

Knowledge and perception towards human trafficking in agrarian communities of Niger Delta, Nigeria

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Abstract: This paper examines the knowledge and perception towards human trafficking in agrarian communities of Niger Delta, Nigeria. This is predicated on the fact that there is high incidence of human trafficking in Nigeria. A large sample size technique $n \geq 30$ was used to select at least 38 rural dwellers from each of the states. Data were collected through questionnaire which was subjected to face validation and has a reliability coefficient of 0.88. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), was used for data analysis with frequency counts, percentages, means, standard deviation and multiple regression analysis. The results indicated that majority of respondents were males (58.78%), married (51.32%), between 30 and 40 years of age (47.39%), Christians (77.2%) had no formal education (55.7%) domiciled in the communities (52.2%) having between 5 and 8 persons as dependants (49.1%) and had inherited land tenure practice (74.6%). Rural dwellers have negative perception about human trafficking but their knowledge on human trafficking is low. Significant determinants were income ($t = 2.64$), knowledge ($t = 4.33$) perceived risk ($t = -2.88$) Education level ($t = -3.13$) and number of dependants ($t = 1.93$). The policy implications are to introduce measures to counter human trafficking and related awareness campaigns should mainly be targeted to those areas where migration rates are high or on the rise. Life Science Journal. 2011;8(2):821-827] (ISSN:1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>.

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1. Introduction

Agriculture plays a leading role in the non-oil sector of Nigeria. It supports 63 percent of the population directly by providing about 28 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) from the total exports and 70 percent non-oil export production (Oladele and Sakagami 2004). Nigeria as an agrarian country, the production of foods and other raw materials is a necessary ingredient for the take-off of all other sectors of the nation's economy. About 70% of the Nigerian total labour force is employed within the agricultural sector. Ekong 2003 reported 64% of Nigerians live in rural areas and their primary occupation is farming. However most farming households operate land owned through inheritance and acquisition through family ties. More than 50% of farmers own their lands (Okunmadewa, 2002). According to Rahji (2002), "A key feature of the Nigerian Agriculture is the dominance of small holder farms or farm households ...they cultivate less than 5 hectares". The small farmers have limited resources therefore they are dependent on traditional implements; hoes and cutlasses, which in turn limit the output; depend on their efficiency in the utilization of basic production resources available, depend on family and hired labour due to the fact that there is extremely low level of mechanization. In recent times, acute shortage and high cost of farm labour have been reported (Oladele, 2004). This has been partly due to the rural-urban migration and the menace of human trafficking. Oladele and Oladele

(2011) reported transhumance as another ploy and form of human trafficking.

UNESCO (2006) defined human trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. A recent study estimates that at least 12 million people worldwide are trapped in conditions of forced labour. Around a fifth of these are being exploited as a result of human trafficking (ILO 2005). Ofuoku (2010) indicated that the dynamics of human trafficking in Nigeria are geographical in nature which includes internal and cross-border trafficking. Internal trafficking, particularly of women and children has been on the increase in the last two decades (UNESCO, 2006). An increased number of people are trafficked from rural communities in Oyo, Osun and Ogun States in the South-West; Akwa- Ibom, Cross River, Rivers, Bayelsa Delta and states in the South-South; Ebonyi and Imo in the South-East, Benue, Niger and Kwara States in the Middle Belt to city centres (UNESCO, 2006). Those trafficked to these areas are used for exploitative domestic work, farm labour and prostitution. In cross-border trafficking, Nigeria is known to be a source, transit and destination country. Internationally, trafficked

Nigerians come from all parts of Nigeria but some states tend to provide more trafficked persons than others (UNESCO, 2006). These states are Akwa-Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Bayelsa, Delta, Imo, Ebonyi, Kano, Ogun, Oyo and Lagos. The trafficked persons, particularly women and children are taken to destinations such as the Republic of Benin, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Gabon and Guinea in West Africa where they are destined to work mostly as domestic servants and on farm plantations. More specifically, UNESCO (2006) argues that women and children recruited and trafficked from Shaki in Oyo state are mainly sent to Guinea, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire to work as hawkers and domestic servants. Most of them are deceived into believing that their destination is Europe.

Between 1999 and July 2000, anti-traffickers deported about 454 trafficked Nigerians, mostly women and children, from Saudi Arabia (Bassey, 2000). There are indications that Venezuela in South America has also become a point of destination for many people trafficked from Nigeria. Increasing rural-urban migration and poverty have made the labour market super-saturated resulting in a reduction in the value of labour, especially in the informal sector. Labour has become cheap there, forcing every member of the family work outside their homes to sustain the family. There is little systematic knowledge on the knowledge and perception associated with human trafficking among rural dwellers which forms the sources and basis of trafficked persons. Many policy reports and several descriptive papers have discussed the root causes of human trafficking. The factors that are regarded as important are very diverse; they commonly include economic factors such as poverty, unemployment and low wages, issues such as ethnic discrimination and armed conflicts but also institutional weaknesses such as the rule of law and corruption, or deficient implementation of international legislation. While theory is scarce, empirical evidence is even scarcer. Literature surveys in recent years have frequently highlighted the need for rigorous empirical research in human trafficking. Akee et al. (2007) analyze the determinants of trafficking of children and women in a cross-country setting. Relying on country-by-country reports of the US Department of State and the Protection Project they construct dummy variables for the incidence of trafficking between countries. This paper provides household level evidence of the knowledge and risks associated with human trafficking.

The immediate impact of human trafficking on rural dwellers is the loss of labour on the farm which makes their production to suffer setbacks. The awareness and knowledge of rural dwellers of the

attendant consequences of the conditions of trafficking determine the perception which could influence their propensity to support and participate in human trafficking. Perception is described as a process by which persons organize, interpret and react to sensory 'impressions' so as to give meaning to their social environment (Hikson and Keith, 2000). This is often affected by the characteristics of the perceiver, object or target being perceived, the relationship of the object being perceived to the environment, the content and time at which the object is perceived, and attribution of the perceiver. Assessing rural dwellers' perceptions is an important means to evaluate their knowledge level on a particular issue, as perception refers to an individual's current appraisal of an object or program (Hikson and Keith, 2000). Farouque and Takeya (2007) conclude that people base their perceptions on past experience and knowledge; therefore, if a person has limited knowledge and experience about a topic, then they can not accurately perceive it or form an opinion. The objective of the study is to determine rural dwellers' perception towards human trafficking in Nigeria

2. Materials and Methods

The study was carried out in Niger Delta area of Nigeria. This includes six states, namely, Anambra, Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, Imo and River States. These six states occupy the South-South part of Nigeria, all of them lying side by side, starting with Edo going from the western part of the country followed by Delta Anambra, Imo, Bayelsa, Rivers, States, bound by the Atlantic Ocean on the south. The population for the study consisted of all rural dwellers in agrarian communities of Niger Delta. A large sample size technique $n \geq 30$ was used to at least 38 select rural dwellers from each of the states. The questionnaire was face validated by Lecturers in the Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural development, Sociology of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Data collected were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), with frequency counts, percentages, means, standard deviation and multiple regression analysis.

3. Results

The results from the study covered the personal characteristics of rural dwellers in Niger Delta region of Nigeria in Table 1, perception of rural dwellers towards human trafficking in Table 2, knowledge of human trafficking in Table 3 and multiple regression analysis showing relationship between perception towards human trafficking and socio-economic characteristics in Table 4.

Table 1: Personal characteristics of rural dwellers in Niger Delta region of Nigeria

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Males	134	58.78
Females	94	41.22
Marital status		
Single	64	28.1
Married	117	51.32
Divorced	23	10.11
Widowed	24	10.53
Age		
Less than 30	24	10.53
30-40	108	47.39
Above 40	96	42.10
Religion		
Christianity	176	77.2
Islam	38	16.67
Traditional	14	6.1
Education		
No formal education	53	23.25
Primary school	51	22.37
Secondary School	19	8.3
Tertiary	31	13.6
Adult education	74	32.4
Status in Community		
Domiciled	119	52.2
Not Domiciled	109	47.8
Number of dependants		
1-4	76	33.33
5-8	112	49.12
Above 8	40	17.54
Land Acquisition:		
Inherited	170	74.56
Purchased	37	16.23
Leased	21	9.21

Table2: Perception of rural dwellers towards human trafficking

Attitudinal statements	Mean	SD
Economic hard ship encourages human trafficking	4.53	0.8
Intimidation and threats involved in human trafficking are part of life-risks	4.57	0.8
Psychological abuse is not only limited to human trafficking	3.83	0.8
Emotional and physical abuse is not limited to human trafficking	4.79	0.8
The get rich quick syndrome promotes human trafficking	4.59	0.7
Structural adjustment programme impoverishment led to high incidence of human trafficking	3.39	0.4
Social isolation promotes human trafficking	3.47	0.4
Privatization of public goods and services encourage human trafficking	3.64	0.5
Participation in human trafficking is criminal	3.97	0.4
Human trafficking provides cheap labour	3.90	0.4

Human trafficking encourages profit margin of enterprises	3.67	0.3
There is high demand for services and labour of trafficked persons	3.51	0.3
The impact of economic reforms encourages human trafficking	3.92	0.4
Poor impact of development programme encourages human trafficking	4.21	0.5
I cannot participate in human trafficking	4.16	0.5
I can allow my wards to participate in human trafficking	3.71	0.4
Changes in social welfare encourages human trafficking	3.68	0.3
Political instability promotes human trafficking	3.51	0.3
Poor law enforcement encourages human trafficking	3.82	0.3
My religion does not allow human trafficking	3.87	0.4
I can temporarily allow participation human trafficking	3.52	0.3
Unemployment is root cause of human trafficking	3.59	0.3
Discrimination within society causes human trafficking	3.62	0.4
Corruption induces human trafficking	3.68	0.3
Family violence promotes human trafficking	2.39	0.2
Juvenile delinquency stimulates human trafficking	4.18	0.5
Family separation(divorce) encourages human trafficking	2.99	0.3

Table 3: Respondents' knowledge of human trafficking

Knowledge items on human trafficking	True	False
Human trafficking withholds legal rights of the victim	85(37.3)	143(62.7)
Human trafficking posses threats and acts of physical harm to victims and family	82(36.0)	146(64.0)
Human trafficking subjects their victims to rape and kidnapping	81(35.5)	147(64.5)
Human trafficking confines their victims to isolation	69(30.3)	159(69.7)
Human trafficking denies their victims medical care	131(57.5)	97(42.5)
Human trafficking inflicts manipulation and psychological abuse on victims	48(21.1)	180(78.9)
Human trafficking involves recruiting, harbouring and obtaining persons against their will	89(39.0)	139(60.9)
Human trafficking does not require any transportation	33(14.5)	195(85.53)
Human trafficking involuntary servitude	46(20.2)	182(79.8)
Human trafficking put people in debt bondage	72(31.6)	156(68.4)
Human trafficking involves holding people against their will to pay off a debt	72(31.6)	156(68.4)
Human trafficking lures through false promise of good working conditions and high pay	74(32.5)	154(67.5)
Human trafficking explores victims for their own financial	69(30.3)	159(69.7)
Human trafficking exposes victims to unsafe, unpredictable and uncontrollable events	90(39.5)	138(60.5)
Human trafficking exposes to drugs and drug addition	139(60.9)	94(41.2)
Trafficked persons are often used for stripping/exotic dance is a	88(38.6)	140(61.4)
Use of persons for pornography is a form of human trafficking	67(29.4)	161(70.6)
Use of persons in massage palors is a form	71(31.1)	157(68.9)
Trafficked persons are often used for agriculture and labour	57(25.0)	171(75.0)
Trafficked persons are often used for factor work/sweat shops	81(35.5)	147(64.5)
Trafficked persons are often used for prostitution	44(19.3)	184(80.7)
Trafficked persons are often used for mail order brides	63(27.6)	165(72.4)
Trafficked persons are often used for domestic servitude	61(26.8)	167(73.3)
Trafficked persons are often used for food service	55(24.1)	173(75.9)
Trafficked persons are often used for entertainment and modelling sex slaves	54(23.7)	174(76.3)
Trafficked persons are often used as drug transporters and mules	58(25.4)	170(74.6)
Trafficked persons are often used for cheap source of labour	67(29.4)	161(70.6)
Human trafficking deprive rural communities of labour	40(17.5)	188(82.5)

Table 4: Multiple regression analysis showing relationship between perception towards human trafficking and socio-economic characteristics

	Reg. Coeff	SE	t	p
(Constant)	-2.55	1.30		0.05
Income	1.35	0.51	2.64	0.005
Knowledge	1.08	0.24	4.33	0.00
Risk	-0.23	0.08	-2.88	0.02
Gender	0.06	0.08	0.75	0.96
Marital status	0.17	3.45	0.04	0.80
Age	4.05	2.24	1.80	0.07
Religion	3.98	3.16	1.26	0.20
Education	-2.66	0.85	-3.13	0.006
Status in community	0.12	0.76	.16	0.86
No Dependents	1.18	0.61	1.93	0.05
Land acquisition	0.14	0.49	29	0.72
F	2.54			
p	0.005			
R	0.68			
R square	0.46			

4. Discussion

The personal characteristics of rural dwellers examined in the study were presented in Table 1; the results indicated that majority of respondents were males (58.78%), married (51.32%), between 30 and 40 years of age (47.39%), Christians (77.2%) had no formal education (55.7%) domiciled in the communities (52.2%) having between 5 and 8 persons as dependents (49.1%) and had inherited land tenure practice (74.6%). This finding is similar to the findings of Yomi-Alfred (2000), and Ladapo and Oladele (2011) who found that 15% and 42.5% of rural people in Yagba East in Kogi state were in age bracket 30 years or less and 30-49 years old respectively and because agriculture in the rural areas is labour intensive, farmers, though young may therefore be married in order to increase farm labour (Ladele and Omotosho, 2000). Farinde and Soetan (1999) reported that 82% of the rural dwellers in south western Nigeria had primary school education or less.

Table 2 shows a list of 27 perception statements about attitude of human trafficking. The respondents were asked to rate the statements using 5 Likert scale as follows; 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (Disagree) 3 (Uncertain) 4 (Agree) and 5 (Strongly agree). The scoring was reversed for negative statements. The actual mean is 3 due to the rating scale and a mean of greater than 3 denoted a positive attitude while a mean less than 3 denoted negative attitude towards perceived risks associated with human trafficking. The results revealed an

overwhelming general positive attitude by rural dwellers towards the perceived risks associated with human trafficking. Of the 27 statements, 25 of the attitudinal statements were above the cut-off point of 3. The most prominent attitudinal statement as ranked by the rural dwellers were economic hardship encourages human trafficking (4.53), juvenile delinquency stimulates human trafficking (4.18), poor impact of development programme encourages human trafficking (4.21), I cannot participate in human trafficking (4.16). This may be attributed to the fact that increasingly difficult means of sustainable livelihood would predispose rural dwellers to human trafficking. Mahmoud and Trebesch (2008) noted that a significant link between risk perception and trafficking exists, such that in regions where more people are aware of the phenomenon of human trafficking, the likelihood of trafficking is lower. This finding, although not fully robust, underlines the potential benefit of awareness campaigns to counter human trafficking. Ngban et al 2009 reported similar findings on perception of human trafficking in the South-South Zone of Nigeria. Conversely rural dwellers were negatively disposed to attitudinal items such as family separation (divorce) encourages human trafficking (2.99) and family violence promotes human trafficking (2.39). Mahmoud and Trebesch (2008) indicated that, remoteness and low socioeconomic development do not appear to matter much for trafficking risks. A lower quality of public services as measured by low density of physicians and high infant mortality rates,

the household's locality (rural or urban), and low wages compared to the capital town do not increase the likelihood of trafficking in a five eastern European city. This is however not applicable in terms of facilities in rural Nigeria.

Table 3 shows rural dwellers' knowledge of human trafficking. The results reveal that rural dwellers had a wide range of knowledge levels regarding human trafficking. No respondents answered all of the knowledge test questions incorrectly, nor did any respondent answer all questions correctly. Majority of the rural dweller had low knowledge about human trafficking. From Table 3 most of items had the highest percentages in the false column which shows that the responses were not right for many of the items. About 61% of the rural dwellers responded correctly only on the item on "human trafficking exposes to drugs and drug addiction". This may be because of low awareness about the consequences of human trafficking among the rural dwellers. Ofoku (2010) stressed the need for effective campaign among rural dweller as a means to increase awareness and reduce the propensity to participate in human trafficking. Ngban et al (2009) recommended a massive and aggressive public enlightenment campaign was recommended to better their perception of the human trafficking pandemic.

The result of multiple regression analysis of relationships between rural dwellers' perception towards human trafficking and socio-economic characteristics were presented in Table 4. The independent variables were significantly related to perception towards human trafficking with F value of 2.54, $p < 0.05$. Also, R value of 0.68 showed that there was a strong correlation between independent variables and perception towards human trafficking. The result further predicted 46 percent of the variation in perception towards human trafficking by rural dwellers. Significant determinants were income ($t = 2.64$), knowledge ($t = 4.33$) perceived risk ($t = 2.88$) Education level ($t = 3.13$) and number of dependants ($t = 1.93$). It implies that as rural dwellers' income increases, knowledge increases, perceived risk decreases education level decreases and number of dependants increases the higher the perception towards human trafficking. The significant contribution of level of education may not be unconnected with the fact that majority of these respondents were not highly educated and hence, they may not know the implication. Ngban et al (2009) stated that demographic variables such as age, gender and residential location influence their perception of human trafficking in the South-South Zone of Nigeria

This paper has shown that majority of rural dwellers in Niger Delta region are males, married, between 30 and 40 years of age, had no formal

education and having between 5 and 8 persons as dependants. They have negative perception about human trafficking but their knowledge on human trafficking is low. The perception about human trafficking was determined by income, knowledge, perceived risk, Education level, and number of dependants. The propensity of rural dwellers to participate in human trafficking will be as a result of high level of poverty which is in connection with their number of household. Majority of them have large family sizes. The low level of knowledge of the attendants problems associated with human trafficking has made them to continually fall prey to traffickers. Lastly perception of rural dwellers towards human trafficking could be improved if their ignorance about the 'totality' of human trafficking is reduced or completely eradicated. To reduce the occurrence of Human trafficking adequate knowledge and awareness of the attendant problems associated with Human trafficking need to be created amongst the rural dwellers. The policy implications of the findings are that policy measures to counter human trafficking and related awareness campaigns should mainly be targeted to those areas where migration rates are high or on the rise. Activities to address the areas of need that predisposes rural dwellers to human trafficking should be addressed such as community development and means of sustainable livelihoods to the rural dwellers.

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