

Demographic Variables and Perception of Human Trafficking in the South-South Zone of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT The problem of human trafficking has continued to plague the Nigerian society generally and the south-south zone in particular. The increasing rates of its practices and its associated health problems such as HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases are really causes for serious concern. This study was conducted with 1000 (one thousand) civil servants in government ministries from the south-south cities of Calabar, Port Harcourt, Uyo, Yenegoa, Asaba and Benin city, to find out how demographic variables such as age, gender and residential location influence their perception of human trafficking, since all accusing fingers seems to point at this direction. Results of the data analyses using independent t-test revealed a significantly positive relationship. Therefore, an aggressive public enlightenment campaign should be embarked upon in order to arouse an objective perception of the issue.

INTRODUCTION

The upsurge of human trafficking has in recent times become very worrisome in the south-south zone of Nigeria in particular and Nigeria in general. Human trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the 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 the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation (UNICEF 2000).

This article therefore looks at some demographic factors such as age, gender and residential location of the respondents that tend to influence their perception of human trafficking pandemic in the south-south zone of Nigeria.

Literature

Literature review for this article is carried out under the following sub-headings:

- a) Age and perception of human trafficking
- b) Gender and perception of human trafficking

- c) Residential location and perception of human trafficking

a) Age and Perception of Human Trafficking

It is a truism that the number of years that a person has lived or existed influence his worldview on issues. To this end, Ezewu (1987) posited that the age of a person plays an important role in the critical appraisal of events, situations or a thing. He maintained that, experience gained as a result of one's helps a great deal in his objective assessment of the world around him. He pointed out that young people lack experience on many issues and are therefore hasty at drawing conclusions.

Pollitt (1990) on his part indicated that there is a positive relationship between age and cognition. He stated that the older the age of a person, the more cognitively developed the person is. This as he further maintained will place the person on advantage over the younger one, because as the saying goes, 'experience is the best teacher'. Therefore the older person will better appraise the effect of human trafficking than the younger one and will to this end perceive the phenomenon as a modern day slavery while the younger ones will perceive it otherwise.

In a similar development, Madunagu (2002) noted that, young men and women have an incurable craze for better life. She maintained that

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to enjoy this better life they do anything without mining the implications. They therefore look at human trafficking as worthwhile and a poverty alleviation measure. She further pointed out that although the young ones are more concerned about better life, parents in some instances compel their female children to engage in human trafficking in order to uplift the family economically.

b) Gender and Perception of Human Trafficking

Research findings have demonstrated that differences exist between gender and perception of human trafficking. On account of this, Madunagu (2002) posited that parents of victims (males and females) who were contacted in a focused group discussion gave different opinion as to what constitute human trafficking. Whereas the females see human trafficking as a money making venture, the males on the contrary see it as an avenue for exploitation of human labour and earnings.

In a similar development, Osakue and Okoojion (2002) maintained that there is a remarkable difference in the perception of human trafficking by men and women. They noted that girls are more easily attracted by wealth such that when they see the successes of others, they want to emulate them not minding the means. They therefore look at human trafficking as a means of making quick money rather than a means of exploitation as being looked upon by men.

Eysenck and Nias (2000) on their part observed that in virtually all cultures, there are different norms for males and females, so men and women have different worldview and by extension different perception of human trafficking. They maintained that whereas men perceive human trafficking as an instrument of exploitation, women perceive it as a worthwhile enterprise which has come to alleviate poverty in Africa.

c) Residential Location and Perception of Human Trafficking

Residential location refers to where the respondent lives, that is either rural or urban but in this case six urban cities are involved, that is, Calabar, Port Harcourt, Yenegoa, Uyo, Asaba and Benin City. To this end, Fontana (1981) asserted that one's residential location influences his/her perception generally. He noted that people in

urban areas typically are exposed to a wider range of experiences. The print and electronic media, information technology and fairly stocked libraries are available to them to boost their experience. Consequent upon this experience they are more likely to perceive the realities of human trafficking better than their counterparts in rural areas.

Griffiths (1990) on his part observed that poverty, sterile environment and low standards of social services characterize rural environment to the extent that the residents' perception is jaundiced. Thus, the rural dwellers hardly see anything wrong with human trafficking since they consider it as a means through which they get exposed to the outside world. The reverse is rather the case with those who leave in urban areas.

In a similar vein, Ezewu (1983) concluded that some features of the rural environment impact on the residents negatively, so much so that they influence their perception and consequently their opinion on issues. A case in point is the riverine areas where residents of such places are always involved in fishing without engaging in any other venture to broaden their horizon. This limited exposure makes them look at human trafficking as means of relieving them of the burden of fishing rather than a means of exploitation

METHODOLOGY

The survey inferential method was employed. This method was preferred because it describes a phenomena as it exists at the time of investigation and make inferences about the population under study using the sample drawn from the population.

The instrument use for data collection was People's Perception of Human Trafficking Questionnaire (PPHTQ). The instrument had two sections (A and B) made up of twenty-four (24) items. Section "A" had four questions which dealt with demographic information while section "B" dealt with people's perception of human trafficking and had twenty questions. The instrument was pilot tested using fifty (50) civil servants randomly selected from government ministries in the South-South Zone. A Cronbach Co-efficient Alpha reliability method was used to determine the reliability estimates for the sub-variables which ranged from .76 to .89. The ministries involved in the pilot study were however, not used in the main study.

Population and Sample of the Study

The population of the study consists of 1,23,854 civil servants in the South-South Zone while the sample for the study consists of one thousand (1000) Civil Servant randomly selected from the above population. 50 per cent of these, that is 500 civil servants, were males and the other 50 percent (500) were females.

RESULTS

The data collected were analyzed using t-test. This approach enabled the researchers to accept or reject the null, hypothesis that;

i) Age, gender and residential location do not significantly influence people's perception of human trafficking.

The result of the analysis gave a t-value of 2.05, which is higher than the critical t-value of 1.95 at .05 level of significance with 998 degrees of freedom (Table 1). Based on this, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that age significantly influences people's perception of human trafficking (Table 1). A further observation of the result shows that the mean score for the respondents who are old ($x = 20.51$) was higher than the mean score for respondents who are young ($x = 20.04$). This means that the respondents who are old will better perceive the realities of human trafficking such as its exploitative tendencies better than the young ones.

Results in Table 2 indicate that the calculated t-value of 2.90 is greater than the critical t-value

Table 1: Independent t-test analysis of the influence of age on people's perception of human trafficking

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	T
Old	593	20.51	3.64	2.05*
Young	407	20.04	3.54	
Total	1000	20.32	3.60	

* $P < .05$, $df = 998$ Critical t-value = 1.96

Table 2: Results of independent t-test analysis of the influence of gender on people's perception of human trafficking

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	T
Male	500	20.65	3.58	2.90*
Female	500	19.99	3.61	
Total	1000	20.32	3.60	

* $P < .05$, $df = 998$, Critical t-value = 1.96

of 1.96 with 998 degrees of freedom at 0.05 significant level. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected on the basis of these results. This means that there is a significant gender difference in people's perception of human trafficking. In other words the quality of being a male or female influences one's perception of human trafficking. With male mean score of 20.65 higher than female mean score of 19.99, it therefore, means that males will perceive the realities of human trafficking better than the females.

Results in table 3 show that the calculated t-value of 6.73 is higher than the critical t-value of 1.96 at .05 level of significance with 998 degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis which specified no significant difference between the group was rejected. This means that there was a significant difference between rural and urban people in terms of their perception of human trafficking. With urban people showing a better perception ($x = 21.08$) of human trafficking than those in rural locations ($x = 19.56$). This means that people living in urban locations will better perceive the realities of human trafficking that has to do with exploitation than those in rural locations.

Table 3: Independent t-test analysis of the difference between urban and rural people's perception of human trafficking

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	T
Urban	500	21.08	3.48	6.73*
Rural	500	19.56	3.66	
Total	1000	20.32	3.60	

* $P < .05$, $df = 998$, critical value = 1.96

DISCUSSION

The result of the analysis on age revealed that, there is a significant influence of the respondents' age on their perception of human trafficking. This finding is in line with Ezewu (1987) who posited that the age of a person plays an important role in the critical appraisal of events, situations or a thing. This means that the older a person is, the better his perception of the realities of human trafficking since he can better appraise the situation as a result of experience arising from age. The older person can easily see the exploitative tendencies of trafficking and is not easily carried away by the flagrant display of affluence by the traffickers. The young persons on the other

hand get easily carried away by the wealth of traffickers and promise of better life abroad such that they easily fall prey to those merchants. This finding is in agreement with Pollitt (1990) who stated that, there is a positive relationship between age and cognition. Therefore the older a person is the more cognitively developed the person will be and by extension a better perception of human trafficking.

Also, the result of the analysis on gender revealed that gender significantly influences people's perception of human trafficking. This finding corroborated that of Osakue and Okoojion (2002) who maintained that there is a remarkable difference in perception of human trafficking by men and women. They noted that girls are more easily attracted by good things when they see the successes of others. They therefore look at human trafficking as a means of making quick money rather than as a means of exploitation. It is true that women (girls) easily get carried away when they see good things or when they are promised better life. The traffickers understanding their psychology to do just that to get their consent. Also the traffickers knowing fully well that girls sell better since they use them for prostitution to do everything possible to entice them, this makes the girls think or look at human trafficking as a quick money making venture. Men on their part do not enjoy such largesse from traffickers, this makes them look at human trafficking differently. The findings further supported that of Eysenck and Nias (2000) who maintained that men and women have different world view and standards.

Similarly, the result of the analysis on residential location indicated that one's residential location significantly influence his perception of human trafficking. This finding supported Fontana (1981) who asserted that one's residential location influences his/her perception generally. Accordingly, people in urban locations typically are exposed to a wider range of experience through the print or electronic media, information technology and fairly stocked libraries. Consequently, they are more likely to perceive the realities of human trafficking better than their counterparts in rural areas. Furthermore, the

findings from this analysis is in congruent with that of Griffiths (1990) who maintained that poverty, sterile environment and low standards of services in rural areas have tended to jaundiced their perception generally such that they see human trafficking as a means of poverty alleviation. The rural people lack information on human trafficking, therefore when they run into traffickers who make all the promises for a better life, they tend to see it as a good deal and a worth while venture after all.

CONCLUSION

The study concerned itself with providing empirical evidence on the influence of some demographic variable such as age, gender and residential location on the perception of human trafficking in the South-South Zone of Nigeria.

Based on the research findings emanating from the study, it was concluded that age, gender and residential location of the people of South-South significantly influence their perception of human trafficking. Therefore, a massive and aggressive public enlightenment campaign was recommended to better their perception of the pandemic generally.

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