



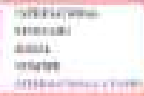
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Editorial

The South Eastern Journal of Research and Sustainable Development (SEJRSD) is published twice a year online and hard copy. But recently, the journal policy was amended on 10th September, 2021 to be published **monthly**. Thus, the journal begins its monthly publication with volume 6 (1); 2021. It is designed to disseminate knowledge to teachers, teacher-trainees, researchers, curriculum specialists and other interested stakeholders. SEJRSD has continued to serve as an effective instrument for development and innovation in education and equips researchers whose purpose is in development and innovation in educational sector.

However, still on quality of articles published on this journal, the editorial board of this journal modified its policy to be **quarterly** publication as thus; **January – March, April – June, July – September, October – December**. This kicked off with January – March 2024 publication seen in volume 14 (2).

The Editor-in-Chief of this Journal is sincerely thankful to the editorial team especially to the numerous subscribers to this volume of the Journal and to all those who has contributed in one way or the other towards making this volume a reality.

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Note to Contributors

The South Eastern Journal of Research and Sustainable Development (SEJRSD) is published twice a year online and hard copy. But recently, the journal policy was amended. Thus, the journal hence forth publishes **quarterly (January – March, April – June, July – September, October – December)** in a year. The journal publishes peer-reviewed, well researched findings and opinion papers from educators, teachers and other stakeholders in any discipline. The editorial board of SEJRSD therefore requests for original and thoroughly researched empirical and theoretical papers on trending issues in any field.

Note the following:

- Any article submitted for assessment for publication should not exceed 12pages on A4 paper with 12points font size, Time New Roman Face and double line spaced
- The front page cover should include the title of the article, the author's name, affiliation and e-mail address, followed by the abstract of the study. The abstract should be precise, not exceeding 150 words
- Article must be written in clear and coherent sentences
- The article must be submitted online via the e-mail address: sejrsd@gmail.com
- Tables, figures, graphs and diagrams if any, should be embedded in the main body of the work where they appear using the appropriate format
- The 6th edition of APA (American Psychological Association) referencing style should be used. Avoid footnotes
- Quotation of more than 40 words should be indented and typed single line spaced with indication of page (s) of the quoted passage
- All article submitted to SEJRSD for assessment are copyrighted to SEJRSD
- Each article must be accompanied by non-refundable vetting fee of ₦5,000.00 only

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- A final corrected copy for an accepted article must be submitted online via the e-mail address: sejrsd@gmail.com in MS Word format, accompanied by ₦15,000.00 which is for online publication only.

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THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING AMONG PEOPLE OF ONDO STATE

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Abstract

Human trafficking remains a pervasive and an issue of great concern worldwide, affecting millions of individuals each year. While its root causes are complex and multifaceted, socioeconomic and socio-cultural factors have been identified as key players in determining whatever happens within the human environment. This study therefore examines the influence of socio-economic and social cultural factors on human trafficking among the people of Ondo State, Nigeria. The study is guided by four research questions and four hypotheses while several relevant literature were reviewed. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design type, correlation studies and ex-post facto research design. The population of the study comprises all people of age between 12 to 60 years old in Akure South and Akure North Local Government Area of Ondo State. The sample for the study comprises 400 respondents who were selected through a proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire titled 'Human Trafficking Questionnaire (HTQ)'. Out of the 400 questionnaire administered, 390 fully completed copies were retrieved. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings from the study revealed that, poverty contribute greatly to the incidence of human trafficking, supported by the following figures; $X^2 = 22.27 > 14.067$ at 0.05; Also, sociocultural factors significantly influences the incidence of human trafficking as revealed by the following figures; $X^2 = 59.29 > 19.49$ at 0.05). Furthermore, Economic opportunities in terms of level of education significantly influences the incidence of human trafficking as shown by the following figures; $X^2 = 35.27 > 19.49$ at 0.05). Based on the above findings, it is concluded that social-economic and socio-cultural factors influence the incidence of human trafficking in Ondo State, therefore, the following recommendations were made; security and law enforcement agency should better empowered to prosecute offenders; there is need for better enlightenment by the government and non-governmental organizations on the danger of human trafficking; easy access to education should be given priority by government; there must be provision for adequate sanctions and punishment for perpetrators.

Keywords: Socio-economic factors, socio-cultural factors, human trafficking

Introduction

In poverty-stricken communities, the lure of a better life usually lead desperate young persons into the clutches of human traffickers. With limited opportunities and societal expectations dictating their choices, they often fall victim to exploitation. Human trafficking is a grave violation of human rights that affects millions of people worldwide, exploiting their vulnerability for various forms of labor and sexual exploitation. It is a complex issue influenced by multiple factors, including socioeconomic and sociocultural dimensions. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing effective prevention strategies and interventions.

Adesina (2014) believed of the opinion that the most common causes that precede the situation of human trafficking may be poverty, experience of neglect and domestic violence and previous experience of marginalization and discrimination. Allain (2017) viewed the reason for human trafficking in another perspective that traffickers prey on others' weaknesses, unfortunate circumstances, unfamiliarity, and inexperience. Traffickers are trained to identify vulnerability and use expert manipulation tactics to persuade and control their victims. They identify a void and offer to fill it. He also argued that individuals living in difficult conditions can become desperate, and that desperation makes them vulnerable.

Meshelemiah and Lynch (2019) believe that human trafficking has a devastating impact on individual victims, who often suffer physical and emotional abuse, rape,

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threats against self and family, passport theft, and even death. But the impact of human trafficking goes beyond individual victims; it undermines the safety and security of all nations it touches. In Nigeria, the prevalence of human trafficking is very high (Aisedion & Edoghogho, 2021). This country is identified as the source, transit, and destination for women and children subjected to trafficking in persons including forced labour and forced prostitution (*United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020*). Nigeria ranked 32 out of 167 countries with the highest number of slaves (1,386,000). This is confirmed by the U.S. State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report (2022), which report that the highest number of trafficked persons in Nigeria are women who are 18+. Also the National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters statistics from 2019 – 2022 showed that 61% of human trafficking activities in Nigeria happens internally, while only 39% is generated from cross-border trafficking. Human trafficking is seen as the third most common crime in Nigeria after drug trafficking and economic fraud (Ukwanyi, Angioha & Aniah, 2019).

This study aims to explore the influence of socioeconomic and sociocultural factors on human trafficking among the people of Ondo, Nigeria. Ondo, a state in southwestern Nigeria, is known for its diverse population and rich cultural heritage. However, like many regions around the world, it grapples with the menace of human trafficking. This study seeks to delve into the specific factors within Ondo's socioeconomic and sociocultural context that contribute to the occurrence of human trafficking.

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Adepelumi (2015) opined that socioeconomic factors play a significant role in shaping the dynamics of human trafficking. Factors such as poverty, lack of education, and limited employment opportunities can render individuals more vulnerable to exploitation. Poverty, in particular, can create desperation and make people susceptible to fraudulent recruitment tactics and promises of better livelihoods, ultimately leading them into the clutches of traffickers. Moreover, the absence of adequate social support systems and economic resources can make it challenging for potential victims to resist or escape trafficking situations.

Alongside socioeconomic factors, sociocultural factors also exert considerable influence. Cultural norms, beliefs, and practices can shape perceptions of gender roles, power dynamics, and social expectations, which, in turn, can contribute to human trafficking. Gender inequality, discrimination, and limited opportunities for women and girls can heighten their vulnerability to trafficking, especially for sexual exploitation. Additionally, cultural attitudes towards migration, trust in informal networks, and lack of awareness about the dangers of trafficking can create an enabling environment for traffickers to operate.

This study aims to identify and analyze the specific socioeconomic and sociocultural factors within the context of Ondo that contribute to human trafficking. By understanding these factors, policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and non-governmental organizations can develop targeted interventions and prevention strategies to combat human trafficking effectively. The findings of

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this study will contribute to the existing knowledge base on human trafficking and provide insights into the unique factors influencing its occurrence in Ondo, Nigeria.

In conclusion, the study will shed light on the intricate interplay of socioeconomic and sociocultural factors in the realm of human trafficking among the people of Ondo. By comprehending these factors, efforts can be made to address the root causes of human trafficking and develop comprehensive strategies to protect vulnerable individuals from falling victim to this heinous crime.

Statement of the Problem

Human trafficking remains a pervasive and deeply concerning issue worldwide, and the people of Ondo State, Nigeria, are not exempt from its devastating impact. This study aims to address the problem of human trafficking by investigating the influence of socioeconomic and socio-cultural factors on its occurrence within the specific context of Ondo State. Despite efforts to combat human trafficking, it continues to persist, robbing individuals of their freedom, dignity, and basic human rights. By understanding the specific factors contributing to human trafficking in Ondo State, policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and organizations dedicated to combating trafficking can develop targeted interventions and prevention strategies to effectively address this grave violation. Therefore, the central problem this study seeks to address is the need to comprehensively analyze and comprehend the influence of socioeconomic and socio-cultural factors on human trafficking

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among the people of Ondo State in order to formulate appropriate measures for prevention, intervention, and protection of potential victims.

Despite being made illegal almost 200 years ago, human trafficking is resurfacing in contemporary society. According to the numerous data available, it is clear that the majority of the instances are reported in Africa, giving the impression that the continent has gone back in time 200 years. It is important to ascertain whether such behaviors are still prevalent in our culture. It is widely believed that the rewards for human trafficking are enormous, but there are many who contend that these rewards cannot boost the economy because they are constantly moving between terrorist organizations and criminal gangs, funding illicit drug trades, arms deals, and oppressive, corrupt regimes.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of socioeconomic and socio-cultural factors on human trafficking among people of Ondo State. Specifically, the study:

1. Examined the association between poverty and human trafficking
2. Investigated the extent level of education is contributory to human trafficking
3. Investigated the extent socio-cultural factors, contribute to the vulnerability of individuals to human trafficking

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4. Explored the extent human trafficking in Ondo State is driven by economic opportunities

Hypotheses

The following null research hypotheses guided the study:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean perception of male and female respondents on the extent poverty is related to human trafficking in Ondo State.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean perception of male and female respondents on the extent level of education is susceptibility to human trafficking.
3. Sociocultural factors will not significantly contribute to the vulnerability of individuals to human trafficking as measured by the mean ratings of male and female respondents
4. The incidence of human trafficking in Ondo State is not significantly driven by economic opportunities as measured by mean perception of male and female respondents

Method

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This involved the use of questionnaire to collect data from respondents. This allows the researcher to

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establish more primary data on the subject across the state. The population for the study is the entire 24,070 people within the ages of 12-60 years old in Akure North and Akure South of Ondo State on which this study covers. The figure was cited in Adetiloye and Abel (2022) study and corroborated data provided by the Secretariats at both Akure North and Akure South local government areas. Similarly, the researcher personally visited the location and observed and analysed if such figure was realistic. A total of 400 respondents were selected for the study. That is 200 respondents from each of the two Local Government Areas. Ten streets were later selected using simple random sampling technique by selecting the first five streets on the list and the last five streets on the list. Therefore, 20 respondents were randomly selected from 10 streets from each local government areas for the study.

The main instrument used for the study is a self-designed questionnaire tagged “Human Trafficking Questionnaire (HTQ)” The instrument consists of two sections, that is, Section A and Section B. Section A sought information on bio-data of the respondents. This information includes the gender, and age. Section B is a twenty item questions that provide data for the study. Participants were expected to complete questionnaires designed for the respondents on a 20 items developed to determine the level of human trafficking and its Implications in Ondo State. The research Instrument utilized a 4-point Likert scale classified as: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The research instruments were validated using both face and content validity. The drafted questionnaire were given to the researcher’s supervisor and some experts in the Department of Social Science

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Education for necessary modifications and corrections. Corrections were effected before printing of the copies to be administered on the respondents. The researcher ensured the reliability of the instrument through the use of test-retest method. The items were earlier tested on very few selected respondents as a pilot study then later administered on the larger numbers of respondents. The coefficient of reliability 0.98 was derived by using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. This showed that the instrument was reliable. The data collected in this study were analyzed using inferential statistics of Chi square at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean perception of male and female respondents on the extent poverty is related to human trafficking in Ondo State.

Table 1: Chi-square Analysis on Poverty and the Incidence of Human Trafficking

| <i>Variables</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>Df</i> | <i>Calc. Value</i> | χ^2 | <i>Crit. Value</i> | χ^2 | <i>Decision</i> |
|-------------------------------|----------|-----------|--------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|-----------------|
| Poverty and human trafficking | 390 | 3 | 22.27 | | 14.067 | | Rejected |

Source: Field study, 2023

Table 1 indicated that the calculated value is 22.27 with 3 degrees of freedom which is greater than the critical value of 14.067. This implied that the null hypothesis that there is no significant association between poverty and the incidence of human trafficking in Ondo State was rejected. That is, there is a significant association between poverty and the incidence of human trafficking in Ondo State.

H0₂: There is no significant difference between the mean perception of male and female respondents on the extent level of education is susceptibility to human trafficking.

Table 2: Chi-square Analysis on the Individuals with lower levels of education are more susceptible to human trafficking in Ondo State

| <i>Variables</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>Df</i> | <i>Calc. χ^2 Value</i> | <i>Crit. χ^2 Value</i> | <i>Decision</i> |
|--|----------|-----------|--|--|-----------------|
| levels of education and susceptible to human trafficking | 390 | 3 | 12.21 | 14.067 | Not Rejected |

Source: Field study, 2023

In Table 2, it indicated that the calculated value is 12.21 with 3 degrees of freedom which is less than the critical value of 14.067. This implied that the null hypothesis that individuals with lower levels of education are not more susceptible to human trafficking in Ondo State is not rejected. Thus, level of education will not significantly affect make one less or more vulnerable to human trafficking.

H0₃: Sociocultural factors will not significantly contribute to the vulnerability of individuals to human trafficking as measured by the mean ratings of male and female respondents.

Table 3: Chi-square Analysis on the socio-cultural factors and vulnerability of individuals to human trafficking

| <i>Variables</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>Df</i> | <i>Calc. χ^2 Value</i> | <i>Crit. χ^2 Value</i> | <i>Decision</i> |
|------------------------------------|----------|-----------|--|--|-----------------|
| Sociocultural Human trafficking | 390 | 3 | 59.29 | 14.067 | Rejected |

Source: Field study, 2023

Table 3 indicated that the calculated value is 59.29 with 3 degrees of freedom which is greater than the critical value of 14.067. This inferred that the null hypothesis that sociocultural factors, such as gender inequality and cultural norms, significantly contribute to the vulnerability of individuals to human trafficking in Ondo State is rejected. Therefore, sociocultural factors, such as gender inequality and cultural norms, significantly contribute to the vulnerability of individuals to human trafficking in Ondo State.

H04: The incidence of human trafficking in Ondo State is not significantly driven by economic opportunities as measured by mean perception of male and female respondents.

Table 4: Chi-square Analysis on Determining the influence of economic opportunities on human trafficking

| <i>Variables</i> | <i>N</i> | <i>Df</i> | <i>Calc. χ^2 Value</i> | <i>Crit. χ^2 Value</i> | <i>Decision</i> |
|--|----------|-----------|--|--|-----------------|
| incidence for human trafficking and economic opportunities | 390 | 3 | 35.27 | 14.067 | Rejected |

Source: Field study, 2023

Data in Table 4 indicated that the calculated value is 35.27 with 3 degrees of freedom which is greater than the critical value of 14.067. This inferred that the null hypothesis that the incidence of human trafficking in Ondo State is not driven by factors such as economic opportunities, exploitative industries, and cultural practices is rejected. That is, incidence of human trafficking in Ondo State is driven by factors such as economic opportunities, exploitative industries, and cultural practices

Discussion

In hypothesis one, positive correlation between poverty and the incidence of human trafficking exist in Ondo State. This is evidently shown by $\chi^2 22.27 > 14.067$ at 0.05 significance level. The result was an indication that majority of respondents believe

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that human traffickers participate to improve their economy. Poverty increases the vulnerability of individuals to trafficking because they may be desperate for work or financial support. Lack of access to education and healthcare, poor living conditions, and limited job opportunities can make people more vulnerable to deception and coercion by traffickers. Research studies have consistently shown that countries with high levels of poverty and income inequality have higher rates of human trafficking.

Poverty limits individuals' access to basic resources, education, and employment opportunities, making them more susceptible to exploitation. Traffickers often prey on individuals who are desperate for financial stability and use promises of better lives and job opportunities to exploit them. In impoverished regions, limited economic opportunities and lack of social support systems leave individuals with few alternatives for survival. Traffickers exploit this vulnerability by offering false promises of employment, education, or marriage, leading victims into situations of forced labor, sex trafficking, or other forms of exploitation.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2019) conducted a global study on human trafficking and found that poverty and lack of education were key factors contributing to vulnerability to trafficking. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has reported that poverty and socio-economic inequalities increase the risk of individuals falling into human trafficking networks. Research conducted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academic institutions

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in different countries has consistently shown that regions with higher poverty rates tend to have higher instances of human trafficking.

In hypothesis two, it was revealed that level of education will not significantly make one less or more vulnerable to human trafficking. Statistically, it was revealed that $\chi^2:12.210$ does not fall within the critical region of 14.067 at 0.05 significance level. However, while education is not the only factor that makes individuals vulnerable to trafficking, it can contribute to the risk. Lack of education can limit job opportunities and access to information, making individuals more susceptible to false promises and manipulation by traffickers. Additionally, people with limited education may not recognize the warning signs of trafficking or understand their rights as workers. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the role of education in addressing human trafficking. Individuals with lower levels of education are not more susceptible to human trafficking. While education can act as a protective factor against human trafficking, it is important to note that individuals with lower levels of education are not inherently more susceptible to trafficking. Several factors contribute to vulnerability, and education alone does not determine an individual's risk.

Human trafficking can affect individuals regardless of their education level. Traffickers exploit various vulnerabilities such as poverty, lack of employment opportunities, political instability, or social marginalization. Vulnerability to trafficking can arise from multiple factors, including socio-economic conditions,

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gender, age, and social networks. Education, while important, is only one aspect of an individual's circumstances and may not be the sole determinant of vulnerability. Some studies have shown that traffickers target individuals with higher levels of education, especially in the context of labor trafficking. In these cases, traffickers may deceive educated individuals by promising better job prospects abroad or exploiting their skills and qualifications for cheap labor.

In hypothesis three, the finding derived is that socio-cultural factors, such as gender inequality and cultural norms, significantly contribute to the vulnerability of individuals to human trafficking in Ondo State. This finding was concluded from χ^2 being 59.29 and >14.067 at 0.05 significance level. Culture and social norms can create an environment that tolerates or enables trafficking. For example, the incidence of child brides or domestic workers can create a market for traffickers. Additionally, discrimination against certain groups of people, such as women, minorities, and migrants, can make them more vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking. Therefore, addressing sociocultural factors is a critical aspect of preventing and addressing human trafficking.

Socio-cultural factors significantly contribute to the vulnerability of individuals to human trafficking. Socio-cultural factors play a significant role in the vulnerability of individuals to human trafficking. Socio-cultural norms and gender inequalities can contribute to the vulnerability of certain groups, particularly women and girls. Discrimination, gender-based violence, and limited opportunities can push

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individuals into situations where they become more susceptible to trafficking. Socio-cultural factors influence patterns of migration and displacement, which can increase vulnerability to trafficking. Conflict, political instability, and economic hardships may force individuals to migrate or become displaced, exposing them to exploitation and trafficking risks.

In hypothesis four, it was revealed that the incidence of human trafficking is driven by economic opportunities, exploitative industries, and cultural practices at $\chi^2: 35.27 > 14.067$ at 0.05 significance level. Traffickers exploit the incidence of cheap labor in industries such as agriculture, construction, and manufacturing. The market for commercial sexual exploitation is also driven by incidence. Furthermore, cultural practices such as child marriage and forced labor can create a supply of vulnerable individuals that can be exploited by traffickers. Addressing incidence through increased law enforcement efforts, education, and social change is essential to combating human trafficking.

In some societies, cultural practices, such as forced marriage, child labor, or debt bondage, contribute to the incidence of human trafficking. These practices normalize exploitation and provide cover for traffickers to continue their operations. The United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT) has highlighted the role of economic factors and exploitative industries in driving the incidence of human trafficking.

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Conclusion

Based on the provided findings, it was concluded among others that:

- i. There is a positive relationship between poverty and the incidence of human trafficking: The findings suggest that poverty is associated with a higher occurrence of human trafficking. This implies that individuals facing economic hardships are more vulnerable and potentially targeted by traffickers.
- ii. Individuals with lower levels of education are not more susceptible to human trafficking: Contrary to common assumptions, the findings indicate that lower levels of education do not necessarily make individuals more susceptible to human trafficking. Other factors such as poverty and sociocultural influences may play a more significant role in vulnerability.
- iii. Sociocultural factors, such as gender inequality and cultural norms, contribute to the vulnerability of individuals to human trafficking: The findings highlight the influence of sociocultural factors on the vulnerability of individuals to human trafficking. Gender inequality and cultural norms can create an environment where certain individuals, particularly marginalized groups, are more susceptible to exploitation and trafficking.

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Recommendations

From the result of the data analysis and the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations are posited:

- More effort should come from the security and law enforcement agency
- People should be informed about the danger involved in human trafficking
- Free educational facilities should be available for all
- Severe punishment should be given to anyone found guilty of human trafficking

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