions where they fall victim to the deceit of traffickers in the hope of escaping the coerced relationships they are forced into by their families.

Africa has the highest rates of child marriages in the world. Forty-two per cent of African girls are married before the age of eighteen. Child marriage is a clear violation of women's rights, one that includes the right to a healthy and happy life, and the right to an education as (Nour 2006). In present time, some of the girls in these regions do not wait to be given out in marriage. Some of them run away from home before arranged marriages can occur and eventually become vulnerable to trafficking. The less fortunate ones who are given out in marriage by their parents at times run away from their husbands and cannot go back home due to the fear of being sent back to their husband's house (Adesina 2014; Odunsi 2011; Anumihe 2013).

In some cases, the family heads facilitate the trafficking of young women. Attoh (2012), in a study carried out in Benin City, Nigeria, discovered that women do not have a say or power to resist being trafficked as family heads compel young women into trafficking situations through deceit and/or outright coercion. Deceit and lies are not only the weapons of traffickers, but also used by family heads to convince young women into trafficking, in some cases.

#### 2.4.4. Gender and Sexuality

Gender and sexuality are complex factors that intersect with several other factors that make young women vulnerable to trafficking. Examples can be found in culture, religion, identity, and the like. Sexuality and gender cannot be separated because, if gender is separated from other forms of categories, then it becomes exclusionary and this obscures the other dimensions of identity (Young 1997). Likewise, sexuality cannot stand alone as it conforms to the ascribed gender of an individual depending on several other interlocking factors. While Kimberley Crenshaw used the concept of intersectionality “to denote the various ways in which race and gender interacted to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women’s experiences” (1989:139), the intersection of gender and sexuality influence different experiences of vulnerabilities for each individual to trafficking.

Sexuality has been identified as one of the most common weapons of repression of women's freedom, and the female body is a territory that women themselves seem to have little or no rights to (Peniche 2007). Heterosexuality is the oppression of women, and gender and sexuality go hand in hand in this form of oppression (Rich 1993). Confirming this in a later study, Baye (2012) reiterates that gender and sexuality are exploitative tools used by men to exploit women.

Vulnerabilities of trafficked survivors are based on factors that are rooted in gender and sexuality, as sexually active young women are more vulnerable to trafficking. The majority of human trafficking victims today are women because females are the most exploited gender because they are useful for diverse purposes like sex and other kinds of labour (Patterson 2012). Sex trafficking comprises of small portions of human trafficking (See Elezi 2011) but other reports have contrary views regarding this.

Trafficking for sexual exploitation is one of the major reasons why young women are trafficked. Lutyia (2012) indicates that although young women and girls are trafficked for other purposes, sexual exploitation is top on the list with about 79% (Lutyia 2012). It is evident that these young women’s vulnerabilities are not only based on gender but their sexuality also plays a role in their exposure to trafficking. Although trafficked young women engage in several types of jobs, the majority of them are found providing sexual services for their traffickers. Sexual services are not limited as it includes various forms of erotic acts like pornography, exotic dancing, and stripping, as highlighted by Deshpande & Nour (2013).

It should, however, be noted that the cause of disagreement in both sex trafficking and prostitution remains the issue of 'sex', with women at the centre. Within the context of cultural practices, vulnerabilities are acute with young girls as they have been sexualized and commoditized (Jonathan *et al.* 2003). The main demand factor in international trafficking of women is the demand for the sexual services of women. This is an important root cause of trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation (See Okojie 2009). Sexual acts in sex trafficking exhibit unequal power relations between the trafficked victim, the trafficker and the buyer of sex. The role of gender in sex trafficking supports the claim that hegemonic masculinity plays a dominant role in the subjectivity and objectivity of trafficked women. The key players in the sex trafficking market are the traffickers, the trafficked person and the consumers of sex (See Henson 2015). This places women at the centre of these forms of exploitation.

While intersectionality is criticized for contributing to the hierarchical ordering of women, it is more commonly viewed as a framework to understand the impact of multiple identities on the oppression of women (See Gerrasi 2015). Environments that promote severe gender inequalities can foster human trafficking. Gender-based violence and the commoditization of females can create psychological and emotional harm that enables traffickers to lure their victims into servitude (Okech, Morreau, & Benson, 2011).



#### **2.4.5. Economic and Global Inequality**

Studies of human trafficking in Nigeria have found that trafficking in persons is related to a number of factors (Adepoju 2005; Okojie 2009). There are factors that induce a person to leave an area or country in search of a better life elsewhere. Other factors are elements in destination countries/areas, which attract persons to move there. These factors have economic and social dimensions. Essentially, demand and supply factors explain human trafficking. While demand factors are mainly economic, supply factors are mainly socio-cultural which act as push factors to trafficking (Okojie, 2009).

On the implications of racialized trafficking, Elabor-Idemudia (2013) expounds that minority women's increased economic poverty in Nigeria is caused partly by the global, capitalist economy. Therefore, social stratification through gender (and through the exploitation of disadvantaged women) is inevitable when society aims to "maximize its economic advantage"

in a global world (Elabor-Idemudia 2013:113-120). Nigerian women are attempting to survive in this cutthroat environment. The study further indicates that one of the prominent ways women can compete is through forced labour. Thus, economic poverty may be a prominent factor in minority individuals' susceptibility to becoming trafficked. It has also been documented that parents, who cannot support their children, are often willing to "give" them to traffickers in the false belief that the child will be given an education, training or a job (ILO 2001; UNICEF 2002). Trafficking is therefore seen as an alternative poverty alleviation strategy for survival (Fayomi 2009).

Globalization indeed has created gaps among developed and developing countries globally, of which the impact is heavier on the developing countries. The economic impact of globalization has instigated unusual forms of migration particularly from very poor regions of the globe to the rich ones, and this form of migration translates to human trafficking (Onuoha 2011; Anderson & Davidson 2003; Bales & Robbins 2001; Beare 1999, De Dios 1999, Kempadoo 2000; Salt & Stein 1997, Skrobaneck & Sanghera 1996; Williams 1999). In East and Southern Africa, trafficking is identified as a problem in thirty-three per cent of countries (UNICEF Insight 2003).

## **2.5. Conclusion**

This chapter has explored literature on human trafficking while emphasizing the fact that children, women and men experience trafficking differently. Therefore, studies in human trafficking should not couple or generalize the experiences of trafficking for everyone as the same. As a feminist issue, different factions of feminists (radical and liberal) have taken different stands, which have created complexities in their debates on what constitutes trafficking, sex work and trafficking for the purpose of sex work. Young women's experiences of trafficking, as well as factors exposing young women to trafficking in Nigeria, were also explored in order to locate this study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3. INTRODUCTION

This chapter unpacks the methodological processes framing the study. The vulnerability of young women to trafficking at a border town in Nigeria has been explored through the use of feminist qualitative research. A narrative thematic analysis was adopted for data analysis. All the other methodological processes will be unpacked in this chapter.

#### 3.1. QUALITATIVE FEMINIST RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research methodology is used in this study in order to explore and understand individuals' meaning to a social or human problem (See Creswell 2014). Qualitative research methods enhance the richness and originality of the participants' stories (Sandelowski 2004). Research on lived experiences on trafficking required active interaction between the researched and the researcher in the collection of quality data. A qualitative feminist research method was suitable for this study considering the participants (young women) and the sensitive nature of the study. Since the development of the second wave of feminism in the 1960s, feminists have been concerned about who produces knowledge, and how knowledge is produced and used (Hesse-Biber 2012). Feminist researchers are not interested in only identifying and naming women issues and oppressions (Westmarland 2001), but rather feminist qualitative methods dig deeper to uncover and understand women's experiences in the society while giving power to subjective knowledge (Wambui 2013). Affirming the role of the researcher in feminist research, feminist research includes the researcher as a person in knowledge production (Reinhard 1992:240).

For a research study that explores lived experiences of human trafficking, a feminist qualitative research method is most suited, as it enhances the richness and originality of the participants' lived experiences. A study on a sensitive issue of this nature requires full participation of the subjects and the researcher. Feminist qualitative research methodology, therefore, is relevant to this study, because it bridges the gap created by traditional researchers, thereby creating a mutual interaction and relationship between the subjects and the researcher, which generates

rich, subjective data. “Feminists have developed and experimented with qualitative, politically sensitive research styles and fieldwork relationships, because this suit their purpose of making diverse women’s voices and experiences heard” (Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002:15).

It has been noted that the majority of studies on human trafficking are usually conducted through NGOs and governmental organizations. This has compelled researchers to rely heavily on secondary literature sources such as reports, journals, books, newspapers, magazines and the internet (Akor 2011:96). It is, however, important for studies in human trafficking to move beyond finding figures to exploring knowledge through research studies that foreground the voices or lived experiences of trafficked survivors. According to Brennan, researchers on human trafficking face multiple methodological challenges and ethical concerns due to the fact that researchers are writing about an issue that has been misrepresented, politicized and sensationalized by the media (Brennan 2005). Lipede discusses this further by stating that despite several studies on human trafficking, there is still limited data on trafficking of women, which is attributed to its hidden nature (2007).

This study is not based on general knowledge but rather on lived experiences of survivors. This compliments the fact that qualitative feminist researchers argue for qualitative research methods that give voice to women respondents, allowing women’s voices to speak to the focus of the research in order to avoid over-generalization (Kasper 1994; DeVault 1999). For this reason, a qualitative research methodology has been adopted here because it leads to a richer and more complex understanding of the subjective experience/s of individuals and their social contexts, and aims to gain a more in-depth understanding of the particular phenomenon being studied. This approach is suitable for this study due to its informative quality derived from the participants stories.

### **3.2. STUDY SITE**

Social context is important in feminist research as it is linked with the interpretation of the study. Qualitative feminist methods emphasize contextualizing research, arguing that individuals cannot be studied in isolation without interaction and relationship with other people in the environment (See Wambuyi 2013). The site for this study is a border town in Nigeria, which will be kept anonymous due to the sensitivity of this work.



### **3.3. THE DEMOGRAPHIC OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

Five young women who survived trafficking across a border town in Nigeria were interviewed for this study. While research studies with small samples are sometimes condemned and viewed as generalizing the phenomenon under study, Patton (2002 in Hesse- Biber 2007) is of the opinion that “there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry” (244). Small samples draw strength from the uniqueness of diversity, depth of data collected, and themes that answer the research questions (Luton 1996). Initially, six participants were to be interviewed for this study, however, the sixth participant could not be located during this period as she had moved to another part of the country. The study population is aged between twenty and thirty-five years of age. Their educational background did not go further than Senior Secondary School (S.S.S). Two of the participants did not go further than Junior Secondary School 2 (J.S.S. 2). The other two went further to Senior Secondary School 2 (S.S.S.2), while the last of the participants completed her Senior Secondary qualification.

### **3.4. SELECTION CRITERIA**

Trafficking is a sensitive topic and survivors are usually hard to locate, or they are not ready to tell their stories. Trafficked survivors are often not visible in the society, which posed a challenge for me in identifying my participants. Studies on human trafficking require the availability and willingness of survivors to participate in the study, and this can be a huge challenge. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher. The convenient sampling and snowballing methods were therefore appropriate for selecting the participants for this study. The lead participant was well known to me and was ready to help connect me with other participants since it was quite challenging identifying them. The already identified lead participant assisted in locating other participants who met the inclusion criteria, that is, young women who had trafficking experiences across a border. Snowball sampling methods give researchers easy accessibility to the hard to reach or vulnerable populations of a study (Atkinson *et al.* 2001). An advantage for me in this study is my familiarity with the environment where the participants were.

### 3.5. INTERVIEWS

The process of data collection is what makes a feminist qualitative research unique from other processes in research studies. In order to hear the voices of research participants, interviewing is one of the most valued research methodologies used by feminist researchers in order to gain insight into the world of their respondents to reveal the unknown (Hesse-Biber 2007). Feminist researchers make use of interviews in data collection processes in order to fully understand women's experiences and theorize these experiences towards social change (Westmarland 2001). In this case, experiences of trafficked survivors need to be heard, as their voices seem to be silent against the generally publicized statistics of trafficking. In sensitive research studies of this nature, feminists have developed and experimented with qualitative, politically sensitive research styles and fieldwork relationships, because this suits their purpose of making diverse women's voices and experiences heard (See Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002:15).

A feminist interviewing technique was employed for collecting narratives for this study. Due to the nature of this study, a focus group discussion was not an option. Having fewer people involved in the interview process increased the chances of having rich information and quality data. Apart from this, semi-structured interviews are suitable when the research topic is about a complex or personal issue (Greef 2005). In addition, the issue to be researched is risky to both the researcher and the subject. Gaining the trust and the confidence of the participants therefore was of high importance. Feminist interviewing allows women to tell their stories by themselves. "Interviewing offers researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher. This asset is particularly important for the study of women because in this way, learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether or having men speak for women" (Hesse-Biber 2006:118).

One-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with three of the participants, while two participants were interviewed telephonically. The International Organization on Migration (IOM) indicates that data collected directly from trafficked persons is an important source of information and has proven central in efforts to understand and combat human trafficking (IOM 2012).

### 3.6. PROCEDURE

Two interviews were conducted with two of the participants who were nursing mothers in their homes, as they indicated that this arrangement was most convenient for them. One was comfortable to have the interview at my residence, while the other two had to be conducted telephonically as the participants had since moved. The two participants who were telephonically interviewed were hard to reach and access due to their remote location. A suggestion of a neutral meeting place with them was declined, as they indicated that they would be more comfortable talking telephonically. This was not envisaged before going to the field, but necessary arrangements had to be made to conduct a telephonic interview in the interest of the participants. Telephonic interviews have been used in qualitative research because with this type of interview method, interviewees perceive a greater level of anonymity and privacy than with face-to-face interviews (Carr & Worth 2001; Holt 2010; Sturges & Hanrahan 2004).

The research procedure for the telephonic interview was different from the face-to-face interviews. The participants chose the most appropriate time and day to be interviewed. One interview was conducted late at night, as this was the most convenient time for the participant, while the other was conducted during the day. Before the commencement of the interviews, I carefully read out and explained the content of the information letter as well as the ethical information to the participants. I emphasized that they were free to withdraw from the study, and to stop the interview if they were not willing to answer any questions. I waited for the participants to give verbal consent before proceeding with the interviews. The interview sessions were recorded on my smart phone, which was later transferred to my computer. During the interview sessions, I made necessary notes but some data were lost because I could not make notes of their facial expressions and read meanings to their body language in the process. Discussing the loss of data, Hesse-Biber indicates that researchers may lose the impact of visual and verbal cues in interviews that are not conducted in person, as well as miss building a rapport with the participants (Hesse-Biber 2007). However, I was able to pick up strained responses, hesitation or long silences before their responses. In this case, I quickly reframed my questions or moved to other questions on the interview guide. Although the data collected was rich and original, it took long and it was more expensive to collect data in this way, in comparison to face-to-face interviews, due to the amount of money spent on airtime.

For the face-to-face interviews, after going through the information sheet with each of the participants, written consent was given before the sessions started. The first few minutes were

committed to relaxing the participants' mood as I went through the purpose of the study and the ethical procedure. The interview sessions were conversational in nature, which made the participants more comfortable to tell their stories. As described by Watts, I was able to explore the subjective experiences of participants deeply (Watts 2006). I continuously used probes where necessary for further clarification. The interview sessions started with general issues, and then I gradually delved into the core issues while keeping participants on track of the interview questions where necessary. The interview sessions lasted around sixty minutes with a few going slightly beyond and, in this process, my primary role was that of "active listener" as described in Hesse-Biber (2007:134). I did not cut or stop the interviews where the participants were willing and keen to go on with their stories. I kept a reflective diary of my fieldwork, wrote down my thoughts and summarized each interview session. Owing to the fact that the interview sessions were not video recorded, context and bodily expressions were noted as these are vital in this study.

### **3.7. THEMATIC NARRATIVE ANALYSIS**

When I started the interviews, I realized that there were no short answers to the questions I asked the participants as one event was linked with others and thus generated lengthy, relevant narratives. Every aspect of the story was as important as the other. I therefore encouraged all my participants to tell their stories by guiding them with probes and questions where and when necessary. After data collection, the recorded stories and the notes taken were used for the analysis. Narrative analysis enhances the chronological order of events from the beginning to the end (Reissman 2002, 2008), which kept the stories together in order to make sense out of the chunk of stories derived from the interviews.

Thematic narrative analysis was used in this study to bring up the voices of women who survived trafficking. The reason for the use of thematic narrative analysis is because it pays more attention to "what" is said and "how" it is said in order to produce undiluted meaning in research (Riesman 2005:2). Thematic narrative analysis is used in this study to present the participants' stories naturally, which gives rich and undiluted data. Narrative analysis, as a methodological tool, is also most suitable for feminist research because it is strongly linked with women's stories about their experiences (See Lagasen 2010; Letherby 2003; Naples 2003). Feminist qualitative studies that make use of narratives give voices to the voiceless

while exploring subjective meanings and experiences that have been previously ignored (See Holstein & Gubrium 2011; Riessman 2012).

### **3.8. ETHICS**

It was imperative that I provide a detailed ethical procedure due to the sensitive nature of my inquiry. The aim of this research was not to cause harm or put the researched into more vulnerable positions. Ethical considerations must not be compromised in human trafficking research studies. There are ethical considerations that apply particularly to trafficking research, which include the safety of the interviewee and the interviewer, which have to be guaranteed to the highest extent possible. In addition, it is important to respect the subjective position of the victim instead of trying to construct one (Beake *et al.* 2005). As previously discussed, verbal and written consent were taken before the commencement of the interviews. The participants were made to understand that the study is voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any point during the course of the interview session. In maintaining high ethical, the issue of confidentiality is paramount in this study, therefore I did not require a research assistant or interpreter. I was the only one (with the participant) present at the interview sessions. In order not to place the participants and myself at risk, I allowed the participants to indicate where they felt was most suitable and safe for them to have the interviews. The interview sessions were audio recorded with a digital voice recorder with the permission of the participants. After each interview session, the data collected was downloaded from the digital voice recorder onto my personal computer which is password protected. The data was also uploaded to a cloud-based password protected Dropbox for back-up, after which the original data was deleted from the voice recorder. Despite the fact that some of the participants did not mind using their real names and names given to them when they were trafficked, I ensured that there is no identity link between the participants and the transcribed data as pseudonyms were used throughout the study.

### 3.9. SELF-REFLEXIVITY

Self-reflexivity is a non-negligible feminist tool in qualitative research. Feminist qualitative research is popular for the emphasis placed on reflexivity and the reflection of the researcher about the research process (England 1994; Mauthner & Doucet 2003; Ackerly & True 2008). From the start of this study, I acknowledged the complex and diverse power relations between the participants and me. Being a female researcher, interviewing women was an advantage for me, but the disparity in the level of education, class, and age was of concern to me. Feminist research confirms that the “politics of the researcher” are a central issue in the production of knowledge (Griffiths 1998:130). I therefore had to act upon these differences in power relations between the participants and myself throughout the research process, by constantly reflecting from time to time on my position as a researcher.

I also had to guard against my identity and position as a researcher impacting negatively on the participants, or creating an unequal power balance between the participants and me. With the assumption that the participants viewed me as an outsider as I came from outside the country, I maintained my position as an insider as Nigeria is my original home and we speak the same language. In qualitative research, becoming an insider and having a close relationship with the participants makes the researcher a participant in that study (Strydom *et al.* 2005). In this way, I was able to gain their trust and obtain quality data from the survivors. They also indicated that they wanted to share their stories to help others from falling into the same situations they found themselves.

The snowball sample technique greatly assisted in my data gathering endeavours. I knew the lead participant through my mother who was the headmistress of her primary school. The position of being the former headmistress’s daughter was of concern to me before going to the field, which I was able to manage to the best of my ability. In the study titled *Women in the Field*, by England (1994), it was argued that the position and biography of a researcher is vital in the research process as the work is intensely personal which directly has an impact on the fieldwork (England 1994).

Reflecting on methodological challenges before going to the field, I was prepared to conduct face-to-face interviews with six participants. I was able to conduct three face-to-face interview sessions, two telephonic interviews, and the last participant could not be reached. Due to unforeseen circumstances, researchers have been encouraged to note, “field work requires imagination and creativity” (See Mills & Withers 1992:163). After my data collection, trying

to code and group my data into themes did not work well as it silenced the voices of my participants. The flow of the story was also affected. This resulted in me using a narrative thematic analysis instead.

### **3.10. LIMITATIONS**

The interviews were conducted in local languages and English because the participants were given the chance to use any language they were most comfortable with. This did not create any challenge to me because I speak and understand the local language. I transcribed and translated the collected data as best as possible. It is, however, inevitable that some data might have been lost during this process. It should be noted that, due to stigmatization after being trafficked, some of the participants now live in the outermost parts of town. These areas are structurally and economically underdeveloped areas, which are usually difficult to access. Locating one participant who was comfortable with being interviewed from her place required travelling on rough roads and walking for about an hour and half on foot, as there were no proper roads to get to where she lived. Moreover, the interview sessions were at times stopped, interrupted or prolonged as some of the participants had to attend to their babies, and in most cases, I assisted where I could. In some instances, I felt that the situation could have been managed better with the help of a research assistant.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

#### 4. INTRODUCTION

In order to answer the research question for this study, this chapter will present an analysis of the narratives collected from the participants. This study explored the lived experiences of young women who have survived trafficking across a border in Nigeria. The chapter begins by exploring the intersecting factors increasing the vulnerabilities of young women to trafficking, their lived experiences as trafficked young women, and finally how their experiences have impacted their lives after trafficking. For this section, qualitative thematic narrative analysis was used once more, while also drawing on intersectionality as a theoretical tool to understand vulnerabilities and the young women's experiences of being trafficked.

As outlined in chapter two of this study, intersectionality is an indispensable theoretical tool used in feminist studies which has been referred to as "the most important theoretical contribution that women's studies has made so far" (McCall 2005:1-7). This theoretical tool has been adopted here to simultaneously link various forms of oppression and marginalized positions of women who are mostly exposed to trafficking due to their gender. Crenshaw's intervention in 1989 brought about the theory that serves as a tool for excavating the voices of the marginalized. It was formed as a way of conceptualizing identity and to show the connection and interrelation between one's identity and other different categories that inform such identity (Crenshaw 1989).

It is important to emphasise that women do not change, and that the understanding of gender in the context of power relations are deeply rooted in social identities and gender categories (Collins 1990, 2000). As will be shown in this chapter, the interviewed young women were not only exposed to trafficking because of their gender, but they were also impacted by other forms of oppressions and inequalities, which further linked with other factors such as poverty, family instability, and child fostering, among others. Intersectional research has shown that women's experiences are a result of the intersection between multiple social categories as well as the socio-cultural context in which this interaction takes place (Davis 2007). It therefore becomes essential in this study to theorize women's positions and identities and how these identities are informed and shaped their lived experiences before, during and after trafficking.



All the participants narrated family instability as the major reason why they were placed in vulnerable positions. Under this major theme, however, lies several intersecting sub-themes such as poverty, low levels of education, child fostering due to financial instability, mothers selling their children, and the participant's desire for a better life, which made them vulnerable to the deceit and tricks of traffickers. The narratives of the different experiences of trafficking are also unpacked in this section, and it emerged that all the participants reported similar experiences of power, manipulation and control used by their traffickers and clients. Debt bondage was paramount as a form of control that resulted in the participants being sexually exploited. In addition, the interviewed survivors reported experiences of physical and psychological abuse. The last section highlights the impact of trafficking on the lives of the young women after their trafficked experiences.

#### **4.1. FACTORS ENHANCING VULNERABILITIES OF YOUNG WOMEN TO TRAFFICKING**

##### **4.1.1 Narratives of family instability and feminization of poverty**

###### **4.1.1.1. Polygamy**

Family is an institution that primarily has the role of taking care of children before they become independent. This study is not about families, but it became salient within the narratives that family issues cannot be isolated in this case as the family is strongly linked with the young women's exposure to trafficking. Family therefore played a pivotal role in what made these women vulnerable to trafficking. Family plays a major role in Nigeria society, a highly patriarchal state, which emphasizes the husband/man as culturally responsible for taking care of the family's needs. Women/wives have the responsibilities to support men/husbands in the family based on the gender ideology and cultural beliefs in different contexts. What emerged in these findings is that all five participants were from unstable homes and the instabilities in their homes are linked to polygamy and other multiple underlying factors.

An unstable family, however, has a negative impact on children's education, social and general well-being. Polygamy is more common in Africa than anywhere else in the world (Anderson 2000). Polygamy in the community of study, is a social, religious and culturally accepted practice. The acceptability of polygamy has negative impacts on the day-to-day living experiences of mostly women and children. In most cases, women are left with the burden of

caring for children without adequate resources or support, which negatively affects their lives, because they are unable to deal with the day-to-day challenges of care and responsibilities alone. This results in the exposure of young women to various unfavourable encounters of which trafficking is one of them.

I began the interview sessions by asking the respondents questions about their family background and life while growing up in order to ascertain a general knowledge of the type of life they had lived. This tactic was also aimed at getting to know if and how their roots and background intersected with other factors that contributed to their vulnerability. What emerged from the respondents' stories is that they had all experienced unstable families, as shown in their stories below:

*Anne:* I come from a polygamous home. I am the second child of eight children, the eldest girl in the family. My father had two wives. My mum is the first wife but my father left to live with the second wife, leaving my mum to take care of my siblings and me. He only comes home whenever he likes.

*Daisey:* I cannot really say that I had a stable home while growing up. My dad had other women outside, so he came home from time to time. At home where I grew up, it was my mom, who was the younger wife, I have five siblings, then there was my stepmom, and her six children. We all stayed in the same compound. Of course there was rivalry between my mom and my stepmom, which is one of the reasons my dad said he couldn't stay with us in the compound. He will rather stay with his girlfriends outside because he said he wanted peace in his life.

*Edana:* We lived with our mom because our dad left home a long time ago. He doesn't come home because he had moved to his other wife's house.

The above narratives give clear indications of the multiple layers of challenges in polygamous families, which impact women and their children more than men. It also reflects the unequal positions between men and women in polygamous families. From these stories, there was a total shift of family responsibilities to women when the men moved away. As indicated in

Daisey's narrative, she did not only grow up in an unstable home, but also in an emotionally charged space as she constantly witnessed 'fights' between her mom and step mom. This type of environment will, however, affect those living in it, as it becomes an undesirable environment. The conflict between wives in polygamous marriages is damaging to the children in such families as well (Thobejane 2014). Growing up in this type of environment had emotional and psychological impact, which affected these young women's future lives.

Barbie's story also illustrates the emotional and psychological scars she has carried all her life and how such emotions opened her up to trafficking:

*Barbie:* My father has many children but I am the last born and the only female child from my mother. My mom raised me because my father sent her out when she was pregnant with me and he got his second wife. I have always seen myself as a rejected child because my dad was never a part of my life. He claimed that he was not responsible for mom's pregnancy (when she was expecting me) as a result he never cared for us. He went to the extent of not giving me a name during my 'naming ceremony' (a ceremony whereby a child is given a name by the immediate family). After enduring abuse from my father for three years after I was born, my parents became legally separated and my mom and I moved out but my siblings were left behind because they were boys and were not rejected like me. There is no relationship between us. I saw him next after I was sixteen years old since we moved out, I later saw him again five years after, still I don't like him, he does not like me, and the feeling is mutual.

Coming out strongly from Barbie's story is the inference that polygamy produces many children without adequate care and resources to cater for them. Barbie views herself as a rejected child due to a lack of care by her father, because the male children were preferred over her (Reddy *et al.* 2014). Her rejection by her father, however, created a gap between them that resulted in both father and daughter having no relationship. The above narrative reflects polygamy as a domineering cultural practice that gives power and privilege to men over women (Reddy *et al.* 2014) and, at the same time, privileging male children over female children. The impact of these, once again, is heavier on women and female children.

To further support the above claim is the story of Cameo who also experienced the impact of an unstable family without the support of her father as well as the absence of her mother at an early stage:

*Cameo:* Talking about my life while growing up is always like opening a past I would rather forget. My family (mom, dad, me and my younger ones) lived together, things were fine until the arrival of the second wife, and then trouble started. Whenever my mom and the younger wife had issues, my dad always supported the younger wife. This continued till one day when someone poured acid on my mom's clothes and she unknowingly wore it, this spoilt her skin and she was just lucky to be alive. After this incident, she felt unsafe and had to move out to save her life... I went with her and we were sleeping in her hairdressing shop in the market because we had nowhere to go...Eventually she decided to relocate to her home town in a neighbouring country. My mom told us (my younger ones and I) to stay back with my dad so as to finish our education because she was not sure of what our fate will be if we had left with her. I am the eldest in the family so I had to look after my siblings.

Cameo's experience of leaving home to live with her mother placed her in a vulnerable position at an early stage in life. Being a female child, the father allowed her to leave with her mother, while the male children stayed back. Gender inequality and preference of male children among siblings once again becomes evident here. While Cameo stayed back after her mother relocated, the gender ideology of a female child assuming domestic roles was placed on her at an early stage of her life. She adjusted to play the role of a sister and a mother to her siblings due to the absence of their mother. This is a typical example of the reproduction and maintenance of the intersection of socially constructed gender roles and female identity in the society, which places the responsibilities of care on women (Reddy *et al.* 2014).

Multiple intersectional challenges associated with polygamous families seem to have played a significant role in exposing these young women to trafficking as evident in the participants' words. Clearly emerging from the young women's voices and strongly linked to polygamy, is the position of their mothers as providers in the absence of their fathers and how this positioning played a significant role in the type of life they lived, hence their vulnerabilities.

The narratives above reinforce the intersection of gender inequality and the normalization of cultural norms, which promote hegemonic masculinity in polygamous families (Connell 1987; Morrell). Polygamy is a common phenomenon not only in Nigeria but also in most African settings. Polygamy is a product of patriarchy and its oppressive nature creates the intersection of a power imbalance between husbands and wives (Lyimo 2011). Empirical evidence also shows that it is a common occurrence that some men have a tendency of neglecting one or more of their wives, particularly the older women, in favour of others, especially the newly married wives or younger wives (Lyimo 2011). This leaves the burden of care with women, as was evident in a number of cases among the participants. The burden of care in these cases was passed on to the female children who played active roles as their mother's "assistants" in the home. These narratives further reiterate the active roles of female children in polygamous homes as caretakers when husbands/fathers left their wives.

#### **4.1.1.2. Economic empowerment**

Strongly linked with the subordination of women and their female children, as has emerged from these narratives, is women's poor economic empowerment. The theme came out strongly and significantly as all the participants lived with their mothers before being trafficked. These women and their children experienced multiple layers of unequal treatment at home as well as in the labour sector of the society. These economically disempowered mothers were constrained to provide basic needs for their children. It should be noted that these single mothers worked in the informal sectors of the community. They were not jobless but the little money they made was not sufficient to cater for their children's needs.

The intersection of their low level of education and the gendered nature of the labour sector in the society limited their opportunities to seek better paying jobs. The young women indicated that life would have been different for them if their mothers had good jobs with sustainable incomes to care for them. Out of the five participants interviewed, two of the survivors' mothers were hairdressers, while two were petty traders. Major economic activities performed by women are in the informal sector, due to these women's low levels of education, among other factors. Women are mainly involved in the informal sector like farming, petty trading, selling wares in the market and street hawking of which their monetary contribution is not commensurate to their living expenses (Makama 2013). When living expenses of women is not

commensurate with their income, it will not only place them in disadvantaged positions but their children as well.

The types of jobs these women are engaged in are not sustainable, and reduce their standard of living. Children are largely left unsupervised as their mothers are not available to care for them adequately. Children who lack basic support from their family are easily pushed into seeking support from outside the family structure to support their needs, as seen from the narratives above. To further support this reality, another study critically assessed the effects of family structure on children from single parent and both parents' households. From this study, it emerged that children from single parent households who live in a disruptive and unstable environment develop a sense of insecurity that pushes them to engage in risky behaviour like street hawking, prostitution and even exposure to trafficking (Salami & Alawode 2000). It emerged that children of less empowered mothers, constituted the participants in this study. They were deprived of basic needs; therefore they became vulnerable to traffickers.

*Anne:* My mom is a crosser<sup>1</sup>. She only goes out when she is called that there are goods to be taken crossed. This type of business is not an everyday thing. It is seasonal and also risky for her, so she does not really go out every day.

*Edana:* As a petty trader<sup>2</sup>, my mom sells her stuff close to a school where we lived. The business is just ok to put food on the table. During school holidays, it becomes a bit difficult for her so she puts her goods on her head and hawk around town and market places in order to make some sales.

*Barbie:* My mom's petty trading and hawking took her away from home early in the morning and she comes back around eleven or twelve at times. I was always alone at home for a while before I started making friends in the neighbourhood. I mingled with lots of people; I had all the time to be in the company of my friends for as long as I wanted...I had many friends...I started meeting guys as well...then I had this boyfriend who introduced me to the woman that trafficked me.

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<sup>1</sup>. A crosser is someone whose job it is to help people involved in buying and selling across the border to bring them and their goods illegally into the country.

<sup>2</sup>. A petty trader is someone who engages in small quantities of buying and selling. They can either hawk the streets with their goods on their heads or just place their goods on a tray by the roadside or in front of their houses.

Support in childcare and upbringing, especially for adolescents, is not limited to the provision of education and food. It includes psychological, social and emotional support. From Anne's interview, I learnt that being a 'crosser' requires her mother to travel away from home for days leaving the children 'unguarded', the neighbours keeping an eye on them. Anne was exposed to traffickers as she lacked adequate parental guidance and support as her mother was often away.

Being a crosser is a risky and time-consuming job. One of the risks of this type of job is that the mothers can be arrested and lose their goods to the law enforcement officers. Most of the young ladies involved in crossing goods did so as a result of economic hardships and the attempt to cope with poverty (See Ojo 2015:27). While these mothers struggled to provide for their families by trading, such trading patterns meant that some women would be away from home for longer periods of time thereby compromising the supervision of their daughters, as emphasized by Barbie.

Daisey and Cameo have similar stories, as their mothers are hairdressers. As hairdressers, these women worked late hours. The overwhelming task of providing basic needs for these children impacted other aspects of childcare.

*Cameo:* My mom was a hairdresser. She had a salon in the market where she used to make hair for her customers. Hair dressing business was not stable. During the low season, she did a bit of petty trading just to make ends meet. She also sells stuffs by the side, like iced water (cool water), minerals (cool drinks), biscuits and sweets.

*Daisey:* My mom was not working initially. She was a full time housewife although she had hairdressing skills. When things were not going well, she started making hair, mostly for school children in our area. Gradually she had more customers.

The intersection of family instability and inadequate family resources due to women's low economic empowerment in this particular society are apparent from the participants' stories. This became one of the factors that placed them in vulnerable conditions to be trafficked. Unsupervised adolescents are more likely to be involved in risky behaviours such as cigarette smoking, alcohol drinking, drug use and early sexual activity resulting in adolescent pregnancy

(Richardson *et al.*, 1993; Blum *et al.*, 2000, cited in Waruesporn, 2011). This sentiment is exemplified and correlates with Barbie's story above. The young women in this study gained 'autonomy' too early due to circumstances beyond their control.

In most communities, the domestic role of women in the family and society supports gender stereotypes of women as caretakers of the home and males as breadwinners (see Lindsay 2007; Hunter 2005) for provider masculinities. Women carry the burden of care in the homes while men control and dominate the financial and economic activities in the family. Such expectations pose further challenges to women who carry the burden of childcare after separation from their partners or even after the passing on of spouse, as narrated by Barbie here:

*Barbie:* My mom remarried after being thrown out and rejected by my dad. We lived a comfortable life because my step dad was OK. However, this did not last long as he died shortly afterwards. Trouble started again because his family said that she did not have any child for him so we were once again asked to leave with nothing. We moved again and her business was destabilized.

#### **4.1.1.3. Gendered cultural practices**

Here, patriarchal norms intersect with discriminating attitudes towards women's sexuality and reproduction in issues of inheritance. In the context of this study, cultural practices and norms do not recognize a woman who does not bear a child for her husband, in issues of inheritance. This was seen clearly in the case of Barbie who claimed that, despite her acceptance by her stepdad, as with all heavily patriarchal norms regarding inheritance, she and her mother were denied access to inheritance because she was not the biological child of her late stepfather and neither did her mom bear any child for the late husband. The impact of the multiple layers of inequality and discrimination against women in inheritance systems, created an atmosphere conducive to negative emotional and psychological conditions for Barbie, as seen below:

*Barbie:* I was not expecting the treatment my mom and I received after the death of my stepfather, whom I had already taken as my father. I was using his surname and most people did not even know that he was not my biological father. He really took good care of me like a father should, that was the father



I never had. When the family came with their problems of inheritance, I felt rejected again and we also left with nothing.

Barbie's narrative indicates the painful impact of the intersection of cultural norms and women's sexuality and their reproduction in the society. The majority of women in developing countries are subordinated and powerless and, in most cases, they do not fight against cultural norms. Men have much more control over resources and decision-making than women in most communities in Nigeria (De la Rey 1992). It is not surprising then that women suffer more when they are no longer married or no longer live with their husbands as their contexts have groomed them to be both subordinate and dependent on male provisioning. Scholarship also shows that in some areas in Nigeria, it is common practice that widows and female children suffer disinheritance due to cultural beliefs and norms guiding such communities (See Onyenenkwa & Nkamnebe 2011). This gendered cultural norm is disadvantageous to women and female children as they are left with no inheritance and no resources.

#### **4.1.1.4. Child fostering and financial constrains**

Child fostering<sup>3</sup> in Nigeria is a gendered phenomenon. Female children are predominantly sent to live with relatives and friends as opposed to male children. This is due to their domestic roles and attributes within the Nigerian society. It is common practice that parents allow their children to stay with relatives and work as helpers for their general upkeep. This approach provides an opportunity for such children to be educated or trained by the people they serve as servants (See Owasanoye 2005; Adepelumi 2015). The tradition of placing children in homes other than their parents' home and initiating them to work at early ages of their lives has been a major debate amongst diverse organisations. Some have argued that the placement is usually done during holidays for different purposes such as to acquire skills, to prepare them for marriage or to train the children to live independently (Chibuike).

Anne narrated how she was sent to live with a distant relative in another town because her mother was struggling to care for her and her siblings:

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<sup>3</sup>. Child fostering is a common practice in Nigeria where parents send their children to live with relatives or friends when they do not have either the time or the necessary resources to care for them.

*Anne:* When I was in Senior Secondary School 1 (SSS1), things were a bit tight at home, I was sent to live with my mom's younger sister. I stayed there till I completed my SSS3. I did not have a good experience there because my aunt's husband was not that friendly. They had no child of their own so I was made to do the entire housework.

The burden of childcare pushed Anne's mother to rely on her family for assistance. Young women in foster homes have different types of experiences that put them in vulnerable positions. Anne's mom sent her to live with her sister with the hope that her aunt would take up full responsibility for her secondary school education up to university level. This ended in Anne running away from her foster home as her aunt's husband constantly abused her. Girls in foster homes are exposed to adverse conditions because relatives might become abusive and exploitative, as they can also be economically challenged (Andvig *et al.* 2001; Cohen 2003; Dottridge 2004), as seen in Anne's case.

The other young women further echoed Anne's sentiments, as seen below:

*Daisey:* I lived with mostly my mom's relatives here and there. My mom being the younger wife in the family and with her petty trade could not shoulder all our responsibilities. The older wife was richer; she was able to take good care of her children. So it was each mother to her own children.

The narrative of living with 'mom's relatives here and there' indicates an unstable life for the participant. It also shows that child fostering, in this case, did not achieve its aim and purpose just like in Anne's case. In the long run, the aim of child fostering is defeated in cases where youth in foster care have experienced a number of traumatic experiences that make them particularly vulnerable to being trafficked (Hannan *et al.* 2017).

Not all the mothers sent their children to live with their relatives. Cameo, however, found herself a foster home due to personal challenges at her own home.

*Cameo:* I was seen as a threat to my father's wife. She never treated me well after my mom left. At times my siblings and I were not given food to eat. I can never forget why I left home; I was very hungry; I asked my stepmom for some

rice because she had just finished cooking. She told me she had no food for me... I could not report her to my dad because he never supports or believed me anyway. I went to a friend's house and I was given food there, I was also allowed to spend the night after telling my story. I never went back home afterwards. While growing up, I lived with friends, family members and even with people that I had no relationship with.

Cameo's story raises multiple questions on factors such as: claims of ill treatment, abuse, and lack of support and hunger, which all contributed towards her running away from home. Such living conditions seem to have played a huge significance in the young woman's vulnerability to trafficking. Children in homes where the parents are separated end up being taken care of by their stepmothers. In most cases, the common narrative around such arrangements is that children are ill-treated and suffer abuse and neglect at the hands of their caregivers (Elbedour 2002). In this case, the above narrative also shows that in some cases, fathers played limited roles in protecting their children in the absence of their biological mothers.

Once again family instability is dominant in the narratives of these participants and it is strongly linked with the low economic empowerment of women, as emphasized in this analysis. Financial struggles, poverty, and gendered limitations experienced by women at different structural levels in this society, played a very significant role in the trafficking of these young women, as is also consistent with literature (see Andvig *et al.* 2001; Cohen 2003; Dottridge 2004; Ojomo 2005).

#### **4.1.1.5. Selling children to traffickers**

Further narratives from two of the participants show how female children are vulnerable to trafficking when their mothers sell them to traffickers. They cite financial hardship as a justification to do so:

*Daisey:* My mom told me that since I was not doing anything at that moment I should visit one of my late grandmother's relatives across the border that maybe they will be able to help raise some money for me to rewrite my exams. I was surprised because I never knew or heard that my grandmother had any

relative across the border. She convinced me that my grandmother had relatives just that she did not keep in touch with them due to some reasons which she was not ready to discuss with me. I was happy for the change in environment I had anticipated. At the set date of my travel, arranged for someone who was travelling to the same town where our relatives were staying. I had no idea what was happening. It was not in my wildest dreams...The woman and I with five other girls left at night because she said that was the best time to travel. When we arrived, the other girls were dropped off at different places while I remained in the bus. I was the last person to be dropped off. I was looking forward to meeting my unknown relatives and the woman said...so this is where we are going. You will be working here. I said work? There must be a mistake and before I could even finish my statement, she said I should forget about the story of meeting any relatives, I had been sold to her by my mom and I should not even think of escaping otherwise I will regret it.

*Edana:* Going to live with a relative as I hoped was the only option I had if I ever wanted to live a better life because we did not have enough money to spend. I did not want to leave home but I guess I had no choice as I thought I would have taken another burden off my mother's shoulders if a relative has agreed to pay for my education and upkeep. The thought of going to live across the border got me excited. I had never travelled outside the country before. I was handed over to a trader who was traveling to the same town where my aunt lives. The journey was long and rough but I did not mind because I thought it would all be over soon. When I finally arrived at my supposed aunt's place across the border, I realized that I had no relative waiting for me. The trader who I travelled with told me that my mom had sold me to her.

Daisey and Edana's stories are chilling examples of young women's vulnerability to trafficking at the hands of the very people who should be protecting them: parents. This example raises multiple concerns around young women's vulnerability. Edana indicates that by leaving she thought that she would have relieved her mother of the 'burden' of her own care: she had to take the sacrifice. Indeed there is no justification for any parent to sell their child, however, it

is evident here that poverty played a very significant role in the selling of these young women to traffickers. Studies indicate that selling children to traffickers is not a new phenomenon and has been widely documented (See Bales *et al.* 2005; Bettio & Nandi 2010).

Female-headed households have worse experiences of poverty and these experiences are mediated by gender roles and cultural beliefs which determine the roles, power, privileges and type of life for men, women, male and female children in this particular context in the society. Female children are turned into a 'commodity' and what is sad is that women are selling their female children to other women.

#### **4.1.1.6. I stopped going to school: Low levels of education**

When poor families face financial challenges, it influences other aspects of their lives. The multiple intersections of poverty, gender inequality and gendered ideologies organizing communities affected these young women's level of education. Young girls in a single parent household living in poverty are forced to drop out of school due to financial burdens. From the narratives in this study, only two of the participants interviewed completed secondary school education. The other three participants dropped out of school due to financial constraints, as illustrated in the narrative below:

*Barbie:* After we were thrown out of my stepfather's house, my mom and I relocated. This affected my education. Before our relocation, I was already in SSS2, I had just one more year to complete my secondary education. When we relocated...I was demoted to JSS2. I could not stand this...why should I go all the way back to JSS 2? I could not cope with it so I stopped going to school. The only option I had was to be enrolled in a private secondary school and my mom could not afford this. I decided to wait till she has money to send me to a private secondary school...but this never happened.

Barbie's narrative shows the multiple complications that shape the challenges faced by young women in this context. Here, family instability, linked with financial constraints, affected Barbie's progress in school. This young woman was still hoping to go back to school, which never happened, and she ended up being trafficked. While waiting for her mother to have

enough money to enrol her in a private school, her being left idle without guidance and support exposed her to interact with peers who introduced her to her trafficker.

Cameo shared a different story of her struggle to educate herself:

*Cameo:* I first moved out of home when I was in my second year in secondary school. After my mom moved out, my step mom was very cruel towards me. She cooked and gave her children food but not me. My dad was never around, even when he was, he never listened to me. I went to friends' houses here and there until I moved in with a friend because I was pitied and welcomed there; I was also given food, which was a big deal at home. So I decided to stay there for some time. I already had some hairdressing skills that I learnt from my mom; I started going to salons to help out after school just to make some money for my upkeep. I was basically taking care of myself with the support of my friend's family of course because I had somewhere to lay my head. I did this schooling and making hair till I completed my SSS 3 which is the highest educational qualification that I have. I planned to retake my exams because I did not make all my papers but that never happened. Out of the little money I made, I still give some to my siblings staying with my dad because I knew they would not be properly taken care of by my step mom.

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Coping with school, providing for her siblings and working at the salon affected Cameo's performance at school, as she did not pass well enough to proceed further in her studies. She was faced with the responsibility of a parent at this stage of her life. She lacked support, supervision and provision. Her emotional and family instability negatively affected her, which made her vulnerable to trafficking. The participation of young girls with low levels of education in economic activities clearly did not take them far.

Anne also narrated a similar story. Although she completed high school, her situation was not any better:

*Anne:* Yes, I completed high school. I decided to go into this because there was no hope to further my education. I have always had a passion for hairdressing, pedicure and manicure so I was enrolled for this. I hoped to finish

and do my graduation so that I can have my own salon and make money to help at home.

Anne had decided to acquire job skills instead of furthering her education. In addition, she was aware that her hope of going to the university would not be fulfilled due to financial constraints. She opted for economic empowerment in order to help ease the financial burden at home. Anne says ‘there was no hope to further more’, this indicates that she gave up her dream of going to the higher institution of learning in order to allow her siblings to continue with their studies. As made evident by Makama, educational opportunities are usually cut short by patriarchal attitudes about gender roles because some parents attach higher importance to the education of boys than girls. This is always the case when parents do not have sufficient resources to enrol all children in school (Makama 2013). Anne was, therefore, pushed to the informal sector of the economy in order to learn hairdressing, pedicure and manicure to share household burdens with her mother. Studies confirm that the engagement of girls in domestic activities is higher than boys’, which is a major concern to their general well-being (See Mukherjee 2008).

Several other factors are linked with financial constraints in the young women’s low level of education. Interrelated factors such as poverty, ignorance, parental attitudes, and child labour add to the decline in the education of young girls in the context of study (see also Mohanty 2003). Studies have shown that girls in polygamous settings are most commonly affected as they are deprived of basic fundamental rights (Lyimo 2011). Anderson (2003) also corroborates this claim by stating that family structure determines which children will benefit more from schooling, as well as the quality of the school, including expenditure. The adults decide which children to invest in, and to what extent. From these narratives, it is evident that the low level of education among the participants hugely contributed to their eventual trafficking.

## **4.2. NARRATIVES OF EXPERIENCES OF TRAFFICKING**

### **4.2.1. Narratives of deceit and desire for a better life**

The common trend in the recruitment of victims by traffickers in this context is deceit. Traffickers generally target vulnerable groups who could easily be deceived: those who are in vulnerable enough conditions to fall for their bait. My participants were already in this position

and their desire for a better life facilitated their recruitment into trafficking. Three of the participants were deceived by the promise of working as hair stylists abroad, while the other two participants were sold to traffickers by their mothers. In this study, I found that all the participants were ignorant of trafficking. It should be noted that all the participants in this study were trafficked by the same woman (who will be referred to as ‘Mamma’) at different times and from different contexts:

Anne: After I completed my apprenticeship at the salon, I was faced with another challenge of raising money for my freedom<sup>4</sup> in order to open my own salon. I was therefore working for my boss in order to raise some money for this purpose and to also help at home. Mamma was a customer who came in one day and asked for the best person to attend to her nails because she did not want an apprentice to do a bad job on her. My boss called me to serve her and I did a good job, she was happy. She asked for my name and she left me with a good tip, I was very happy. On my way home, unknown to me that she was waiting for me, she called my name; I realized she was the customer that was at the salon earlier. I was even more surprised that she could still remember my name. I asked her if there was any problem, she... said no she had been waiting for me because she liked the job I did on her nails. She then asked me if I will not mind working in a professional setting and make more money. She then told me that she needed people like me in her salon across the border to work for her; she said if I work for only six months, I will make a lot of money to set up my salon. I was so excited and I said yes.

Anne’s desire to be economically independent by ‘setting up her own salon’ opened her up to trafficking. The intersection of desire for economic independence and poverty put Anne in a vulnerable position and she fell for deceit. She was deceived into trafficking by Mamma who was very familiar with this environment; enough to know that apprentices who have completed their training usually needed financial support to be independent salon owners (freedom as Anne indicates above). The bait of working for six months and making enough money to set up her own salon was enough to convince Anne because Mamma had done a thorough

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<sup>4</sup>. Freedom is a graduation ceremony conducted for learners who have learnt and completed a trade or a particular skill.



background study of knowing what her needs were. The same pattern of deceit was also used by Mamma on Cameo, as indicated in her narrative:

I was working as a stylist in a salon close to us in order to make some money and take care of my siblings; I was also working to make money for my freedom because I had long finished my apprenticeship. Mamma was someone I knew in the neighbourhood although we do not really talk... She met me on my way from the salon one day and asked...what I was doing at the moment. I told her I was working towards my freedom. Mamma said she can help me because she has a salon abroad and she was in need of hair stylists to work for her. She said that she guaranteed me that by the time I work for six months there I will have more than enough money for my freedom. She even said that if I am hard working, she was sure I will not even spend up to that six months before making a lot of money then I will be able to come back and set up my own salon back home.

In the context of this study, hairdressing is a menial job that women, especially young women, engage in locally in Nigeria in order to make money, which falls under the informal sector of the economy. In order to acquire this skill and be independently established, it is required for a trainee to train under an already established hairdresser for a number of years. Set against the backdrop of the informal sector of the Nigerian economy, youths who experience high levels of unemployment due to poverty, low levels of education, and several other factors, especially in rural and semi-urban areas, are mostly found in this sector. The 'master', at his or her discretion based on the competency of the learned trade, grants permission for 'freedom' in order for the apprentice to legitimately trade independently (Jawando *et al.* 2012). Anne and Cameo's stories are the same because these two young women were under pressure to be economically independent. Mamma clearly had carried out a careful study of her targets to know what story will work in her deceitful process in recruiting them. In this study, it was apparent that young women who were engaged in hairdressing or pedicure and manicure work were easy targets for traffickers.

Barbie was another victim of deceit who was introduced to Mamma by her boyfriend who happened to be Mamma's accomplice, as shown below:

*Barbie*: After I dropped out of school and was doing nothing, I just hung around with my friends in the neighbourhood; made hair for people once in a while if I see anyone who wanted to make her hair. One day, my boyfriend told me about this lady who needed a stylist across the border that if I am interested in earning good money I should give it a try, I did not even think twice before I agreed to his proposition. ...This boyfriend of mine later introduced me to Mamma in person who said she needed hair stylist to work in her salon in South Africa. I had the skills, and I was eager to do something for myself. I told my mom about it and she warned me not to go but she did not give any reason. And the thought of going to South Africa was also too good to be true. I made all the arrangements to go with Mamma without my mom's knowledge.

Similar to the above narratives, this participant was lured into trafficking through a promise of a job. The environment where girls socialized, coupled with their low level of maturity and the need for economic independence, exposed them to the deceitful tactics used by traffickers (See Luya 2012). This type of trafficking has also been documented in multiple contexts where women were promised employment in other countries (Shelly 2007; UN 2000).

The height of Barbie's desperation to be economically dependent was evident, as she did not heed to her mother's warning against the likely false prospect of working outside the country.

'I was eager to do something for myself. I told my mom about it and she warned me not to go but she did not give me any specific reason' - *Barbie*.

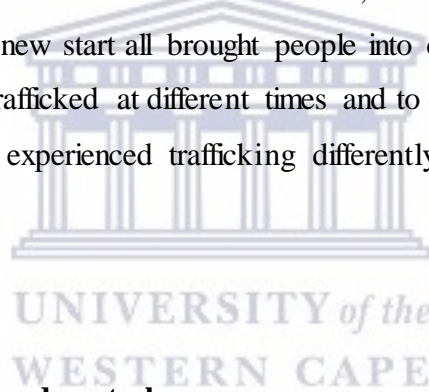
The hidden nature of human trafficking is evident in this case. 'I was eager to do something for myself' is a clear reflection of Barbie's struggle to live a better life. Barbie's mom's refusal to explain her scepticism at working in another country also hid the possible implications and risks of taking up such an opportunity. The hidden and silent nature around trafficking issues exposed the majority of these young women to traffickers due to their lack of adequate knowledge.

Daisey and Edana claimed that relatives deceived them, as they told their stories of how they ended up being trafficked:

*Daisey:* my own mother deceived me. She had planned the whole thing all along without my knowledge. It was all a lie.

*Edana:* It was hard for me to believe that my mom deceived me and sold me to traffickers. Of course I knew we were struggling at home but that was the last I could ever think of.

What strongly emerged from this study were narratives of deceit – mothers deceiving their children and selling them to traffickers to ease the financial burden on the family; and young women who were deceived by the traffickers themselves, who used their own hopes and dreams of a better life against them. The desire for a better life, the need to escape conflict, and oppression and the hope for a new start all brought people into contact with traffickers (Bales 2005). The participants were trafficked at different times and to different locations, hence they all shared different stories and experienced trafficking differently.



#### **4.2.2. Power, manipulation and control**

Participants reported how traffickers controlled and manipulated them throughout the trafficking processes. From the participants' stories, there were no reports of violent abductions in the recruitment processes, but their trafficking was not voluntary or consensual. Deception has been described as a tool that is often used in recruitment for forced labour (Belsler & Andress 2009). The traffickers utilized psychological and subtle use of force to control their victims. Physical restraint and captivity of victims would result in complicated situations, but psychological control was much easier to conceal (see Dando 2016). Women who are generally assumed to be non-violent and easy to control, therefore they are considered as easy targets for traffickers. Traffickers build their position of power from the recruitment stage onwards by carefully exploring and familiarizing themselves with the targets' environment, to gain insights as well as to strategize for successful recruitment and trafficking. Traffickers know where to "hand pick" girls, and they acquaint themselves with the traumatic life-histories of their

potential victims (Godman & Leidholdt 2011) as is clearly evident in the participants' narratives.

Participants claimed that Mamma used 'supernatural' powers, some sort of magic or 'Juju'<sup>5</sup>, and oath taking<sup>6</sup> on three of the participants. The participants also claimed that the effect of the charms on them resulted in their being psychologically controlled as well as manipulated, as reported in the following story:

Anne: Mamma invited me to her hotel room to have further discussion about the job offer and travel plans. I was given a black face cloth to wipe my sweat and offered some black fish to eat as well. I fell asleep and I woke up the next morning with a blank memory. Mamma came back with three other girls, apologized and said she needed to quickly buy some stuffs across the border before we can go and say goodbye to my mom, that was the last I remembered till I found myself at this strange place across the border.

In the narrative above, Anne claims that she did not have a clear memory of the journey because she was unconscious due to the 'traditional charm' which she calls 'juju' (as it is locally referred to) cast on her through the fish that she ate and the black face cloth she used to wipe her face. She claims that she lost memory of the journey and how long it took them to travel there. The term 'juju' originated from Nigeria's colonial history and language (Aghatise 2002). The use of juju in this case is a traditional means of psychologically controlling trafficked young women. Juju and oaths are psychological tools of control, and it is believed that the gods will severely punish any person who does not comply with the oath (Oba 2008), and it was therefore not surprising that the participants were manipulated in this way.

Participants presented different claims on what they believed to be supernatural means of control and manipulation, which they experienced. While Anne reported eating fish and wiping her face with a black cloth, Cameo and Barbie narrated different experiences:

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<sup>5</sup> Juju is defined as a magical and supernatural power common in West Africa, which is popular for its vindictive nature (Ikeora 2016). One of its numerous uses is to invoke curses and bad omens on whoever goes against it.

<sup>6</sup> Oath taking is a covenant made between two or more people with a threat for severe consequences if any of the party goes against it.

*Cameo:* We travelled mostly at night on rough roads across the border with six other girls and a woman. There was no time to rest, the bus driver only stopped for us to freshen up before the final lap of our journey. Mamma made us take an oath to be sure that we will work for her and not run away. This was done by the other woman that travelled with us whom I later realized was an herbalist. She cut some of the hairs on our heads, cut little of our toes and finger nails and gave us a black liquid substance to lick. I have watched things like this in the movies never imagined it happening to me.

*Barbie:* I never had any experience of a witch doctor; I had no idea what Mamma was up to. I was instructed to bring one of my panties, cut some of my toe nails, finger nails, and some hair from my private part as well as my armpit. We gave all these to the other woman that came with us and we were told that if we betray Mamma in any way we would die.

Using such measures to coerce young women is an act of power and control by the traffickers. Oath taking is a common practice in Nigeria, meant to bind a contractual agreement in case of default. Here, the trafficker uses ‘supernatural coercion’ as a control mechanism to keep her victims in bondage (See Ikeora 2016 for related examples). The purpose of the control mechanism is to instil fear, commitment and to keep victims of trafficking imprisoned for as long as the traffickers wanted. The young women also shared their general belief that there are negative consequences for those who go against oaths taken, as seen in Barbie’s words: “...if we betray Mamma in any way we will die”. Some scholars have documented such beliefs to include that the consequences of reprisals for renegades can range from madness to death (See Fayomi 2009).

The traffickers here needed to consistently control and dominate their victims, hence their need to ensure a power imbalance throughout the trafficking process. It is generally believed that the majority of Nigerians believe in the supernatural, therefore it is not surprising that these young women believed that the oath they were made to take will have negative repercussions for them if they did not comply with the traffickers. Having full knowledge that the belief in the supernatural and juju practices regulates the lives of many Nigerian communities, traffickers deceitfully manipulate this reality to control victims for sexual exploitation (See Baarda 2016: 259).

Women trafficked across the borders of their own countries have different experiences in comparison with women trafficked within their countries of origin. The intersection of their lack of knowledge of the laws and policies in the countries they are trafficked to, and their ignorance about trafficking, further puts them in powerless positions.

*Barbie:* If I had known the laws of the country and made a formal report at the police station within the first three months of being in the country, things would have been different. We did not have access to this information, our cell phones were taken away, and we were always hidden and guarded. We could not go out on our own. We mostly went out at night.

*Edana:* We lived in bondage as our movement was restricted and closely guarded, our bosses took our identity documents away, and we were not allowed to freely communicate with people.

*Daisey:* We were also threatened and misinformed that if we attempted to escape we will be jailed. We got to know later that all these were not true that if we had actually gone to the police earlier we would have been rescued.

Traffickers manipulated the women by using their knowledge of the location to their advantage, by restricting their victims' movement and access to necessary information that would have been helpful for their escape. It has also been reported that the principal methods traffickers use to control victims include: taking away victims' travel and identity documents, and repeatedly telling victims that the local police or immigration authorities will arrest, brutalize, or even kill them if they are found (see Bales *et al.* 2005.) Some of the participants narrated that the traffickers deceived them into believing that going to the police to facilitate their escape would categorize them as illegal immigrants.

#### **4.2.3. Debt bondage as a means of control and sexual exploitation**

With the successful recruitment of victims, traffickers continue to maintain their positions of power by ensuring the victims remain subservient to them. Traffickers further exert power and control by manipulating their captives into debt bondage in order to render them powerless. All

the participants reported that they were informed on arrival at their trafficked destinations that they were in debt:

*Barbie:* “Who do you think paid for your travel papers and transport before you got here? Do you think we are running a charity shop here? You owe me equivalent of about five million naira which you have to hustle and pay back.”

*Cameo:* I thought it was a joke. I wondered how I would be able to pay back this huge amount of money I was told I owed. Mamma just dropped me there without any further explanation and she left.

Debt bondage is a tool used by traffickers to further entrap their victims and make them do their bidding. This means is also employed by the traffickers to restrict the captive’s movement through confiscation of their travel documents. They were told that they would only have access to their travel documents when they had paid up their debts. They were left with no better choice other than to accept their fate and lived their lives according to the dictates of their new bosses.

*Daisey:* ‘I paid your mom a huge sum of money, I have to recover my money back’ said Mamma. I was told that I owed about four million naira and that the earlier I start hustling to pay back the quicker I will have my papers and be free to go.

*Edana:* Mamma told me that my mom sold me to her and I have to work and pay her back all the money as agreed with my mom. I broke down crying and I was told to go and ‘hustle’ (hustle is the term used for selling sex in this context).

From the above narratives, Daisey and Edana, despite being sold to Mamma, were still indebted to the traffickers for expenses incurred, for travel documents, accommodation and transportation. Participants detailed the different modes the traffickers used to keep their captives for as long as possible. Just like traditional slavery practices, debt bondage, as seen in the following narrative, the victim was not allowed to leave her job until payment had been made.

*Cameo:* Aunty (that is what we call my boss) told me to go and hustle so that I can pay up her money on time. I told her I don't know what she meant by hustle, she said I must go out with the other girls at night to watch what they were doing. We were given new clothes to wear...altered neck tops and miniskirts. I went out with about ten other girls standing by the road side just outside the bar and I saw men coming around to take the girls one after the other inside the rooms. Then I realized what hustle meant.

Participants revealed that agreeing to 'hustle' or engaging in commercial sex was a survival issue in this instance rather than a choice. In their positions, they further revealed that, 'hustling' was forced on them and they were not given any other options. The intersection of the unequal position of power between traffickers and the trafficked women played a major role in this instance as they were coerced into commercial sex work.

*Anne:* After I agreed to do whatever my boss wanted me to do (hustle), she became nice to me. She took care of me, bought me new clothes, toiletries, and provided for my other needs. She promised to continue taking care of me if I continue to behave well.

*Edana:* The other girls that I met there told me they were just like me when they came and that they are now enjoying a good life. They did not hesitate to show me all the things bought for them to make their lives bearable and advised me to stop being stubborn.

As narrated above, material things were used as a means of coercion where Anne was showered with gifts in order to make her think of the benefits of sex work. Edana's story also confirmed this by reporting that the other girls encouraged her to cooperate, be well behaved so that she could also enjoy the good things they were enjoying. Traffickers allow new victims to interact with the older victims who were already familiar with the system, with the aim of indirectly familiarizing them with the situation, what will be expected of them, as well as to disorientate, frighten, and gain obedience and control (Bales 2005).



Feminists' debates have emphasized the issue of voluntary consent and choice in sex work. The coercion of women into sexual activity by men in the society is an indication of social inequality between both genders (MacKinnon 1986). Prostitution and trafficking, under Barry's dominance feminism model, are exclusively about the sexualized oppression of women by men. In this case, it is evident that all participants were 'tricked' and coerced into selling sex, not for their own benefit but for the traffickers (Henson 2015; Almario 2015). Clearly, the young women did not give their consent to engage in commercial sex work and lacked any form of protection. They were, therefore, being sexually exploited. Furthermore, it should be noted that the experiences of women trafficked for commercial sex work will not be the same as those of women who voluntarily engage in sex work as a profession. Several feminist debates seem to contest prostitution as either a violation of human rights or not. From radical feminists' perspectives, prostitution or commercial sex is seen as violent, exploitative and oppressive in nature. The debates emphasize that all women in prostitution are forced and it is patriarchal in nature. Liberal feminists, on the other hand, support the empowering nature of voluntary sex work. Liberal feminists, with their support for prostitution, emphasize that women who give consent to prostitution should be protected (Outshoorn 2005; Aghatise 2004; Jeffreys 2004; Raymond *et al.* 2002; Outshoorn 2005; Limoncelli 2009; Dempsey 2010).

*Cameo:* Aunty told me that since I was not living a better life back home, it is better to do something to pay up my debt and still be sending some money home to help my family. I thought about this and it made sense to me since I did not have anything to do back home.

Here the trafficker used the intersecting layers of vulnerabilities as a tool to convince Cameo to engage in commercial sex work. From Cameo's story, 'Aunty' reminded her of her poor standard of living back home. This, coupled with other factors, would limit her chances of living a better life if she objected to her proposition to sell sex and Cameo was convinced she was doing the right thing.

Daisey also narrated her reason for resigning herself to her fate by engaging in sex work:

*Daisey:* While the other girls were crying about the situation we found ourselves in, I did not cry, I thought about my life back home, there was

nothing to go back to. I just had to accept my fate, work hard to pay up and regain my freedom.

The realization of being enslaved and the desperation to regain her freedom is evident in Daisey's story when she says: 'I just had to accept my fate'. The definition of female sexual slavery is regarded as a condition where women or girls are subjected to sexual exploitation irrespective of the factors that placed them in such situations (See Butler 2003). Sex trafficking, as related by the participants here, is about slavery, it emphasizes the enslavement of an individual by coercive labour and the exploitation of bodies (See Kara 2009).

Forced prostitution, as evidenced in the above narratives, can be regarded as forced labour in the trafficking of young women. This is undoubtedly gender-based violence and a violation of human rights. Gender-based violence and unequal power dynamics are key dynamics that mediate to contribute to the young women engaging in sex work in this context. Selling sex in this case is categorized as forced labour, which one engages in mainly for the financial benefits of the traffickers. Forced prostitution/sex work is the use of another person for sexual purposes in exchange for cash or material things which can be between a customer, an intermediary/agent, and any other person who gains one way or the other from the trade (See UNODC 2012). This study further compliments the feminist notion that there is no demarcation between sex work and trafficking, as they are both forms of female sexual slavery. Sexual domination is the cause of trafficking and it is oppressive in nature as it violates women's rights through deception or force (see also Usman 2014).

Sex work, as shown in this context, is a display of the impact of multiple intersecting layers of the negative outcome of gendered power differences in the society. Clearly linked with this is the dominating and controlling nature of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity in this society. Young women's sexuality is exploited for the benefit of patriarchy as evident in the popular phrase 'male domination in the trafficking ring' (Scoular 2004:343). This study clearly shows that women are mostly trafficked for the purpose of commercial heterosexual exploitation by other women. Women have been found to play active roles in the recruitment processes of new sex workers, as they are closer to, and have easier access to other women (Kienast 2015). My study seems to be in line with this as it shows that the trafficker and the bosses (agents who bought these girls) were all females but what is common in all the narrative is that the clients were consistently hetero-sexual males.

Further studies have shown that women are more trafficked than men globally for sex work, with women constituting 98% of victims of commercial sexual exploitation (See Rafferty 2013). It has also been proven that heterosexual prostitution is the most common and lucrative form of commercial sexual exploitation by adult males, which mostly affect women (IOM 2009, United States Department of States 2012). The intersections of multiple gendered factors promote and normalize heterosexual exploitation of women in the society, as indicated in the women's narratives in this section.

Participants' narratives further revealed the intersection of gender, sexuality and citizenship, as participants felt that their 'clients' humiliated and objectified them because they were foreigners:

*Edana:* Most of the men that come to that place are married. But they will rather preserve their wives at home and come to women like us for sex. I think they believe that women like us are trash and that we can have sex with them in any way they want to because they are paying for it and many of us doing that were foreigners.

*Anne:* Some of the men will tell us that if we are nice to them they will give us something extra. Nice to them means we should have sex with them in whatever way they wanted. But some are not nice. I heard one of the girls said that most of those men don't do these stuffs to their wives at home.

The young women in the above extracts raised concerns about feeling violated, associating this feeling with their identity as outsiders and the belief that foreign women's sexuality is for sale, which made them sex objects for these men (See Neves 2011). Crenshaw (1991) asserts that intersectionality proclaims the impact of sexism as dependent on race, class and other identities. The participants felt that they were categorized as lower class and of less value in comparison to the wives of these men who patronized them for sex. The dignity and pride of these women were compromised, as indicated in the above narratives, where the survivors claimed that their bodies were abused and objectified. Sexual issues, as have emerged in all of the narratives from the five participants, are strong motive for trafficking, and it remains a huge concern for feminism.

#### 4.2.4. Experiences of Physical Violence and Psychological abuse

Participants claimed that they experienced both physical and psychological abuse due to their unwillingness and resistance to cooperate with the traffickers and hustlers. Traffickers engage in sexual exploitation of young women for business purposes, therefore they go to extremes by being violent to ensure that their victims are productive. Violence, threats and other means are some of the ways that traffickers use to break the spirit of their victims and to overcome their resistance (See Laczko 2002). This was evident in Anne and Daisey's narratives:

*Anne:* I was beaten for several days after my refusal to hustle...locked up in a cage like a dog at the back of the house without food or water for days. I was thirsty hungry and only survived with the help of a girl who used to sneak some food to my cage whenever she was around.

*Daisey:* Any girl brought to that place who refuses to hustle after all the punishment is said to be sick. We will only hear that they are being taken to the hospital for treatment and we never see them come back. We all wanted to behave or else we would be taken to hospital.

Anne claimed that she was beaten and later confined in a cage because of her refusal to sell sex. This study has already shown that traffickers use coercion and manipulation to recruit these young women, but this coercion took a violent turn when participants continued to resist selling sex. Daisey narrated that any girl who could not be forced or coerced into sex work was taken away. Two of the other participants claimed this to be true and that it was common knowledge that any form of misbehaviour, especially disobedience, would land them in the "hospital". "Hospital" to the young women in this context was not a place for treatment of ailments, but rather for kidney removal and death. Human trafficking consists of several activities. While it is mostly known for sexual exploitation, the participants' stories reported that trafficking in this instance was also linked with human organ trafficking.

*Edana:* ...a girl there told me that those men who were not blacks were not coming for sex alone, most of them were the 'kidney customers'....I remember aunty told me one day 'I will kill you'. If you make me lose my money on you; one of us will meet God because I will not allow you go scot free'.

*Barbie*: I learnt that girls do disappear without anyone knowing their whereabouts. I was disturbed and scared because I did not want to end up that way.

Blatant and overt threats were used to terrify trafficked victims and to keep them in line, as Edana narrated. Edana also reported that disobedience would result in being taken away and killed. In this instance, the traffickers indiscriminately used violence as a weapon to maintain their positions of power and control. The *UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women* defines violence against women as: “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women” (UN 1993).

Daisey also added that:

The first time I started this job it was a terrible experience for me. I couldn't do it the way the man wanted. He reported me to aunty and she slapped me for spoiling her business. She said she could see that I will work for a long time before I ever pay up my debt.

Apart from the girls being abused for their resistance to sex work, they were further punished if their clients complained about their attitude or sexual performance. Several forms of punishment included beating, starvation, and non-payment of their service fees for days. Not cooperating with the client meant having sex the way the client wanted, irrespective of whether it caused any form of discomfort or pain to the girls. In these narratives, the participants reported that some of the men did not report them, but rather punished them by having sex with them in unpleasant ways, which they referred to as being ‘sexually punished’. This meant that they were kept for longer hours than necessary and, in the process, sustained sexual injuries. Men who satisfy their sexual desires by reducing other humans to sex objects through payment or other means are referred to as prostitute abusers (Jeffries 1997:4). Extreme forms of physical and sexual violence against trafficked women have been reported in several international studies in several countries and continents (See, Farley, Matthews *et al.* 2011; Zimmerman,

Hossain, Abas, Light & Watts 2010; Kennedy *et al.* 2007; Sarkar *et al.* 2008; Di tommaso *et al.* 2009; Acharya & Clark 2010; Aronowitz 2009; Bokhari 2008; Cwikel, Chudakov, Paikin, Agmon & Belmaker 2004). Narratives of sexual domination of trafficked women's bodies by their male clients and the traffickers were dominant and these are abusive in nature. The intersection of gender and sexuality continue to be the basis of women's subjugation and exposure to violence, as seen in the above narratives. Gender and sexuality are markers of inequality through which women's bodies are being exploited (Baye 2012) in this study. For these trafficked young women, sex work was neither beneficial nor empowering but rather, it exposed them to traumatic and violent experiences which is in congruent with the radical feminist's argument.

Also, as a major feminist issue, trafficking, for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation, is seen as abuse of sex that deprives women from owning any form of power over themselves (See Mackinnon 1982). There are multiple layers of unequal power relations in the violent experiences of trafficked women for commercial sex work, as shown in this study. These women were so subjugated that they lacked any form of control over what happened to them. As narrated by the participants, women trafficked for sex work does not determine who their clients are; they do not negotiate or give terms and conditions for their services. These types of non-negotiable working conditions however, complements the radical feminist's campaign against prostitution and sexual labour as patriarchal and exploitative, as it violates women's rights, as also seen in this study.

From different feminist campaigns regarding sex work, either by choice or by coercion, it has been emphasized that the issue of consent is important. Men who engaged in sex with these young women did so on their own terms because the women had no power to dictate their terms of sexual engagement with their clients. The participants said that some of the clients decided to use medicinal sex stimulants on themselves before sex without the consent of the women they engaged with in order to boost their own sexual performances. Examples of this nature are typical instances of sexually abusing such women. Strongly linked with sex stimulants as an abusive act is also the issue of alcohol and drug abuse, as Cameo and Edana's narratives reveal:

*Cameo:* The men drink, some will be on drugs before coming. They say that it helps improve their performances. And some of the girls also believe that it will help them in their services to these men.

*Edana:* Some of them are nice, they do not force us to use drugs and some are wicked they force us to use drugs. They said it will make our service easier.

Narratives of male clients who controlled the sexual performances of the young women, by forcing them to use drugs or alcohol, is a non-conscientious act and is also an act that benefitted those men only. Here, the unequal power relation and the dominant control of male clients under the influence of drugs and alcohol placed the young women in positions of abuse. Raymond (2001) reports that the male “customer” has become the most invisible factor in promoting prostitution worldwide. The domination of men over women’s sexuality is present here as they exercise control and power over the trafficked women.

*Edana:* We cannot dictate if a client must use a condom or not. Some of them use and some of them do not. Remember we do not have the right to complain or these men will report us.

*Daisey:* Those men smell. Even their mouths smell badly. It looks like they have not brushed their teeth or taken their bath for days. And we must look nice for them and allow them access to us whenever they come.

*Cameo:* You cannot refuse a client. Even when you are tired if a client wants you he cannot be refused.

*Barbie:* Concerning the issue of protection when we work, we are on our own. Our bosses don’t get involved. They are mainly concerned about their money.

As reported here, the participants were unable to protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections and other diseases associated with unprotected sexual intercourse. The traffickers involved here did not make the necessary provisions to cater for the health of their captives; neither did they give the captives the power to control what happened to them. The trafficked here were not only exposed to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, but other infections related to lack of proper hygiene on the client’s part. Other studies have shown tuberculosis as other types of infectious diseases that trafficked victims are exposed to (See Barrows & Finger 2008).

Refusal to use a condom and the denial to healthcare services and facilities put these trafficked women in a space that violated their rights. The imposition of unsafe sex on women places them more at risk of contracting and spreading STIs/HIV/AIDS. Worldwide, women constitute more than half of all people living with HIV. Women are at least twice more likely to acquire HIV from men during sexual intercourse than vice versa. This is evident by the alarming number of HIV/AIDS infected and affected households in Africa. (UNAIDS Fact Sheet, 2014).

#### **4.3. NARRATIVES ON THE IMPACT OF TRAFFICKING**

Human trafficking experiences affect men, women and children differently. However, the impact of trafficking will be heavier on women who were coerced and deceived into trafficking for sexual exploitation in comparison with women who willingly migrated for commercial sexual purposes or other forms of labour. The various experiences have significant impact on the lives of the young women after their rescue. It should be noted that the impact of trafficking, for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation for these survivors, will also be different because all the women facilitated their escape without any assistance whatsoever. This clearly indicates that their experiences of sex work influenced them negatively, hence their need to make a plan and escape from the traffickers.

Narratives on the impact of trafficking for the affected young women started from their trafficked destinations and continued to manifest in their lives even after their rescue. Sadness, guilt and regret were dominant themes within the narratives reported by all the participants. Experiences of psychological and emotional impacts were more dominant in the narratives in comparison with physical impacts. In addition, their experiences of trafficking have influenced the young women's self-esteem and relationships in their immediate community. One of the participants, however, reported her fear of ever travelling out of the country again. Above all, there is no significant change in the quality of life after their return from the lives they lived before.



#### 4.3.1. Regrets, Guilt and Sadness

All the participants reported that they regretted falling for the deceit and lies of the traffickers:

*Barbie:* I curse the day I met my boyfriend and Mamma. I regret ever listening to their lies. I also regret not listening to my mother's warnings about all these people. She warned me but I did not listen. The most painful part in all these is that I lost my mom while I was there. Although I tried to send money home to take care of her but she still did not make it. I always feel guilty that I was part of the reason why she died.

*Cameo:* If not for my friend that introduced me to you I will not share my story with you. People may be interested in my story just to make jest of me so I don't talk about it. That makes it even more painful. It is a chapter of my life that makes me sad and angry. But if my story will help someone out there, why won't I share it? It was an unfortunate experience for me because I thought I was doing it in order to help my family but here I am today a survivor of trafficking. Of course I regret everything and wish I had better opportunities, maybe then I will not be here today.

*Edana:* Life is unfair when all you want is to live a better life and some people end up messing up your life because of their evil ways, people who just want to use you for money making business...it is very sad. It is even worst when your own mother pushed you into this type of a thing.

All the participants reported dominant narratives of regret, guilt and sadness. Barbie claimed that she regrets being deceived by her boyfriend and Mamma and, at the same time, regrets not listening to her mother's warning. Barbie's narrative of guilt and regret went a bit further with the death of her mother. Her loss left a permanent scar in her life, which she has to continually live with. On the other hand, Cameo blamed her lack of better opportunities on her trafficking experience. According to Dottridge, it has been reported that girls are expected, and are more willing to make sacrifices for the family in comparison to boys (See Dottridge, 2002). This reflected in the case of Cameo who further narrated that in her endeavour to help her family, she became a victim of trafficking. Her frustrated tone reflects sadness and anger at her fruitless effort in doing her bit in helping to cope with family responsibilities that she found herself in.

Cameo and Barbie narrated similar stories as they both expressed their anger at their lack of awareness of the tricks and deceit of traffickers. For these women, it was all self-blame for being trafficked rather than pushing the blame on the vulnerable conditions that opened them up to trafficking in the first place.

Edana, who expressed her bitterness by claiming that all she wanted was a better life and instead felt used by traffickers for punitive profiteering, also shared narratives of betrayal that led to sadness. Her expectation of living a fulfilled life was aborted and this is strongly linked to being betrayed by her mother.

Memories and flashbacks of experiences of abuse before trafficking and after evoked emotions in Cameo as she narrated her story:

*Cameo:* I have so many scars on my body that remind me of my life of struggles. I got these from my father when he ill-treated me because of his second wife. I also got these on my body when I was over there; I was punished and hurt because a client complained about my poor service.

From Cameo's emotional display, despite several years of being rescued, memories of abuse by her father and stepmother intersect with memories of her trafficked experiences, which have impacted on her psychologically and physically. She narrated that the scars on her body are constant reminders of her traumatic past. She claimed that, each time she looks at these scars, it bring back sad memories. I referred the emotional participants to the government facility for counselling.

The impact of trafficking on Daisy is, however, different as she reported that she is constantly disturbed about the others girls who are still with the traffickers:

*Daisy:* Those underage girls over there are suffering. I always think about them, I cannot get them out of my mind. They are so young and innocent. These people are just using them. Some of them died. It is very sad.

These women continue to live every day with the memories of their lives in the traffickers' den and these have affected their psychological and emotional well-being. Barbie's traumatic

experience of war in the trafficked country, dead bodies and the loss of someone who helped her escape, put her in an emotional state as she claimed that flashbacks and memories of these unfortunate events remain consistent in her memory. (She was referred appropriately to the nearest government facility for counselling and follow-up). While some of these women shared their sadness, loss and emotions, Edana indicated that she was too pained to talk about them:

*Edana:* I will rather not talk about it. It is too painful...I don't want to start. I wish I can just erase these sad memories from my life.

Edana chose not to talk about her experiences, indicating that she is emotionally and psychologically affected. Findings show that women who are trafficked for commercial sex show a significant risk of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression in comparison with women trafficked for other forms of exploitation (See Tsutsumi *et al.* 2008).

With the aim to live a life of not being constantly reminded of their experiences in their immediate environment, Cameo and Daisey narrated their decisions to relocate to the outskirts of town:

*Cameo:* After all that happened, I decided to hide my head here. I moved away from town because I feel it is better to live away from people.

*Daisey:* I was not deceived by the sympathy I received from people when I came back. I had to move to another part of town where I am not well known.

*Anne:* When I came back people showed empathy, but you know they still gossip about you behind your back.

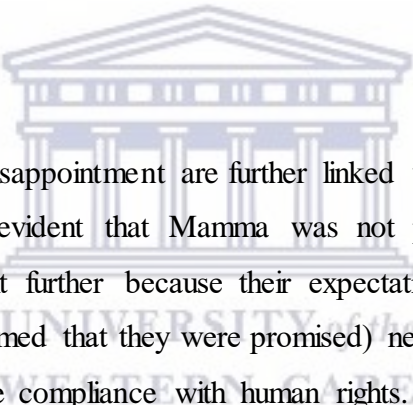
The above narratives indicate indirect acts of stigmatization in the community where the trafficked survivors live. Their need to relocate shows their discomfort in living in that environment. Their level of social interaction was impacted and this led to their living far away from the rest of the community.

Strongly linked with self-blame, guilt, regret and sadness is the disappointment of the legal outcome of the court case between the survivors and Mamma. Four of the participants who were rescued together expressed their disappointment at the way the case ended:

*Anne:* When Mamma was arrested, I was very happy. She is supposed to be punished for what she did to us. We were told in court that all the properties that she acquired will be sold and the money shared among us. But till today we have not heard anything about our case again. I saw Mamma in town recently a free woman.

*Edana:* With some people's influence they can do whatever and get away with it. We were promised that we will be compensated. But as it is, it will never happen ...after how many years now?...when the woman is out already. She was still seen in town a few days ago. It is very sad.

*Cameo:* I have decided to leave Mamma in the court of God when court of man has failed. Though it is very painful, but if you do not have power to fight your battles yourself, then you just have to accept your fate no matter how painful it is.



Narratives of resignation and disappointment are further linked with sadness and bitterness, as indicated here, because it is evident that Mamma was not punished for her deeds. The survivors' disappointment went further because their expectations about getting a share of Mamma's property (as they claimed that they were promised) never happened. "The state must protect human rights and ensure compliance with human rights. The state is liable for wrongs committed by private individuals if it fails to prevent, investigate or punish those who have violated human rights" (Lansink 2006:55). A human rights approach to trafficking needs to focus on the protection of the victim and safeguard his or her rights (Lansink 2006:55).

Three of the participants narrated that they are still very sad and occasionally worried and concerned whenever they remember the oath the traffickers made them take:

*Anne:* After Mamma was arrested and we were to go for the court proceedings, all the other girls could not talk, they were afraid of the repercussion of the oath taken. I was bold enough to confront Mamma in court because I had already been taken somewhere to neutralize the effect of the charm.

*Barbie:* There was this lady that was at that place with us who refused to stay and do what she was asked her do. She escaped and came back home. We later

heard that she died. Aunty did not hesitate to tell us that anyone who goes against the oath will face that same repercussion.

*Daisey:* It is worrisome to think about an oath that you have taken and not sure if it will still have any effect on you or not.

These women still hang on to the belief that going back on the oath taken will have negative consequences on them. Living in fear of the unknown is indicated here as these participants expressed their fear. The above narrative confirms that experiences of trafficking can result in lasting psychological challenges (See Rafferty 2007).

#### **4.3.2. I can never travel out of the country again**

Three of the participants claimed that due to their lived experiences, they were afraid and not willing to travel out of the country again:

*Daisey:* I do not and can never travel out of the country again. There is really nothing out there. It is better to suffer in my country than to be deceived to do what I don't want to do.

*Anne:* My mom's sister has invited me to come and live with her in Ghana but I will never step out of this country again.

I asked one of the participants whether she would travel again if she received a legitimate offer for work outside the country, her answer is as follows:

*Anne:* ...(laughs)...I will not go. I will rather stay here and suffer than go for any job outside the country.

While Anne and Daisey reported their reluctance and fear to travel out of the country, Barbie was impacted by her trafficked experience in a different way:

Barbie: I want to go back and look for a boyfriend I had at the later stage of my stay there. He encouraged me to stop what I was doing; he really loved me, helped me and took care of me. I think I owe him a thank you. Maybe one of these days, I might go back there and look for him.

#### 4.3.3. Who wants to marry ‘Ashewo’? (Prostitute)

Experiences of sex work negatively affected the young women’s relationships with men. Two of the participants are presently married, while the other three are not married but have children. Out of the two participants that are married, only one of them claimed that she has informed her husband of her trafficked experiences:

*Cameo:* I told my husband about being trafficked because I did not want him to hear about it from another source but I did not tell him everything that happened there. He is a man...you know...

Barbie, on the other hand, claimed that she did not and is not willing to tell her husband of her trafficked experiences because she does not trust his judgment:

*Barbie:* I never told my husband my story. Why should I tell him? If I tell him I am sure his attitude is going to change towards me. How will he look at me and respect me again?

Barbie’s fear of not telling her husband was confirmed in Daisy’s story because her husband sent her away from her marital home because of her trafficked experience:

*Daisy:* I did not tell my husband that I was trafficked for fear of losing him. Unfortunately for me, he got to know about it years later and that was the day he threw me out of his house.

Anne's boyfriend left her, for no particular reason, when she came back:

*Anne:* When I came back, my boyfriend called it off with me for no reason. Presently, I have three kids with three different men. I want to settle down, but it is just not happening. I am still living with my mother and my children.

It is common knowledge that traditionally, women who engage in sex work are labelled and stigmatized as being wayward:

*Edana:* Who wants to marry 'ashewo' (Local name for prostitutes)? Men believe that we are not marriage materials so they just come and go. I have two children but I have never been married.

Edana narrated that she has been labelled 'ashewo' (prostitute) which is her reason for men losing interest in marrying her. Her claim that men believe she is not of marriageable standard and the constant question about 'who wants to marry ashewo?' continues to put her to shame. The name 'ashewo' is a socially constructed label for sex workers in this environment. "In Nigeria, prostitution is considered a social and moral aberration and regarded as a sin among Christians, Muslims and idol worshippers, it is a great sin" (Ofuoku 2010:4). Trafficking has been referred to as gender-based harm (Lansink 2006). This indicates that women trafficked for sex work are further stigmatized and judged by the community and this result in their lack of confidence and subsequently the stigma impacts on their interpersonal relationships. The gendered impact of trafficking is evident in these stories as some of the survivors' husbands sent them away from their matrimonial homes because of their trafficking experience.

The survivors live in challenging conditions in a society where unequal power relations intersect with unequal gender relations. Their interaction with people is limited and they often times live in isolation. Women's sexuality is at stake. Men abused these young women through forced sex work, now men use their 'tainted' sexuality against them once more, to relegate them in the issue of marriage. Women's sexuality is continuously objectified and devalued in the society by men.

#### 4.3.4. There is no difference in what we were doing before and now

I asked the participants what they were doing before being trafficked and what they are currently doing as survivors. They all have similar responses that nothing significant has changed. Some of them went back to their previous jobs while others engaged in petty trading as their mothers did. Above all, their trafficked experiences did not make any significant impact to better their lives. Below are their responses:

*Cameo:* I am still doing what I was doing before we were taken away. Although I do not have a salon of my own but I make hair for people at home.

*Anne:* I am not doing anything presently. After being rescued, while sourcing for money for my freedom I became pregnant. I will continue to stay with my mom till I am able to raise enough money for my freedom and set up my own salon.

*Edana:* I am into business. I buy and sell stuffs. Since we came back there is really nothing to do. I have to take care of myself and still assist my younger ones.

*Barbie:* I am working in a salon presently, not as an apprentice but as an employee.

*Daisey:* I am into buying and selling. We move from one state to the other. We even go to the northern part of the country to bring foodstuffs down here.

Edana, Barbie and Daisey's experiences show a cycle of a reproduction of economically disempowered young women with no significant source of income because some of these young women inherited their mother's vocations. This is significant as it clearly indicates a reproduction of unstable families, which might expose them and even their own children to unfavourable conditions. Trafficked experiences linked with limited economic opportunities further limit the chances of negotiating better opportunities in order to live a better life. Feminization of poverty was a vulnerability factor to the trafficking of these survivors and it is still part of their lives, potentially opening up their own children to the same risks. Trafficking impacts physically and psychologically on women, consequences of trafficking on women and



girls also include financial, community, and family stressors, which are related to their trafficking experience (DeRiviere 2006).

In this chapter, intersectionality has been adopted to analyze the narratives of trafficked young women survivors with the aim of finding out the factors that exposed them to trafficking. The narratives show that three of the interviewed young women were victims of trafficking by deceit and lies. They were promised job opportunities outside the country while mothers sold two of them to traffickers. It came out that the young women were exposed to traffickers due to several intersecting factors that placed them in disadvantaged positions.

Family instability due to the negative impact of polygamy is a factor in the trafficking of young women. Adopting an intersectional lens allowed the thesis to explore the family space as a patriarchal environment characterized by multiple displays of hegemonic masculinity and how this impacted on the young women. Polygamous practices impacted the young women negatively, especially, as female children in these contexts. Polygamous homes emerged as gendered spaces where experiences of gender inequality linked with unequal privileges, positioned the young women unfavourably under the care of disempowered mothers. Feminization of poverty is linked with family instability. Economically disempowered mothers who have been neglected and with limited resources, could not provide the basic necessities for their children and such challenges exposed the young women to traffickers. The disempowerment of women in the society reflects the quality of life of their children, especially female children as traffickers frequent such environments to recruit their victims.

Narratives also revealed that most of the young women had low levels of education as none of the participants went further than secondary school education. Women sending their children to foster homes with the intention of easing the burden of care off them further heightened vulnerability to trafficking. For some mothers, selling their children to traffickers was a means of coping with their living conditions and all these intersecting factors resulted in the interviewed young women's vulnerability to trafficking.

Intersectional experiences of power, manipulation and control used by traffickers were evident in the narratives. Traffickers targeted vulnerable women living in poverty and deceived them with false promises of jobs. Superstition and debt bondage served as a control mechanism to reinforce the dominant power of the traffickers over their victims.

Key in the emerging narratives is that human trafficking exhibited gender-based violence and violation of women's human rights. All the participants experienced physical violence, psychological abuse and sexual abuse. Experiences of forced labour, restricted movement and isolation all intersected in framing their experiences of forced commercial sex work while trafficked. All these, summed together, impacted the lives of the participants differently. Furthermore, indications of emotional and psychological impacts were evident. Participants shared emotions of regret, guilt, sadness, ignorance and self-blame. Most of all, their experiences were saddening; they felt trapped in a cycle of poverty and vulnerability in a context where the rule of law is insignificant.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1. Introduction

This chapter gives a concise summary of the intersecting factors of vulnerability that exposed the young women to trafficking, how they were trafficked and their experiences of trafficking. Methodological contributions as well as theoretical contributions of the study will also be unpacked and the final section will highlight recommendations and suggestions for future studies.

#### 5.2. Summary of findings

The aim of this study was to explore the lived experiences of young women who survived trafficking. This exploration also critically unpacked the intersecting factors that increased young women's vulnerability to trafficking as emerged in the narratives in a particular context in Nigeria. I collected stories of how five young women's lives opened them up to trafficking and how they experienced trafficking. What emerged from my participants' stories was that they were all involuntarily trafficked. They did not give their consent, neither did they have previous knowledge of the predicaments that befell them. Three of the young women interviewed were coerced and deceived by traffickers through the promise of a better life, while the other two were sold to traffickers by their mothers. The contextual factor that exposed young women to trafficking mostly emerged from an unstable family structure and the social institution where gender discrimination and gender inequality were paramount.

Several studies indicate that it is difficult to obtain data on human trafficking due to its hidden and complex nature. This, coupled with the unwillingness of trafficked victims or survivors to share their stories, contributed to the difficulty in obtaining data. With this background knowledge in mind, I went to the field with only one known participant who connected me with other participants who also experienced trafficking across a border in Nigeria. I adopted a feminist approach within a qualitative paradigm to explore the lived experiences of trafficked young women, in order to create a platform where trafficked survivors would willingly share their lived experiences of trafficking with the aim of warning others against falling victim to traffickers.

In an attempt to understand what exposed the trafficked survivors to traffickers, a crucial theme that emerged in the stories of the survivors is the issue of poverty, which intersected with gender and other factors to mediate most of the challenges encountered by the participants and their parents in these contexts. All the participants are from female-headed households where all the mothers engaged in informal trading in order to provide for their children. In this case, the gendered impact of the labour force and the women's low level of education did not favour them in terms of seeking better economic opportunities. It has been affirmed that in most cases, female-headed households are poorer than male-headed households and the impact becomes heavier on women due to the intersection of gender inequality in the labour market and the heavy reliance on women's meagre earnings (See Posel & Rogan 2009). Furthermore, "parental poverty has serious consequences for child well-being and vulnerable families who are poor and cannot protect their children from harm" (Makoae in Reddy *et al.* 2004:128). It became clear from the narratives that the petty trade and hairdressing jobs the mothers engaged in could not sustain the upkeep of the family, therefore the young women could not be protected from exposure to traffickers at an early stage of their lives.

Linked with family instability and the effects of polygamy was feminization of poverty. Feminization of poverty became a dominant factor in exposing the interviewed survivors to trafficking. Experiences of poverty, due to social and economic inequalities, resulted in inadequate family resources for most single women. This further affected the survivors, as it is a reason for their low level and incomplete education. All the participants did not proceed beyond secondary school education. The young women also lacked guidance, supervision and adequate care in their upbringing, which further placed them in vulnerable positions of being trafficked. Collins accurately summarizes the young women's experiences in this study in the following quote: "experiences of oppression and resistance are on three levels which are: the level of personal biography, group or community level of the cultural context created by ..., class and gender and finally the systemic level of social institutions" (Collins 1993:557). It can be said that these young women were underprivileged and treated badly, based on their gender in both their family and the society. Some of the mothers who could not cope with childcare due to inadequate resources, sold their female children to traffickers, while some sent their female children to foster homes, as emerged in the narratives. Growing up under these circumstances, the survivors were exposed early in life to the gendered challenges of care. They inherited domestic roles and took it upon themselves to help their mothers to ease the burden

of care in the family at such young ages. Their desperation to be economically empowered and provide support to their families pushed them to fall for the lies and deceit of traffickers.

Strongly linked with the lack of economic empowerment of women is the role of. Surprisingly, what emerged from the study is that the family, which is supposed to be a safe haven for the survivors, was instead, an environment where gender inequality led to ill-treatment of females. Ill-treatment here reflected in two ways: (i) between husbands and wives; and (ii) ill-treatment due to the privileged position of male children over female children in the family. There were fathers of the participants who exercised their power and control over their wives by sending the wives and female children away or neglected them because of a newly acquired wife. There were also reports of men's favouritism of one wife over the other as well as male children over female children. Cultural ideology normalizes displays of hegemonic masculinity, which gives husbands power to dominate and relegate the positions of women in the family. The narratives also divulged that polygamous practices, which are patriarchal in nature, placed women in subordinated and marginalized positions in the context of this study. Family in this case, "interacts with other institutions in the society and this gives various experiences for family members" (Reddy *et al.* 2004:291).

The unequal value placed gender norms and gender roles resulted in the young women sharing the burden of care and responsibilities with their mothers, who were incapable of dealing with such demanding responsibilities at that stage in their lives. Gender order is the system of social relations of power and a determinant in the construction of gender identities (See Rubin 1975 & Connell 1987). The gender order in these families opened them up to vulnerable positions, as emerged from the young women's narratives. This is the case not only in the family but across various social institutions in terms of employment and other uneven privileges between males and females in the society.

In interrogating and understanding women's experiences of trafficking, two key themes emerged: narratives of deceit, and a desire for a better life. The first was deceit by traffickers who gave false promises of employment to the young women, and secondly, deceit by mothers who sold their female children to traffickers under the pretence of sending them to distance relatives across the border. All the participants shared different narratives on their experiences of trafficking. Three of the participants indicated that they experienced manipulation and control by their traffickers by supernatural power, juju and oaths. Juju and oaths were control mechanisms meant to keep the trafficked victims submissive to the traffickers. Debt bondage

was another means of control used by the traffickers to keep their captives for a long period. The victims were made to believe that they owed the traffickers certain amounts of money, which they supposedly incurred for their transport and other expenses. All of the young women also claimed that they were asked to engage in commercial sex work in order to pay back their debts. All of the narratives on experiences of trafficking in this study indicated that the trafficked young women were trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation.

In their captivity, and being sexually exploited, the survivors indicated how physical and psychological violence was used to contain and manipulate them. They were punished and threatened for their reluctance to sell sex. The types of punishments meted out ranged from holding them captive (caged), starvation, and making life unbearable for them. Threats, intimidation and violence were used by the traffickers to “break the spirit of their victims and to overcome their resistance” (Laczko 2002:1). The findings of this study strongly concur with this observation, as most of the young women later showed how these experiences ‘broke their spirits’. The young women also claimed that they experienced violence from their captors and clients. All these experiences affected these survivors psychologically as they all claimed that the memories of violence and abuse while they were trafficked would remain ingrained in their memories.

The survivors were in captivity for a period of one year to five years. The participants further narrated that their plans to escape connected them. Cameo, who claimed that she had been at her trafficked destination for a longer period of time and had finished paying off her debt was able to save some money which came in handy to help Barbie, Daisey and Edana to escape. Three of the women indicated that they were sad because they became victims of trafficking because their family could not take care of them when they needed care the most. Two of the women expressed bitterness, sadness and disappointment at being sold by their mothers. Fear of sharing or talking about their experiences due to stigmatization and being re-trafficked also emerged from the stories. Two participants claimed that, due to their trafficked experiences, they have been labelled ‘prostitutes’. This has reduced their self-image and self-esteem as they indicated that this amounted to them not having a stable relationship with their children. Some of the participants expressed their fear of ever travelling out of the country, but one participant indicated that she wanted to go back and look for a loved boyfriend who helped her when she was there. The participants claimed that there is no difference in the type of life they lived before trafficking and life after they had been rescued. This clearly indicates that there has been no change or difference in their socio-economic space.

In summary, findings from the studies previously reviewed in chapter two showed the diverse stand taken by the liberal and radical feminists regarding sex work. Liberal feminists argued that sex work is economically empowering and that it is not exploitative. This study clearly shows otherwise for the trafficked young women who engaged in sex work because of deceit, on the other hand, reported intersectional experiences of exploitation, violence, and deceitful recruitment strategies by traffickers. Involuntary engagement in commercial sexual activities by the trafficked young women is in congruent with the radical feminists' campaign against sex work. For this study, sex work is seen as a gendered phenomenon that objectifies these young women's sexuality for the financial gain of the traffickers and the clients, who were mostly male. The young women's lives before and after been trafficked have not improved.

### **5.3. Methodological contributions of the study**

Although there are many methods of research inquiries, it is essential that the research aim guides the method of inquiry. I went to the field with already prepared interview questions as I intended to collect data guided by semi-structured interviews. This changed as soon as I engaged with participants who had long stories about their challenges. Participants' stories guided the interview sessions. The interview guide only assisted in shaping and framing the stories of the participants. I quickly assumed the role of a moderator and asked necessary questions where and when necessary because all the participants had different lengthy stories to tell which I did not want to lose.

One of the guiding tools throughout the data collection process is the principle of feminist qualitative research, which is a participatory research method that maintains non-hierarchical power relations between the researcher and the participants as well as its non-manipulative nature (See Oakley 1981). I only asked questions where and when necessary for clarification and further explanations. I was also able to concentrate on what was said, how it was said, took notes of body language as well as facial expressions. This came in handy and created meaning while analyzing the data. Reflecting back on this method of inquiry, it contributed to a successful research process. This methodological approach also gave the participants the chance to use their own words in describing their lived experiences and this makes their stories original.

As a feminist researcher, hidden meanings behind unspoken words are as important as spoken words during interview sessions. For example, the emotional display of two of the participants while telling their stories of vulnerability to trafficking was noted and used to support the data analysis. I referred the emotional participants to the government facility for counselling. My position as an insider, that is, someone who grew up in the same area as the research site, made the snowball sample technique the most efficient method for recruiting my participants, who were not easy to locate. The relationship between my lead participants and the other participants, coupled with my position as a woman, made the young women trust me enough to tell their stories willingly. They trusted me enough to indicate that they did not mind their real names coming up in the study. However, for anonymity's sake, pseudonyms have been used throughout the study. This method is most relevant in recruiting participants for sensitive studies of this nature. Narratives are an essential tool used here to bring out the silenced, marginalized voices of bodies who continue to bear the hallmarks of trafficking in their current lives through perpetual stigmatisation, being labelled "ashawo", "unmarriageable", and "damaged", in a culture that defiles women's sexuality through marriage and procreation (Dahal *et al.* 2015). The aim of this study is to explore the lived experiences of young women who survived trafficking. The narratives, however, show how living in vulnerable conditions initiated their quest and struggle for survival, which pushed them to traffickers. Connected with their experiences of trafficking is their struggle for dignity in the society where they seem to have lost their dignities due to their experiences. The similarities in their struggle for survival before trafficking and struggle for living a dignified life after trafficking dominate the findings of this study.

#### **5.4. Theoretical Contributions of study**

This study is aimed at contributing to the pool of knowledge concerning the issue of human trafficking of young women. Trafficking of young women has gone beyond the stage of using quantitative figures to curb and measure its impact in the society. Walking this route indicates that the problem is being scratched on the surface without addressing it from the source. Moreover, experiences cannot be generalized and neither can vulnerabilities be the same for all of the trafficked women (Cole 2009). Feminist research studies on narratives of lived experiences of trafficking require an intersectional method of theoretical analysis, as the findings of this study hugely portray that trafficking occurs in multiple factors and structures.



Any inquiry into trafficking will, therefore, require a method that will assist in unpacking the layers and different complexities shaping the field. Indeed, the young women's narratives raise multiple intersecting dynamics that can effectively be accessed through an intersectional analysis (Yuval-Davis 2006; Cole 2009).

Intersectionality was originally utilized in order to give voices to the marginalized and the oppressed (Crenshaw 1989). In this study, it gave voices to trafficked survivors whose stories have been embroiled in multiple silences because of the sensitivity of this work. From the narratives, it emerged that the participants' vulnerabilities and experiences were shaped by gender, gender inequality, age, sexuality, culture and multiple other institutional categories of difference and marginality (Yuval-Davis 2006). Intersectionality helps to understand how all of these categories worked together to heighten vulnerabilities among young women and also to show the complications of the matrix involved and how all these worked together to impact the lives of the survivors. Although gendered vulnerabilities and gendered experiences emerged through all the narratives, gender must be understood in the context of power relations embedded in social identities (Collins 1990; 2000). Intersectional theory reflects how the identity of being a young woman alone did not shape the participant's vulnerabilities and experiences of trafficking, but also helped us understand how the gender order further marginalized the survivors. They were expected to marry and have families, but at the same time they are marginalized and labelled 'ashewo' because the community understands where they are coming from. It is through using intersectionality in this study that one realizes that an analysis that uses a single axis of either gender or race will not be a true and complete representation of a woman's experience of trafficking (See Collins 1990; Crenshaw 1989). Multiple axes of intersectionality therefore became useful for me to further analyze how gender intersected with other aspects of the women's lives, and in shaping their experiences, vulnerabilities and the impact of trafficking.

Of utmost importance in studies on human trafficking of young women, is that it requires a proactive and concerted effort in addressing the issue from the root in order to prevent future occurrences. As difficult as this may be, I was keen to understand why young women are exposed to trafficking, their experiences of trafficking and the purpose of being trafficked. These are deep questions that can only be answered by trafficked survivors through sharing their lived experiences of trafficking. This study has also reflected one of the aims of feminist research: to bring up excluded voices in knowledge production and policy making and reflect on how it can be done better (See Frisby, Maguire and Reid 2009). Using an intersectional lens

gave me the opportunity to answer my research questions and, to answer these questions, the intersectional framework contributed to the thorough exploration of the narratives collected for this study, because it is a framework that deals with the similarities and differences of individual lives (See Collins 1990, Crenshaw 1989).

It therefore became imperative that the early lives of the participants not be isolated or separated from their future experiences, as they are strongly linked. All the participants similarly shared narratives of growing up in polygamous families, but they all shared different experiences of growing up in this type of environment. Socially constructed gender roles, coupled with an uneven distribution of power and privileges in the family and the society, affected all of them differently. All of the participants shared the experience of growing up with their mothers, but their exposure to traffickers were not the same. Two of the women narrated that their mothers sold them to traffickers, while the other three narrated that traffickers deceived them, without their mothers' knowledge. Limited economic resources are further linked with their low levels of education. The young women's early lives had impacted on their future lives and experiences. They all engaged in commercial sexual exploitation and this was experienced in different ways shaped by their gender, sexuality, age and the like. These intersectionalities show how trafficking is embroiled in multiple power dynamics and how the young women struggled for survival. As survivors of trafficking, they are still further marginalized by "social context" that has indeed exposed and opened them to multiple vulnerabilities.

### **5.5. Recommendations for future studies and suggestions**

This study is limited in a number of ways, which further research studies need to explore. I concentrated on the experiences of young women between the ages of twenty and twenty-five who were trafficked and have survived trafficking across a border in Nigeria. Experiences of young women who survived trafficking cannot be generalized. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies explore other women within different age groups who were victims of trafficking or have survived trafficking from different contexts. Studies should further explore men and children in different contexts, as they can also be victims of trafficking.

My study focused on trafficking across one of the numerous borders in Nigeria. Further studies should undertake a comprehensive research that will explore other major border towns in

Nigeria in order to identify similarities and differences in vulnerabilities to human trafficking, which will assist in policy development in order to curb human trafficking re-occurrences.

Within the Nigerian society, although there are campaigns against gender inequality, it is still much present today. It emerged from this study that gender inequality in the society is still a major issue in women's vulnerabilities to unfavourable conditions and this requires urgent attention. It is therefore suggested that gender education should be included as part of the school education curriculum in order to teach children from an early age about the importance of gender equality in every section of the society.

Traditionally, women in the context of this study context are constrained by gender norms and gender roles that limit their ability to engage in economic activities. Hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy further place women in disadvantaged positions in the family and other various social and economic institutions. I am aware that there are policies in place to this effect but maybe it is high time the policies should be reviewed and proper monitoring and evaluation should be put in place for its effectiveness in the society. Policies should also target women education, empowerment and development that will ensure sustainable livelihood irrespective of women married in monogamous families or polygamous families.

I will also recommend that the local authorities should provide loans to start up small-scale businesses, especially for young people that have completed their education in various trades. Three of the five participants interviewed learned a trade and are skilled at starting up a small-scale business, but there was no funding to achieve this life-changing opportunity. Their inability to be economically independent exposed them to trafficking.

From this study, after the trafficked young women were rescued and handed over to the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP), as indicated in their stories, they were counselled and promises of follow-ups were made. This had not been done at the time of my interviews. The study participants were hindered because of distance and the survivors did not have transport fare to go to NAPTIP office. I will therefore suggest that help centres be located around the local authorities and made easily accessible to victims of trafficking and the public in order to assist and follow up rescued victims.

From my study, it emerged that all of the participants did not have genuine travel documents but were able to cross the border with fake travel documents and the trafficker bribing the officers. I also recommend that perhaps it would assist the victims if responsible authorities

thought about stricter border control measures to prevent illegal entries and exits across the border in order to efficiently monitor human trafficking.

The survivors in this study are unable to completely heal after their experiences because they indicated that their trafficker was not punished as they were promised. They indicated that she was released on bail and they have since seen her walking freely in the neighbourhoods. It is therefore suggested that traffickers should be appropriately punished according to the law of the country.



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## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

**Project title:**

**Human Trafficking across a Border in Nigeria: Experiences of Young Women who have Survived Trafficking.**

**1. Tell me about yourself:**

- Who do you live with?
- What is your level of education?
- What is your family background?
- What is your financial position?

**2. How were they trafficked?**

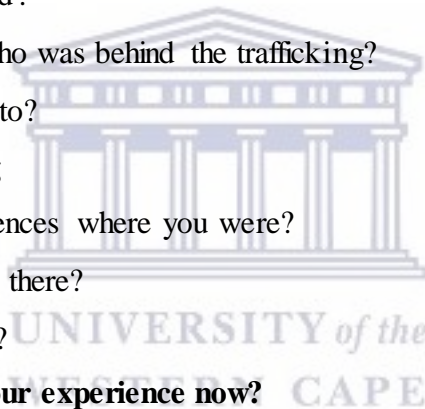
- When were you trafficked?
- How were you trafficked?
- Do you have an idea who was behind the trafficking?
- Where were you taken to?

**3. Experiences of trafficking**

- What were your experiences where you were?
- For how long were you there?
- How did you come out?

**4. How do you feel about your experience now?**

**5. How has it affected your life going forward?**





University of the Western Cape

Faculty of Arts

Women's and Gender Studies Programme

Private Bag X17, Bellville, 7535

South Africa

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## INFORMATION SHEET

### **Project Title: Human Trafficking Across a Border in Nigeria: Experiences of Young Women who Survived Trafficking**

This is a research project being conducted by Mrs. Kemi Oyebanji from the Women's and Gender Studies Department, University of the Western Cape, South Africa. You are being asked to participate voluntarily in this research project because of your trafficking experience.

The aim of the study is to explore young women's experiences of trafficking from their own perspective, in order to contribute to the ongoing discourse and fight against human trafficking.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to talk about your experiences of being trafficked. In this discussion, all answers or opinions are correct. I shall take notes and tape-record only if you allow me to. The discussion might take one hour or less.

Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your name will not appear on any report, and your identity will not be revealed to others. Your individual answers will not be shared or presented in any way that would identify you as the source. With this understanding, the collected information would be analyzed and compiled into a mini-thesis to fulfill part of the requirement for the Masters Program in Women's and Gender Studies at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa.

I want to use this study to help others to understand better the different dynamics involved in trafficking and women's vulnerability to trafficking. This will serve as my contribution to the fight against women trafficking not only in Badagry, but worldwide.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research study, you may decide not to answer certain questions, or stop participating at any time without any negative consequence. Please note that because of the nature of this research, there might be a recollection of emotionally moments. In case of such an occurrence, interviews will be discontinued and you will be referred to appropriate counselling services. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, or your rights as a research participant you can ask me, the school or the undersigned.

Mrs. Kemi Oyebanji	Dr Sisa Ngabaza
Women's And Gender Studies Programme	Women's And Gender Studies Programme
University Of The Western Cape	University Of The Western Cape
Tel: (+27) 0840717902 , South Africa	Private Bag X17
Email:Kemifisayo@Yahoo.Com	Bellville 7535
	South Africa
	Email:sngabaza@uwc.ac.za



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WESTERN CAPE



University of the Western Cape

Faculty of Arts

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Private Bag X17, Bellville, 7535

South Africa

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## **ETHICAL STATEMENT**

Approval and ethical clearance to conduct this study will be obtained from the Research and Ethics Committee of University of the Western Cape, South Africa.

Written informed consent will be sought from the participants before conducting the interview, whereby the aims of the study are clearly stated. Consent to audio tape the interview will also be sought. The data collected including the written notes and transcription during the semi structured interview will be kept under lock and key and only the researcher will have access to them in order to eliminate the risk of breaching the participant's confidentiality.

Participants will be made aware of their rights in the study. Their participation in the study is voluntary; the study participants are free to leave or to withdraw from the study if they are not comfortable. Their voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality will be guaranteed.

The study will be conducted according to the protocol and there will be no deviation from the protocol.

Researcher: Mrs. Kemi Oyebanji



University of the Western Cape

Faculty of Arts

Women's and Gender Studies Programme

Private Bag X17, Bellville, 7535

South Africa

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### CONSENT FORM

**Project:** Human Trafficking across Seme Border Badagry, Lagos, Nigeria: Experiences of Young Women who have Survived Trafficking

**Researcher:** Kemi Oyebanji

**Supervisor:** Dr. Sisa Ngabaza

**Please initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and that I understand the information sheet explaining the above research project and confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.
  2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason or negative consequences for me. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. (If I wish to withdraw I may contact the lead researcher at anytime).
  3. I understand that the information given will be protected, e.g. by using pseudonyms for all the individuals interviewed and those mentioned in such interviews.
  4. I hereby give my permission for an audio-recording of the interview.
  5. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in this project.
  6. I agree to take part in the above research project.
-

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant  
(or legal representative)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person taking consent  
(If different from lead researcher)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher  
(To be signed and dated in presence of the participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

*Copies: Each participant will receive a copy of the signed and dated version of the consent form and information sheet. A copy of these forms will be filed and kept in a secure location for research purposes only.*

**Researcher:**

Kemi Oyebanji  
Department of Women's  
and Gender Studies,  
University of the Western  
Cape.



**Supervisor:**

Dr Sisa Ngabaza  
Department of  
Women's and Gender  
Studies,  
University of the  
Western Cape.

**HOD:**

Prof. Lindsay Clowes  
Department of  
Women and Gender  
Studies,  
University of the  
Western Cape.

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