

Psychological coercion of trafficking in human persons: Antecedents and Psychosocial consequences for the victims and society

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Abstract: *This study explored the psychological coercion of trafficking in human person, antecedents such as causes, psychological coercion and processes and psychosocial consequences. We adopted Victimological paradigm which explains why some people are more vulnerable to victimization than others through victim-trafficker relationship, repeat victimization and role of lifestyle in victimization risk. The study presented causes of trafficking in human persons as the desire to migrate. The tendency to migrate may be precipitated by poverty, oppression, lack of human rights, lack of social or economic opportunity, dangers from conflict or instability. Political instability, militarism, civil unrest, internal armed conflict and natural disasters could result to desire to migrate. We presented psychological coercion as the means of obtaining initial victim and posited that this instills psychological disorders, for example depression, absence of emotional reactions, anxiety disorder, self-blame, helplessness or hopelessness, nightmare, suicidal ideation, paranoia, anger and rage control problems, psychoactive substance and alcohol abuse, dissociative disorders and host of others (Kornzinski, 2013). The psychological processes involve recruitment, initiation and indoctrination and were applied to obtain, maintain and gain control over the victims. Trafficking in human person has negative psychosocial consequences in its entirety. Psychosocial consequences of trafficking in human persons varied with undermining the extended family ties, and in many cases, the forced absence of women leads to the breakdown of families and neglect of children and the aged (Danailova-Trainor & Laczko 2010). The study concluded that the traffickers and the victim of trafficking need rehabilitation and recommended cognitive therapy for necessary rehabilitation.*

Key words: *psychological coercion, victimology, trafficking in human person, victimization.*

I. Introduction

Global communities have long been concerned with the problems of trafficking in human persons, an act referred to as modern day form of slavery. Concerned national and international communities have been busy doing everything possible to combat the ugly menace and its attendant behavioural abuse such as exploitation in the form of forced labour and sexual abuse. Human trafficking is a serious social problem which has unquantifiable negative consequences, not only for those persons who have survived trafficking, their families and closest environment, but also for society at large. Africa and Nigeria in particular is a fertile ground for trafficking in human person. For example, one of the UNO reports indicated that Africa is predominantly an origin region for victims of trafficking (M'Cormack, 2011). According to the report, Western Europe and West Africa are reported to be the main destination (sub-) regions for African victims while West Africa is reported to be the main origin sub-region for victims trafficked from Africa. This points to intra-regional human trafficking in Africa in general and West Africa in particular. Down to country level, Nigeria has been reported to rank very high as an origin country, while Benin, Ghana and Morocco ranked high as origin countries. Trafficking in human person in West Africa usually takes the form of child trafficking within national borders and across the region for labour and sexual exploitation; recruitment of children by force into armed conflicts; and women and girls being trafficked within and out of the region for sexual exploitation (UN.GIFT, 2008).

Trafficking in human persons, whether it occurs within countries or across borders, and whether or not conducted by organized criminal networks, is criminal (ILO, 2014). Human trafficking has been regarded as callous global industry that denies victims their rights and dignity and on the other side generates billions of dollars for organized criminal networks (Belser, 2005).

Human trafficking is today referred to as modern day slavery. Its serious psychosocial damages may have caused Federal Government of Nigeria to respond promptly to United Nations call to combat human trafficking by becoming a signatory to the Transnational Organized Crime Convention (TOC) and its trafficking in Persons Protocol on the 13th December, 2000. In further efforts to stop trafficking in human persons, Nigeria established National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other related Matters (NAPTIP) on the 26th of August, 2003. The Agency is the creation of Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law

Enforcement and Administration Act, 2003 and came into being as Nigerian's fulfillment of international obligation of trafficking in Persons Protocol Supplementing the Transnational Organized Crime Convention (TOC). Finally, national action plan on trafficking in persons was adopted in Nigerian in 2006. This provided evidence on the seriousness of Nigerian Government efforts to combat trafficking in persons within and across the border. Since the victims suffer complex psychosocial problems, psychologists need knowledge on the behaviour of the trafficker and the victim. This will help to provide necessary psychotherapeutic interventions to rehabilitate the traffickers and the victims.

This discourse is more concerned with the psychology of trafficking in persons; the process of coercion involved and the psychological experiences of the trafficking victims. It is hopeful that this study will add significantly to knowledge base for psychology to tackle rehabilitation issues for the traffickers, the victim, their families and close relations who may have been psychologically affected by trafficking.

Trafficking targets mostly women and children. In other words, most of those trafficked are vulnerable women and children who are deceived into a life of suffering. The deception takes the form of psychological coercion with its psychosocial antecedents. They are exploited for sex and forced to work in conditions very similar to slavery. This awoke the attention of United Nations that called for urgent promulgation of laws across the globe to prevent trafficking in human persons. To this effect, the specific offence of trafficking in persons was established in Nigeria in 2003.

Trafficking in human persons is defined as 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 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 (TVPA, 2000). This study deals with psychological processes involved in trafficking and of course portray the psychological conditions of those trafficked so as to provide insight into understanding psychological experiences of victims of trafficking that further provide leeway for psychotherapy needed for their rehabilitations. The ideas presented in this study are based on review of literatures and outcomes of interview granted by non-significant number of trafficking cases in the South Eastern Nigeria. The study was based on victimological paradigm – the paradigm which explains the issues of victimization in trafficking.

Theoretical framework

It is important that theoretical framework which explain trafficking in human person be presented in this article for clearer understanding of psychological processes involved in trafficking in human person.

Victimological paradigm

There are issues considered important in discussing victimology paradigm which explain why some people are at greater risk of being trafficked than others (Van Den Hoven and Maree, 2005). Some of these issues according to Lutya and Lanier (2012) may include victim trafficker interaction, repeat victimization and lifestyle. The authors noted that relationships and interactions with traffickers, lifestyles and number of times women have been trafficked form an essential part of the process of human trafficking of women and girls for involuntary prostitution.

Victim and trafficker relationship

Victim proneness and victim-trafficker interaction are two factors explaining the vulnerability of victims to human trafficking for involuntary prostitution through maintaining a relationship with a trafficker. There are three categories of victims that could be prone to victimization. These are innocent, precipitating and provocative victims. By interacting with criminals innocently through no fault of their own or by walking alone in the dark some individuals could be seen as precipitating their own victimisation. In addition, by exhibiting certain behaviours that could be seen as provocative by traffickers, some people are prone to victimisation, (Van den Hoven & Maree, 2005). Such behaviour may include tendency to migrate or desire to relate with the trafficker. The distance between the trafficker and the victim and the intentions of the trafficker and the nature of victim-trafficker interaction may increase the chances of victimisation. It is pointed out by Van Den Hoven and Maree, (2005) that victims and the trafficker could have interacted closely before victimisation occurred. Victim involvement in the events that led to victimisation could be identified. Either the victim had provoked or precipitated the victimisation incident. However, it is a known fact that women and children are more likely to be victimised by a known person than by strangers (Lutya and Lanier, 2012).

Repeat victimization

Repeat victimisation refers to the fact that victims of crimes are likely to be victimised either by different perpetrators or the same assailant during a limited time period, and that repeat victimisation is likely to manifest into a cycle of violence (Van den Hoven & Maree, 2005)). The authors further noted that, in turn

victims are likely to become abusers by replicating or modelling behaviour and actions perpetrated against them by human traffickers and recruit other women and girls to involuntary prostitution.

According to Van den Hoven and Maree (2005) there are certain characteristics that make specific categories of people more prone to repeat victimisation than others, for example target vulnerability, target gratifiability and target antagonism. Target vulnerability is the observed victim's physical weakness, and psychological distress; whereas target gratifiability entails attributes that are attractive to the trafficker. The presence of destructive impulses in one's personality could expose one to the risk of being victimised. It is possible that if traumatic experiences and future plans constrained, are not addressed the former victim may work independently as prostitutes or replicate the process by recruiting potential victims for their own benefit for financial gains that could have been generated from prostitution. This implies replicating trafficking in human persons by the victims of human trafficking (Lutya & Lanier, 2012)).

According to Lutya and Lanier (2012) replication of human trafficking is conceptualised as second-wave trafficking, and then repeat victimisation and second wave trafficking correlate. Victim vulnerability may increase by repeat victimisation. If the victim escapes human traffickers, the chances are that he or she might be re-victimised. The trauma experienced through the process of being victimised at first, may generate feelings of helplessness and could see the victim back with traffickers for involuntary prostitution. With trauma left unresolved, the dependence and bonding between human traffickers and victims still present in victims psyche and negative responses of the community and family members to the experience of the victim, the chances are that the victim could still be vulnerable to human traffickers. The human traffickers could be the only centre of acceptance that the victim could find comforting. And so efforts to avoid falling prey to traffickers by the former victim become whittled.

The role of lifestyle in victimisation risk

Lifestyle risk model describes the risk of victimisations to be influenced by personality of the potential victim, absence of a capable guardian, environment with which the potential victim resides and the daily routine activities which occupies the time of the potential victim, (Van den Hoven & Maree, 2005). The authors further pointed out that the lifestyle activities which a potential victim participates determine the type of victimisation the victim could experience. For example, substance abuse may fuel the occurrence of interpersonal violence, whereas the use of the internet may expose children to inappropriate social networks, and participation in activities favoured by the deviant groups may pose danger to unsuspecting potential victims, (Van Den Hoven & Maree, 2005). Lifestyle activities such as substance abuse, internet use and equivalent groups are key factors explaining human trafficking of young women and girls for involuntary prostitution. It is possible for human traffickers to draw into the human trafficking ring known victims whose lifestyles intersect with theirs instead of selecting girls and young women from unfamiliar places. Sometimes, girls serving in restaurants have been deceived and so disappeared with traffickers. Such victims could least likely report the perpetrators to the authorities having rendered themselves easy prey to human traffickers (Van den Hoven, 2005).

Causes of trafficking in human persons

The root causes of trafficking are numerous and can differ from one country to another. Trafficking in human person is a complex phenomenon that is often driven or influenced by social, economic, cultural and other factors. Many of these factors are specific to individual trafficking patterns and to the states or nations in which they occur. There are, however, many factors that tend to be common to trafficking in general or found in a wide range of different regions, patterns or cases. However, Nigeria is mostly the place of consideration here.

One of the key factors to consider is the desire of potential victims to migrate to another location. This desire and tendency to migrate is exploited by traffickers to recruit and gain initial control or cooperation of the potential victims (Danailova-Trainor & Laczko, 2010). The moment this initial cooperation is established, it is followed by more psychological coercive measures especially as the victims have been moved to another state or region of the country, which may be different from the one to which victims initially intended to migrate to.

Then, there are some factors which may compel people to decide to leave their original place. Some of the factors may include poverty, oppression, lack of human rights, lack of social or economic opportunity, dangers from conflict or instability and similar conditions. Political instability, militarism, civil unrest, internal armed conflict and natural disasters may result in an increase in trafficking (M'Cormack, 2011). The current disturbances in North Eastern Nigeria should be cited as case in point here. Precisely, the activities of the Boko Haram which can better be described as "terrorism via domestic violence" have led to many social vices and massive displacements of reasonable populations of the affected areas. Some people may feel fed up with the situation and decide to move out of the affected area even with constraints in their means of livelihood. Undoubtedly, this ugly situation may have rendered some human persons, for example orphans and street children, extremely vulnerable to trafficking.

Poverty and wealth can also play meaningful role (Danailova-Trainor & Laczko, 2010). Poverty and wealth are relative concepts which lead to both migration and trafficking patterns in which victims move from conditions of extreme poverty to conditions of less-extreme poverty. In that context, the rapid expansion of broadcast and telecommunication media, including the Internet, across the developing world may have increased the desire to migrate to advanced countries and, with it, the vulnerability of would-be migrants to traffickers. Use of internet without caution may cause some children today to search for phantom opportunities through internet application options.

Further, the practice of selling or entrusting poor children to more affluent friends or relatives may create victim vulnerability. Some parents sell their children, not just for the money, but also in the hope that their children will escape a situation of chronic poverty and move to a place where they will have a better life and more opportunities. In some places, social or cultural practices also contribute to trafficking in human person. For example, the devaluation of women and girls in a society makes them disproportionately vulnerable to trafficking.

In addition to those factors are the problems of porous borders, corrupt government officials, the involvement of international organised criminal groups or networks and limited capacity of or commitment by immigration and law enforcement officers to control borders. Lack of adequate legislation and of political will and commitment to enforce existing legislation or mandates are other factors that facilitate trafficking in human persons (OSCE, 2014).

The discussion on trafficking can be significant or relevant to the field of psychology only if the behaviours of the traffickers which are coercive and the victims who are victimized are explored. This study did that by discussing the psychological coercion that creates different patterns of psychological disorder in victims of trafficking.

Psychological coercion of trafficking in human persons

Most often it might be believed that victims of trafficking were physically forced to succumb to traffickers. But, it has been understood that psychological coercion devoid of physical force even play greater role in winning victims of trafficking. There are evidences giving credence to psychological coercion in trafficking with person. For examples, in law targeted at stopping slavery in the United States since 1865, Involuntary Servitude Statutes recognized that individuals may be held in non-violent coercion (Hopper & Hidalgo, 2003). In 2000, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) recognized coercion and criminalised non-physical forms of trafficking in persons. This act defined trafficking in human persons as:

Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of a person by means of coercion, or by abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or of position of vulnerability, or by the giving or receiving payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person, having control over another person, for purpose of exploitation.

Within the context of TVPA, coercion include violent as well as non-violent force in which case the victim believes that he or she has no alternative but to succumb to demands of the trafficker. Here, coercion includes though not limited to taking advantage of the vulnerability resulting from the person having entered the country illegally or without proper documentation, pregnancy, any physical or mental disease or disability of the person, including addiction to the use of any substance, or reduced capacity to form judgment by virtue of being a child.

Traffickers adopt psychological manipulation and fear to gain and sustain control of the victims. To achieve this, traffickers apply conviction that physical harms may occur to them or others should the victims escape. This really achieves the same result for the traffickers as direct threats of physical violence. Even as perpetrators may use violent as last resort, it is not necessary to use violent often to keep victim in a state of constant fear (Herman, 1992). The author further noted that the threat of death or serious harm (either to the victim or to others close to him or her) is much more frequent than the actual resort to violence.

Literatures are extant in psychological coercion of various forms of abuse. Also, studies have revealed psychological coercion in processes of perpetrating various forms of abuse. For example, psychological coercion has been observed in prisoners of war and torture and physicians have also noted that psychological coercion has negative psychological consequences (Herman, 1992; Turner & Gorst-Unsward, 1993; Simpson, 1993). Such negative psychological consequences will produce stress disorders if sufficiently severe (Simpson, 1993). According to Basoglu and others (1997) maltreatment of victims of torture that results in profound sense of helplessness is associated with the great level of distress.

Research into cults by social psychologists has described the methods used by cult leaders to control their members as coercive (Anderson, 1985). The study noted that some of the means of psychological control adopted within cults may include separation from familiar surroundings, deception, creation of confusion, social

isolation, prohibition against dissent or free will, induction of guilt, offer of affection that depends on compliance, threats of harm and creation of fear (Anderson & Zimbardo, 1980).

Even in domestic violence, psychological coercion exist in creating conditions of psychological captivity and victims reported that psychological abuse that they experience was as harmful or even worse than the physical abuse that they suffer (Walker, 1984). Boulette and Anderson (1986) found that perpetrators of domestic violence adopted psychological control such as isolation, provoking fear, alternative kindness and threat to produce disequilibrium, encouraging feelings of guilt and self-blame, creating dependency and establishing conditions that lead to learned helplessness.

The elements and psychological conditions of abuse thus analysed have significant similarities with trafficking in human persons. Hopper and Hidalgo (2006) presented similarities of other abuses with that of trafficking in human persons. The authors noted that as with prisoners of war, prisoners might be forced to live in overcrowded conditions with poor sanitation, basic physiological needs such as food and sleep may be withheld in order to break, control or punish victims. Freedom of movement is restricted. Trafficking victims are isolated from external social networks that create sense of disconnection just like in cults and victims of trafficking experience repeated verbal abuse, threats, and sexual abuse similar to victims of domestic violence.

In a study to investigate the experiences of trafficked women in five countries of Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Venezuela and the United States, Raymond (2002) found high levels of psychological abuse, besides physical and sexual violence. The study further found that over seventy percent of the women reported that they suffered emotional abuse, verbal threats and control through use of alcohol and drugs. There were also reports of threat to report the women to police or immigration-related threats, deaths threats to the women or their families, control through the use of weapons and control by withholding their money.

Trafficking in human person creates conditions of traumatic stress on human trafficking victims with its attendant psychological consequences. For example, majority of trafficking victim abused women reported emotional, behavioural, psychological problems such as depression or sadness, guilt and self-blame, anger and rage and sleep disturbances (Raymond, 2002).

Bales (2004) in his work on victims of forced labour explained psychological manipulation adopted by traffickers which x-rayed that victims of forced labour often suffer psychological assaults designed to keep them submissive. As victims were cut-off from contact with the outside world, victims can lose their sense of personal efficacy, control and attributes which have been considered earlier by health professionals as essentials to good mental and physical health (Bales, 2004).

In the process of trafficking, unique relationship of coercive control between the perpetrators and the victim is established. Perpetrators use what may be regarded as organized methods of empowerment and disconnection. This instills terror and helplessness on the victim and destroys the sense of self in relation to others. The more isolated the victims become, the more they depend on the trafficker for both survival and basic bodily needs, for information and even emotional sustenance. Psychologically, this simply increase control over the victims. The provoked feelings of fear, disconnection, dependency and helplessness in the victims provide the traffickers more opportunity to exploit the victims for personal and financial gains.

Psychological processes of trafficking in human persons

The process of trafficking involves psychological manipulation and control that can take three phases such as recruitment, initiation, and indoctrination (Hopper & Hidalgo, 2006). During recruitment, traffickers may identify potential victims who are mostly women and girls who suffer from poverty, no access to education, unemployed, discriminated in one form or the other and lack of formal economic opportunities in their countries. The traffickers fraudulently persuade the victims by providing misleading information and painted picture of an ideal world. The victims are lured with false promise of good working conditions.

Initiation

Initiation follows recruitment in the process of trafficking in human person. Immediately, victims are got, they are initiated into the culture of trafficking (Demir, 2003). In this stage, the victims are compelled to accept distorted sense of reality in which exploitation is expected and accepted (Hopper & Hidalgo, 2003). Traffickers now assume authority over the helpless victims. Victims are not allowed answers to any of their questions if they dare to ask, and so information is shielded against them. The victims are usually moved from one environment to another and isolated from outside the world. The victims face language barrier that worsen their situation (Hopper & Hidalgo, 2003).

Indoctrination

Initiation into the culture of trafficking is maintained through indoctrination in which traffickers deepen control over victims by utilizing authoritarian status. Studies in the field of social psychology have shown that people will behave in ways that should ordinarily be morally offensive to them under the presence of strong

enough authority. For example, in a study Milgram (1974) found that when instructed by an authority, majority of people will comply with request to administer painful electric shocks to another. In similar manner, traffickers utilize their status and authority to influence their victims' behaviours including behaviour that may be against a victim's moral or beliefs (Hopper & Hidalgo, 2003). This may apply more to the situations of sexual exploitation on young girls and women by traffickers. During indoctrination, traffickers create physical impairment, exhaustion and deprivation of basic physiological needs and thus create victimization with complex psychological effects that may include lack of self control, learned helplessness, hopelessness, frustration among others.

Psychosocial consequences of trafficking in human persons

Consequences of trafficking in human persons have little or no social advantage whatsoever for the victims or the society. Scholars have posited that the negative consequences outweigh positive consequences of trafficking in human persons for trafficked victims (Lutya & Lanier, 2012). Victims of trafficking in human person experience human rights violations and deterioration of mental and physical health pre and post processes of trafficking. Free will, human dignity and inability to make decisions are some of the human rights violations experienced by victims at the hands of human traffickers (Hughes, 2004; Kinnu, 2006; Phinney, 2006). Trafficked young women and girls often have traveling documents confiscated by human traffickers, which render them incapable of seeking assistance from the authorities at the host country (Jordan, 2002; Simic, 2004).

Further, there are other human and social costs to development attributable to trafficking in human person. The direct impact on the family and community left behind cannot be easily quantified but nevertheless should not be ignored. Trafficking undermines extended family ties, and in many cases, the forced absence of women leads to the breakdown of families and neglect of children and the aged (Danailova-Trainor & Laczko 2010). Victims who return to communities often find themselves stigmatised and shunned, and are more likely to become involved in substance abuse and criminal activity (US Department of State, 2004). Trafficking in human person may cause various degrees of social harms to the victims.

The victims are often deprived of basic medical and mental health care; shelter that is not a form of prison or detention; protection from traffickers; access to information on legal rights and to attorneys or advocates; financial or other assistance; for example food, clothing and telephone calls as well as a means to return home safely. The victims are in fact enslaved. On the other hand, the trafficker is not left out. The trafficker is like a criminal who does not enjoy sufficient freedom in the society. Oftentimes they are caught and suffer the wrath of either local or international law. For example, three Nigerians were reported to have been jailed a total of 13 years in UK for being the London connection in a global trafficking in human person conspiracy in July, 2014 (channelstv online, 2014).

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) - Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is regarded as the individual's response to traumatic events. PTSD is defined in DSM IV-2 as development of a group of symptoms after being exposed to extreme traumatic stressors, including threat of death or injuries, or peril to physical integrity of the person and exposure to events where other persons are exposed to danger jeopardizing their life or threatening to inflict severe injuries. The person's response to such events can be fear, helplessness and terror. It is then that the person fears that the events will be repeated and identifying with the bad, believing that he or she is bad and that's why such things are happening. This is always possible because the process of recruitment, initiation and indoctrination involved in trafficking, as earlier explained, is full of threat and efforts to instill fear in the trafficked or victim. Other psychological conditions may include depression, absence of emotional reactions, anxiety disorder, self-blame, helplessness or hopelessness, nightmare, suicidal ideation, paranoia, anger and rage control problems, psychoactive substance and alcohol abuse, dissociative disorders and host of others (Kornzinski, 2013).

II. Conclusion and recommendation

The nature and culture of trafficking makes study on trafficking in human person difficult. However, trafficking in human person creates complex psychological disorder in victims and the traffickers which should not be left unattended to by psychologists. Both the traffickers and the victims are psychologically affected by the experiences of trafficking. Trafficked victims could experience nightmares, depression, anxiety, PTSD and other mental health related ailments. Those who experienced these mental health ailments should need psychological services for rehabilitation. For psychologists to poise to render such services there is every need for them to understand the human traffickers and the victims to a large extent. This study underscores that point by providing knowledge base on victimological paradigm which explains process of victimization on the bases of victim and trafficker relationship, repeat victimization, and the role of lifestyles in victimization risk. It further presented the possible causes of trafficking and psychological coercion, the psychological process of

trafficking such as recruitment, initiation and indoctrination, and psychosocial consequences of trafficking in human person.

With that knowledge so imbibed, psychologist should have insight into the behavioural aspects of trafficking as to tackle the issues of rehabilitation of trafficking victims and the traffickers by applying proven psychological intervention techniques. Therefore, psychotherapeutic intervention, in form of cognitive therapy, is recommended here by the authors to respond to victims' experiences, rehabilitate human traffickers and even assist other persons that could indirectly be affected by trafficking in human person such as families and relatives of victims.

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