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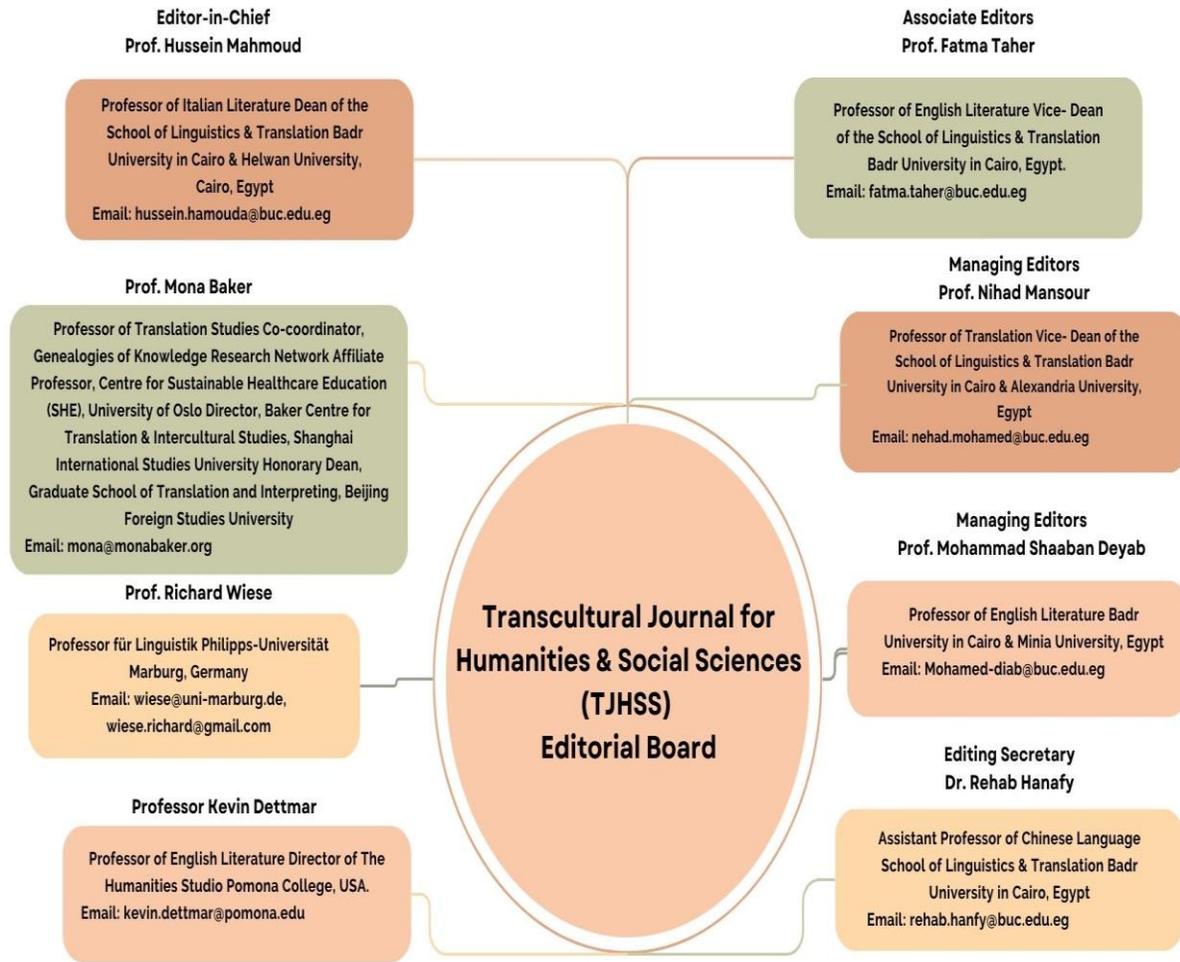
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## Editorial Foreword

The first section of this edition of the research papers of the International conference on Transnational Feminism: Explorations, Communications, Challenges & Horizons is clearly conceived as a collection of research papers on the diversified approaches of the intersection between feminism, literature, linguistics, and translation. The diversity of the research papers closely connects to academic experiences and cultural backgrounds of the contributors. While presenting diversity in approaches, this section contributes to achieving a collective discussion of the multifaceted concept of translational feminism.

The section includes studies on the challenges of recent development of translational feminism, gender problematics in the translation of non-literary texts, the English translation of the *The Odyssey* (2018), gender bias in machine translation, the deafening effect of non-feminist translations of literary works, Arab Egyptian Feminist Voices in Translation, and lastly written in Arabic; obsession & rebellion in feminist movements writings.

In an attempt to have a wide reach and significant impact, the second section is allocated for miscellaneous research papers written in English, Spanish and Chinese. A semantic visual study of the image of orientalism in Indian epic tales, literary dissection the literary works of Antonio de Zayas, (Spanish), how poetry reflects and summarizes social life, and a study of Lin Shu's travelogues prose in Chinese are engaged in and/or preoccupied with recent trends and fast growing leaps in linguistic and literary studies.

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## **Understanding the Dynamics and Complexities of Human and Sex Trafficking from South South Nigeria to Europe: A Critical Review of Victims Experiences through Returnees' Life Stories**

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**Abstract:** Human and Sex trafficking is a contemporary social problem which is currently causing disquiet globally. Many victims suffer a wide range of human rights abuses including confinement, actual bondage, physical and sexual assaults. Through human and sex trafficking, a nation's active population is exploited especially as young people are unable to reach their full potential. This has critical impact on development challenges especially for developing origin countries notably in Sub Sahara Africa where a large number of young girls and women are trafficked from for sex work in Europe annually. This research thesis uses qualitative research methods, specifically life stories, to explore the relationship between sex trafficking and social and economic conditions in the South-south region of Nigeria, with a particular focus on poverty. In the process it also interrogates the adequacy of understandings and responses to, the problem and explores tensions between Western framings of the phenomena and the lived experience of people vulnerable to human trafficking South-south Nigeria.

**Key words:** Sex trafficking, sexual exploitation, poverty, young girls, understanding, Edo state, South-south Nigeria

### **Introduction**

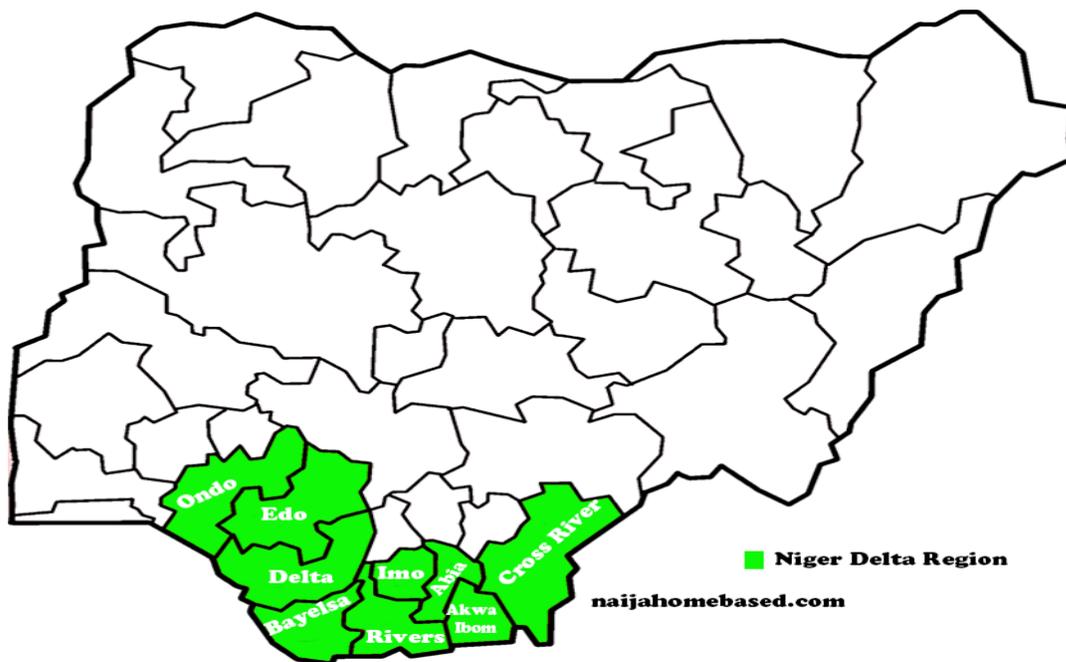
Human trafficking is ravaging the modern societies and is arguably prevalent in all nations of the world and rated as the third most lucrative illicit trade next to arms smuggling and drug trafficking. For example, thousands of people are trafficked from West Africa and Nigeria to European countries yearly (Aronowitz 2001; Attoh & Okeke 2012; European Commission Home Affairs, 2015; and Otoide, 2000). Nigeria in West Africa is a major source, and destination country for trafficked women and children who are subjected to slavery and sexual exploitation (United States Trafficking in Person Project [US TIP], 2018). Nigerian and Italian authorities estimated that more 10,000 Nigerian prostitutes work in Italy and that many of them are victims of trafficking (Fitzgibbon, 2003; Olujuwon, 2008). Estimations like this are sometimes often debatable due to the unsure methods of arriving at them (Kessler, 2015; Musto, 2009; and Weitzer, 2014).

Researchers have often undertaken a retrospection approach of the phenomenon while attempting a review of the problem in Nigeria. Following the late 70s devastating economic recession, the worst hit populations in rural areas commenced mass movement to the urban areas thereby swelling the urban population and children were given to relatives for fostering in

exchange for money and some of the girls worked on the streets as hawkers while many were trafficked abroad for prostitution (Achebe, 2004; Akor, 2011; Mohammed 2004).

Specifically, the historical profiling of sex trafficking from Nigeria to Europe connected the practice with the early arrivals of poor agricultural migrants from West Africa to Italy and other Mediterranean European nations in the 1980s (Carling, 2005). These early migrants were originally forced to migrate because of unemployment and poverty associated with the economic crises of the 1970s for better jobs abroad (ibid). Bringing Nigerian nationals over to Europe for the purpose of sex work was seen as more economically viable and replaced agricultural jobs (Carling, 2005), unlike many (especially the males) which were reported to work in farms in rural Italy where they were and are still exploited (see, Oddone 2018). In the light of this, other researchers argued that focus appears to have, overtime, been on demand and supply with poverty as the primary push factor resulting in the vulnerability of victims (Bales, 1999; Far, 2005). With more Nigerians getting poorer partly due to lack of coherent and comprehensive economic reforms, leadership failure and government failure to invest in human capital development (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2018; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation [BMGF], 2018) as well as create jobs the vulnerability of these poor has been sustained.

Figure 1. Map of Nigeria showing the states of the country with endemic South South States highlighted



Source: Map Reproduced from Google site <https://www.google.com/search?q=map+of+south+south+nigeria&oq=map+of+south+&aqs=chrome.0.69i59j0i512l2j69i57j0i512l6.12328j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#imgrc=-WULW1coSjHuJM>

Above is the political Map of Nigeria showing the 36 states of the country including Abuja - the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The highlighted areas represent the South-South Region with

the exception of Ondo, Imo and Abia states. The entire states of the South-South Region are parts of the nine oil producing states of the country also called the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. It is ironical that the region is supposed to be rich, yet its people are faced with serious endemic and abject poverty which some argue to be a critical factor responsible for the wide spread of human trafficking in the area.

### **Human Sex Trafficking in South-South Nigeria**

The South-south region of Nigeria is notorious, for cross-border sex trafficking in Nigeria (World Bank, 2015), and Edo State seems to account for the majority of the young women and minors trafficked to European countries for commercial sex (Carling, 2005; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 2006). Meanwhile, older women are also argued to be frequently trafficked from the area (Okojie, et al, 2003). People in Benin City where much of trafficking takes place in the region celebrate trafficked women and their material achievements (Smith, 2001). Italy is the most popular destination for those trafficked for prostitution from Edo State (Carling 2005; Okojie, et al, 2003). Trafficking to other nations of Europe like Spain, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom has also been reported (see, Okonofua, et al, 2004; UK National Referral Mechanism, 2018). Although some scholars argue that diverse forms of trafficking are experienced in the South-South region of Nigeria, the general consensus is that sex trafficking is the main form of exploitation (see, Fitzgibbon, 2003; Okojie et al, 2004; Otoide, 2000).

Some Researchers argue that trafficking of women for commercial sex is common in the study area because traffickers who specialise in the trafficking of women into Europe for commercial sex dominate the business in the area (Nnadi, 2013). Also, sex trafficking from the region to Europe is sustained because traffickers in the region have contacts and influence dealing with the local kingpins and syndicate who are controlling the prostitution business in the European destination countries for the regular supply of women (Carling, 2005). Added to these factors is the liberalisation of the sex work industry in the European destination countries where traffickers *a priori* operating in the region are connected and easily incorporate newly trafficked women into the business (Oluwa-Baye, 2012).

It has been argued that the reason for the pattern of trafficking in many of the leading West African countries especially Nigeria is that women sex traffickers are mainly indigenes of Edo State in the South-South region of Nigeria (Carling, 2005). Additionally, the first set of successful people in the trade were from Edo State who returned home to help their friends and relatives relocate to Europe, thereby making the activity gain momentum in the area and remain unabated till date (Oyekanmi & Okunola 2017). There is also the argument that a sizeable population of Nigerians (mostly from South-South region) in Diaspora of almost 200,000 legal residents are in Europe who may be facilitating trafficking from their home states (Carling, 2005), and hence supporting the activity of trafficking syndicates. Okojie et al, (2003) argued that local prostitution which is a common practice among the people of the area may be another reason why sex trafficking is preferred, though this has been disputed and the claim vitiated. Aghatise (2002) for example disagreed with this assertion and argued that prostitution is culturally and traditionally unpopular among the Benin people of the South-South region Attor and Okeke (2012) further counter Aghatise's defense. According to them, how do you explain the fact that sending women and young girls abroad for the purpose of prostitution has become a family decision if the people culturally abhor the practice?

The factor of remittances that come generally from female indigenes of the area in the Diaspora is also considered as justification for trafficking in the area (Akor, 2011; Oyekanmi & Okunola, 2017). There is also the issue of a highly available population of young girls not attending school (United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), 2018) combined with a high, demand for young girls in European sex markets (Ahatise, 2002; Oluwa-Baye 2012). With the preceding propositions and arguments regarding the reality of the wide spread practice of human trafficking in South-South Nigeria and suggestions of the contributing factors; this paper aimed at the understanding of the dynamics and complexities inherent in sex trafficking from the South-South region to Europe. It also highlights the critical role of socio-economic and general structural conditions in explaining the wide spread of the practice. Significantly, this paper anticipates an emerging outcome that may highlight the peculiarity of individual victim cases with respect to issues of contributing factors, circumstances surrounding trafficking, experiences and post trafficking conditions.

### **Methods**

This was a qualitative enquiry hence the main instrument of data collection was life story or the voluntary narratives of returned migrants. Life stories and short interviews were conducted with returnee victims in Benin City - a notable endemic area in South-South Nigeria with a high rate of cases of returnee victims of human and sex trafficking from Europe (Carling, 2005; NAPTIP, 2016; Okonofua, 2004). In all, six interviews were conducted. Focus was more on two of the life stories as their accounts were more revealing. The selection of participants in the field work was through a purposive sampling method whereby consented returnees were contacted and engaged for the narrations of their experiences. In the presentation of the findings, the returnees' identity were not disclosed instead we used pseudo names. This is to protect the victims' identity and for confidentiality sake as ethically demanded regarding a sensitive topic as this. The interviews were conducted with the help of a female assistant interviewer (who works with National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Person (NAPTIP)) to avoid secondary victimization since the core researcher is a male. Also, the female staff of NAPTIP helped in the interview because she was used to interacting with returnees as part of her daily routines and understands the intricacies involved. The interview process was strictly supervised by the core researcher.

### **Field Finding and Discussions**

The two life stories conducted with returnee victims are presented hereunder. Following the presentations of the life stories, certain findings are noted and subsequently discussed as they relate to the focus of this paper.

#### **Life Story: Mariam and Uyimmen**

The two life stories that were conducted were Mariam's and Uyimwen's (not real names) accounts. These represent victims' experiences in the area. Much was revealed by their stories regarding their early life; their recruitment; their experiences as it relates to the nature of the journey through the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea to Europe. Data generated from these accounts helped in exploring the direct experiences of trafficking to more long-term life experiences and living conditions.

#### **Mariam (not the real name): HTP01/01/02**

##### **Family and Social Background**

Mariam started by reliving her family background that indicated hopelessness and despair. She did not only emphasise her poor background, but was clear that this was largely contributory to her vulnerability before her trafficking experience. According to her:

I don't have parents... my parents were farmers before they died. They were both sick before they died especially my mother. So I grew up helping my parents doing farming in the village. I now came to Benin and stayed with one of my aunties, after their death. (Mariam, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 17, field work, 2020)

### **How Mariam Was Recruited**

Mariam's account also showed the circumstances surrounding her recruitment and how she met the trafficking syndicates. According to her:

When I left my aunt's house because of ill treatment I stayed with a friend. Her name is Juliet. So, we met somebody that promised to take us to abroad. We were teenagers, my friend and I were staying together. I was 17 years then. So we used to follow one guy ... the guy puts us through, he didn't even tell us what we were about to do... he just told us that, when we get there, before one year you will pay up your money. Your money is not going to be much. So the guy promised to take us to the Europe... {Mariam, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 17, fieldwork, 2020}.

### **Her Journey through the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean**

Mariam's account also included her experience during the journey from Nigeria to Libya via the Sahara Desert which also involves other victims. She said:

...The guy promised to take us to Italy but he did not tell us it was through land that we were going to pass... He took us to enter bus. He said that there is a place we are going to stop and enter the flight... Because we don't have any idea about this, he deceived us. So we now follow the boy to a town by boundary of Niger. It took us more than three days to get to the first town in the Sahara desert... When we were about to get to a check point everybody will now hold her money. They will just tell us to come out... Everybody will line up and they will start searching everyone. 'Bringing out your money from your pocket', collect some other things they want to collect. . . may be if they see a fine phone they can collect. When it was late we went to one village.. After eating we waited for other buses then we now drove to Libya... {Mariam, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 17, field work, 2020}

Mariam continued her narration of what happened at their brief stop at what she called "connection house" in Libya.

When we got to Libya the guy took us to a connection house {a sort of stop over house also controlled by the syndicates where victims put up first before crossing the Mediterranean Sea}. They told us that we were going to stay with the madam that is there {the first madam victims usually meet in Libya who is also another member of the cartel}. They said for staying in the woman's place we were to pay some money to her... But we now asked the boy this is not Italy... he said no we should not worry that from this place, after we pay the woman, the woman {ie the madam in Italy) will now come and send somebody, to come and pick us

up... from there we will now be in Italy. So, we paid money to the woman in Libya. As at this time we have started prostitution work in Libya... The woman now say there is no way we can pay her rather we should prostitute and pay her so that we can go to Italy... {Mariam, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 17, fieldwork, 2020}.

### **Crossing the Mediterranean Sea to Europe**

Mariam narrated her experiences and that of her friend as well as the other victims who were on board the dingy-boat they used in crossing the Mediterranean Sea. According to her:

...The very day we wanted to cross the Mediterranean Sea... we went there in the midnight... when it was day-break we saw ourselves on top the sea. We were very scared and cried. We used balloon, rubber boat to cross. That day we thought we were going to die... We were on the sea for two days. We went there around twelve in the night, we started our journey, the next morning we were there, till the other day... they now told us that we have lost our way... It was after two days in the sea that we were rescued by Italian government, It was an experience that we can never forget throughout our life. I held my friend, she held me, No food, no water... We were thinking how are we going to end it up... before rescue team now came {Mariam, trafficking victim, trafficked aged I field work, 2020}.

### **Experience while in Destination Europe**

Mariam explained what she, her friend and others went through in Europe as sex workers under the control of the madam in Italy. According to her:

... While in Europe, they did not allow us to go out. We now leaved the camp to go and live with the woman. Some time when we go out the woman just position us, and command us 'do this... do that'. And when we are in the road side, we get customers. Some time we take them to her place... There was a time the woman didn't allow us to be going out with anybody. She will just invite them... tell the men to come and then tell us somebody wants to see you. Just like that... A day you will get some men... you know what I am talking about...that will come and see you there to make love. Even if they want to pay, they are going to pay the woman. At the end of the day, she will call you, she will tell you... today food we spend so-so money, or light bill, the house rent. Then she will minus it from the money they paid her..., before she will now minus her own. We have note..., everybody has her own note where she calculates and record everything. So the girl {her friend} said she is not going to continue that she is going to leave That we have not sent any money back home... {Mariam, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 17, field work, 2020}.

Mariam continues with her story. She revealed the identity and character of the trafficker (madam) and her encounter with her especially as it has to do with the financial exploitation. According to her:

... The madam is a Nigerian, she is Bini (Bini is the dominant ethnic group in the area of study) woman, So there was a day my father complained that he is feeling sick..., that he needed money. She said ok... I will give you the money, it is going to be next week. Let's see how you are going to work it out, it is going to be next week. So I now called my father while talking with my father she will put it on loud speaker. I now said ok... don't worry I will give you next week. She said ehen... 'which money, which money? You have not balanced the amount you are talking about... money. Do you think this is how I will continue with you? And this one we were talking she said each of us will pay ten million {ten million in Nigeria currency - the naira, i.e about 15,000 pounds by the year 2020 value} ... How much have you paid that you are talking about sending money to your parents... And, we don't know anywhere to go. So my friend said ok, since this woman don't allow us to go out, we are going to meet a friend... {Mariam, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 17, field work, 2020}.

### ***Victim's Freedom***

Continuing the narrative, Mariam revealed how she and her friend managed to escape and returned to Nigeria. According to her:

... But when we now went one day we met police men who arrested us and now took us to NAPTIP agents... Before we know it they took us down to Benin. NAPTIP sue the woman to court. They sued the woman to court but she didn't come. They went to the family's house. It was through the guy we now locate the woman. The guy that took us to Libya... We now got information that both of them were working hand in hand. Sometimes, police used to come around there {in Europe} but they usually settle them {meaning bribe them}, but people always run away. There they live rough life. Not free life... {Marian: trafficking victim, trafficked aged 17, field work, 2020}.

### **Uyimwen (not the real name): HTP01/02/02**

#### ***Family and Social Background***

Like Mariam above, Uyimwen also narrated her family background and described the conditions that epitomised poverty and vulnerability.

I am from a polygamous family...my father married four wives, my mother is the senior of the wives in the house. I am the eldest daughter of the family and my father is late. My mother had nine children but only five are surviving which are two boys and three girls and I am the eldest. {Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2020}.

#### ***Uyimwen Early life Experience***

Uyimwen's early life was impacted by her family background, with her family life worsening as she grew up. According to her:

So when I was in secondary school, in Junior Secondary School 3 (JSS3) I became pregnant of my first son and I delivered the baby. My father said after I finish the JSS3 exam I will continue my education but when I

finished the JSS3 exam which was in 1997, my father became sick... He was taken to different hospitals but he died. After his death, we were abandoned by our relatives, none of them ever showed concern about my welfare and that of my siblings. So, my younger brother wanted to continue his education but there was no source of fund for him. When my father's gratuity was paid I told my brother to let me travel out so that I can take care of him and other of our parents' children. I then used the money to travel to Italy in 2004. {Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2020}.

### ***The Point She became Vulnerable to Sex Traffickers***

Uyimwen narrated how she has to contemplate migrating abroad for greener pasture. I had no option but to go abroad after the death of my father in 2003 when things became very difficult. I went there on my own I was not taken by anybody. I decided to go to help my family... People travel because of poverty. When I got there and saw what they were doing and how people were enslaved I was scared... {Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2020}.

### ***Role by Relatives***

Uyimwen's story indicates that it is not in all cases that 'the family' often directly play roles in the trafficking of their daughters or relatives. She stated:

I did not tell any member of my family anything... It was only my brother that knew. {Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2020}.

Unlike the case of Mariam earlier presented, Uyimwen's life story account indicates that she was not deceived to go to Europe for commercial sex by anybody. This shows that it is not in all cases that victims are deceived to be trafficked abroad for sexual exploitation as often reported by State Agencies like US TIP and others. Uyimwen declared:

Nobody deceived me, me and my brother decided to do that because there was nobody to help. {Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2020}

### ***Uyimwen 's Expectations before Leaving for Europe***

Uyimwen's story unraveled her expectation before travelling to Europe.

Before I travelled, I worked at Oko Prison yard (Oko Correctional Center is one of the Federal Correctional Service units in Edo State). There is one Restaurant {a bar} at the prison compound... where I worked. I said if I go abroad, I will do the same thing. But later when I went to abroad it was different experience {she had expected to make bigger money by working as sales girl in bars abroad} {Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2020}.

### ***Uyimwen 's Experience in Europe***

Uyimwen's narrative revealed much about her personal experience while she was in Europe.

Before I travelled I promised I was not going to work on the street when I reach there. But when I arrived Italy I didn't know anybody and I was confused. The moment we reach there we waited for the sojourner {a sort of document often given to migrants to allow them temporary stay in some foreign countries} for six months. If you reach there... if you want to run away, you can run away. Because it is not compulsory that you must stay there in the camp but the place was somehow not too okay for me, I told myself that I am here to find money... My friends there at the Camp were also saying they need money... they said, Uyimwen if you are ready let us go. I said I don't know anybody here {ie. after a while at the migrant camp Uyimwen and her friends who travelled together with her became anxious and escaped to other cities in Italy in the desperation to start making money as soon as possible} {Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2020}.

### ***Getting Involved in Commercial Sex***

Then one of my friends now took me to where her sister lives... in the night they all dressed and said let us go. I said haa... where are you going? They said it is hustling ooo... We used to hustle here in order to pay house rent, eat and survive... Then i said hustle... I said no ooo... I said let me follow my friend Pat to Verona... When we reached Verona, I now see that it is the same thing that they used to talk about there... in Verona. So, they said that if i am not ready to follow them out they will drive me away. Then i followed them out to hustle. {Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2020}.

### ***Rescue for Uyimwen in Europe and how she was Returned to Nigeria***

Uyimwen narrated how she was brought back home. She said:

One day I stood by the road side... and an advanced man just came. He said follow me, because God sent me to you. He said what is the problem? Then I narrated everything to the man. The man now said ok, give me your phone number. I said that i don't have phone, i don't have money to buy phone. The man said ok tomorrow he will bring phone for me. The man brought me one old phone and said i should go and buy sim... I put the sim. From there the man started calling me. The man asked if I liked the job, I said no. He then asked if I needed help. I said yes, he said okay, if i want to help you will you follow me? I said yes, help me. Then from there the man wrote a letter in Italia language. I was told that the man wants to help me. My friends said if the man comes, talk to the man fine... One day the man just called me. He said i should come and meet him at the train station. I went to the station. Then i followed the man, He took me to Caricas. We met the Head of Caricas and the woman now talked to me. From there the help now started {ie. the help that led to her return to Nigeria} {Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2020}.

### ***Communication with Family Back Home***

Uyimwen tells in her story whether she was in contact with her family back home while at destination in Europe.

When i arrived Europe, I did not have any phone hence could not communicate with anybody there. My family members were worried and thinking I Uyimwen has died. So one day, when i got a phone i just called them. All of them where happy and said thank God. They say people are dying in Libya. Thank God you are alive, all of them were happy. {Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2020}.

### ***Financial Benefits to Family***

Uyimwen's story also showed that her family and relatives had not benefitted financially whilst she was in Europe

My family did not benefit anything... there was nothing...no land, I could not build even a small house {which migrants sent abroad would normally want to do first}. I did not bring back any money. That is the reason for the quarrel in my family now as i am here. That is what is even bothering me now as I am here because they are quarrelling over their money which i used to travel. They have even summoned me. The first money they paid my father after death was 800,000 naira (about 1200 pounds), that was what I used in travelling, now everybody in my family is fighting me over it. My brother, my mother, my step mothers, my other sisters, and the entire family, they are all angry with me. They said only me used our father's gratuity money and did not bring anything from abroad... {Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2020}.

### ***Reintegration into the main stream society***

She also talked about what it was like resettling after she was rescued and returned to Nigeria from where she was doing sex work in Italy.

I am not settled...it has been trouble for me since i came back., i have only gone home once. That was when i was summoned to the meeting to come and explain the issue of the money i took to travel. Even though since i came back ... i have problem with my leg. The leg was swollen. As i came to Benin I fall sick and didn't know what was the problem. In the night i was not able to sleep.. We went to one church like that, and the pastor said that i have problem with my family because of money. He said that if i don't give them that money... I should pray hard so that they don't take my soul. I told the pastor that... is true that there is money problem with my family that I am from a polygamous home {...}. Even if I leave this country tomorrow, I don't have anything with my family again...if I can give them their money that will be all. {Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2020}.

### ***Support from Government and NGOs Upon Return***

Uyimwen's story also showed the level of support from government and NGOs to a victim.

It was only when i was returning from Italy that I was assisted... but since I came to Nigeria, nothing. I have not received any support from anywhere. {Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2020}.

### ***Plans for the future***

She talked about her future plans as a returnee.

What I am planning to do is that first i want to go back to Italy and collect my sojourner document... The police collected it... when i was coming. I have to travel back. We are suffering here in Nigeria...I married when I returned and my husband does not have money. He receives 15,000 naira (about 15 pounds) monthly. The two rooms that we stay, we pay 8,000 naira (about 8 pounds) monthly for each room. I know people there in Italy, once i get there they will give me a house to stay before i start making my own money {i.e. Uyimwen is still contemplating going back to Europe, meaning she could be a potential victim of re-trafficking}. {Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, fieldwork, 2020}.

### ***Prior Knowledge of Prostitution and Sexual' Exploitation of Young Girls in Destination***

Uyimwen's narratives gives indication whether the girls often trafficked are aware of sex work and sexual exploitation in destination or not before travelling.

According to her:

I was aware people go abroad for prostitution before I travel. {ie. she was aware of prostitution and maybe not too sure of sexual exploitation in destination}. But they said that not all of them do prostitution. Some of them go there to do hair {make people's hair as source of income}, to sell for people {as sales girls in shops}...it is different...different ways. The common thing is that some of them, when they get there, they will go into prostitution. The traffickers don't go straight to the point. They will say...you will do this, you will do this but when you reach there you will see another thing. {Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2020}.

### ***Reason Girls get Trafficked from the Area in Uyimwen's Opinion***

Her story also divulged some specific reasons while most young girls and women are often trafficked from the region.

Some, it is because they come from a poor or polygamous home. You know Nigeria men they used to marry many wives. If you come from a polygamous home and the other women's children are doing well, the other ones they are not doing well, they will still find solution na... If the other woman's daughter has travelled out, the other will also want her daughter to travel. Me as I am talking to you now, the daughters of my father's other wives have travelled out abroad. {Uyimwen, trafficking victim, trafficked aged 15, field work, 2020}.

Apart from Mariam and Uyimwen whose life stories accounts were presented above, other returnees were also interviewed during the field exploration. Ejiro, Cythia, Ene, and Osi (not their real names) also participated in the study as returnees. Their accounts also help to further highlight the dynamics and inherent complexities of cross border trafficking from south-south Nigeria to Europe. For example Ejiro said:

In Nigerian Pidgin English

Like me now... wetin make me commont be say..., I reason am say... I dey stay Nigeria, to even eat self na problem... me and my family dey suffer...so naim make me and my parent say make I travel out with my madam, naim I still go...{...}. {Ejiro, trafficking victim, trafficked age 18, field work, 2020}

In correct English ,

Like me now...what made me to travel is ...I thought about my living condition in Nigeria...to even eat is a problem, me and my family members are suffering...so ...that was what made me and my parent to agree I should travel out with my madam...then I travelled {...} {Ejiro, trafficking victim, trafficked age 18, field work, 202}

### **Findings/Discussion**

As presented in the preceding findings, Mariam and Uyimwen's accounts represent typical cases of victims trafficked from South-South Nigeria to Europe. The findings from their stories also go to corroborate and in some cases contest or complicate the characterisation of trafficking in existing academic and policy literatures (see, O'Connell Davidson, 2015; US TIP 2016). It particularly could be said to have made revelations indicating contrast to the often dominant claims by some global and Western authorities that the issue stems from criminal tendencies (United Nations Office on Drug and Crime [UNODC], 2006; US TIP 2016) a conclusion reached without taking a holistic view of the matter to the extent that local structural conditions are hardly considered. Though the stories also noted the role of syndicates aided by corrupt law enforcement agencies especially at destination countries which of course could be said to be criminal, but it is clear that local constraining socio-economic conditions could be more paramount and compelling as explanatory factors.

As to the typical processes involved in the trafficking of victims, both cases however presented a two-way argument. While in some cases victims are sponsored by syndicates to get to their destination where they are conscripted into commercial sex work by their sponsors (as seen in Mariam's case); others take the risk to move over to Europe on their own (of course not without

the assistance of less vicious intermediary) and are lured into prostitutions either by their colleagues or madams' (traffickers) who usually assisted them with (temporary) accommodation and feeding upon arrival (as reflected in Uyimwen's case). With this, it was clear both cases in the stories typified the complexities and apparent interplay of individual distinct circumstances and structural conditions in the experiences of most victims from the area. The fact that some are moved to destination on their own accord and others lured or deceived to travel by syndicates before exploitation as indicated by the distinct individual experiences highlights complexities in the narration of trafficking processes in the region did not negate the truth. What is however clear in the cases seen above is that traffickers are argued to often enlist close friends and others around a potential victim to pressurise her into agreeing to travel abroad as noted with the case of the person that lured 'Mariam' to be trafficked to Italy.

The Syndicate as revealed will normally assure the girl that within a short while she would have paid off the cost of taking her abroad and she will become rich and help her family extricate out of poverty (also see Eghafona et al. 2016; Okojie et al, 2003). The role of peer group influence and deception are also highlighted. Most importantly, despite the distinction of the individual cases it was obvious that structural conditions (household poverty, poor economic condition, patriarchy, polygamy, economic inequality etc) play critical roles in orchestrating the trafficking of Mariam and Uyimwen into sexual exploitation abroad. Okonofua et el. (2004) also alluded fairly to the role of structural conditions but not in detail. In all of this suggestions are that victim blaming should be discouraged as many victims who moved voluntarily abroad and become trafficked for sex work may have just been victim of hash societal structural constraints. This further raised the seriousness of the critical issue of victim blaming, which is a major problem in policy and practice as well as in global responses.

All the same, as can be seen in Ejiro's case, further evidences from field interactions indicate that because poverty limits the people's life chances, indigent families are sometimes helpless as they personally arrange for their children's trafficking. Poor families, as found, have sometimes been complicit in the trafficking of their children and have encouraged them to leave Nigeria with the prospect of better lives abroad in Europe. That is, the usual irrational decisions by victims and parents leading to sex trafficking could be a product of the humiliating impact of poverty.

### **Conclusion/Suggestions**

This paper concludes that not all victims of human trafficking are forced out of their home by traffickers or smugglers though some are argued to be lured as one of the victims interviewed relived. Many moved abroad voluntarily and in the quest for immigration legitimacy and survival at destination cities they become trafficked. However, traffickers are argued to often enlist close friends and others around a potential victim to lure her into agreeing to travel abroad as seen with the case of the pimp 'trolley' (as they are called) that lured 'Mariam' away to Italy. Many traffickers also normally use their relatives as agents to persuade and get women and young girls from the area to be trafficked as indicated by interviewed returnees in previous studies like the one by Okonofua, et al (2004). A clear indication from the field outcome is the role that poverty plays in predisposing many young girls to becoming victims in Europe. As can be concluded from Ejiro's case, whether victims are lured away or decide to travel abroad on their own volition, the propelling force of poverty that they suffer at home cannot be exempted as a basic contributing factor.

Suggestions are that state actors need to as a matter of deliberate policy enactment commit to reducing poverty levels in the region. Serious efforts are needed from both government and critical stake holders to put in place administrative and legal frameworks to deter the spread of the practice. Re-trafficking, avoidance of victim blaming and proper reintegration of returnees are also very important needing attention, These can be done by adequately empowering agencies responsible for arresting the social problem to be effective. For example, re-trafficking of returnee victims is very likely once he or she is not properly reintegrated into the local community when returned to country of origin where poverty is still very visible and appear to be unbearable for him or her. The case of Uyimwen as reported in the finding indicates that many returnees suffer neglect by families and government agencies thereby making life more difficult for them and in the process become more vulnerable to re-trafficking.

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