

Knowledge and Attitude of Secondary School Students Towards Human Trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the knowledge and attitude of secondary school students towards human trafficking in Edo State. Three (3) research questions guided the study. The study adopted a correlational survey research design. The population of the study was fifty four thousand, seven hundred and seventy three (54,773) while a total of eight hundred and forty (840) senior secondary school students were sampled using the multistage sampling procedure. The study employed the use of two (2) instruments for data collection- an achievement test and a questionnaire. The internal consistency reliability of the instrument was determined using Kuder Richardson formula 20 (KR-20) for the achievement test items and Cronbach's Alpha statistical formula was used to analyze items in the questionnaire. The reliability result for knowledge yielded a coefficient of 0.68 and attitude yielded a coefficient of 0.77. Data analysis was done using mean, standard deviation, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypothesis. The findings of the study revealed that students have a high level of knowledge and positive attitude towards human trafficking. The study also revealed there is a significant relationship between students' knowledge and their attitude towards human trafficking. It was therefore recommended among others that Social Studies Associations of Nigeria in collaboration with the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIPs) and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) should periodically produce bulletins to our schools on the danger of human trafficking.

Keywords: Knowledge, Attitude, Human Trafficking

Introduction

The Trafficking in Persons Prohibition Law Enforcement and Administration Act (2003 No. 24) of Nigeria provides a comprehensive definition of trafficking, encompassing various acts and attempts related to the recruitment, transportation, purchase, sales, transfer, receipt, or harboring of individuals using deception, coercion, or debt bondage. The purpose of such actions is to place or hold individuals in involuntary servitude

(domestic, sexual, or reproductive), forced or bonded labor, or slavery-like conditions. Trafficking also includes the smuggling of individuals, particularly for sexual exploitation, which may involve perpetrators such as parents, family members, intermediaries, strangers, or acquaintances. Human trafficking is defined as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, sheltering, or receiving of persons by force, fraud, or deceit with the intention of utilizing them for financial gain, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2011). Human trafficking is widely acknowledged to be a kind of contemporary slavery, and it has been shown to be growing illegally every year, making it one of the most widespread crimes in the world. The primary goal of these actions is to profit financially from them. The incidence of human trafficking as a criminal activity has significantly expanded over time, and it is commonly recognised that it is a modern-day version of slavery. Additionally, the United Nations Protocol (2011) provides an additional perspective on human trafficking. It emphasizes the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons through various means such as threats, force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power, exploitation of vulnerability, or even the exchange of payments or benefits to gain consent from a person who has control over another individual. Therefore, ultimate aim of all these actions is exploitation (p. 4).

Victims of human trafficking more often than not come from disadvantaged backgrounds and belong to lower socioeconomic classes of society and they are faced with some challenges which make them vulnerable such as poverty, isolation, hunger, homelessness, insecurity, inadequate health care etc. The reasons behind their vulnerability can be quite complex, including factors like economic deprivation, high levels of unemployment, ineffective policies, and inadequate exposure to the right information. These circumstances contribute to the marginalization of these individuals, increasing their susceptibility to the enticing world of trafficking. Moreover, the desire for imported goods, societal status, and the pursuit of wealth create additional vulnerabilities, exposing people to exploitation through the horrifying practice of human trafficking.

When examining the trafficking of women, it becomes evident that it shares striking similarities with slavery. Both practices involve the acquisition and transportation of individuals across local, national, and even international borders, often against their will or with limited consent. The violation of personal freedom and the utter disregard for human dignity associated with human trafficking are universally condemned as illegal, criminal, and utterly inhumane acts. Such crimes are directed against individuals, as they exploit their vulnerability, infringe upon their rights of movement, and undermine their self-determination through coercive means. Consequently, human trafficking ranks as the world's third largest and most lucrative organized crime, surpassed only by drug trafficking and arms trade.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2017), an alarming 2.5 million people fall victim to human trafficking annually. This statistic underscores the urgent need to address this global social crisis, as its eradication requires the collective attention of all stakeholders. The consequences of human trafficking extend

beyond its direct impacts and encompass indirect repercussions, including the spread of HIV/AIDS, malnutrition, and the proliferation of diseases, among other grave concerns.

Nigeria has been identified by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2011) as a significant source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking. Beyond its role as a source country, Nigeria also serves as a transit and destination point for individuals trafficked to other West African nations, including Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, and Ghana. Typically, women, girls, and children are trafficked for various purposes, such as prostitution, labor in cocoa plantations, granite mines, and agricultural farms. The existence of regional migration routes within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), allowing undocumented entry and exit within a period of three months or ninety days, has facilitated human trafficking within this region.

Initially, human trafficking, particularly involving women and young girls, primarily focused on forced sex work and domestic servitude, receiving significant attention from advocacy and assistance efforts. However, there is now recognition that women, children, and men are trafficked into diverse forms of labor and sexual exploitation. Additionally, trafficked individuals may be coerced into activities like begging or serving as soldiers, while women and children are forced into "marriage" with men who demand their services after financial transactions with traffickers.

Several factors contribute to the vulnerability of potential trafficking victims. These include the knowledge, attitudes, and socio-economic status of victims' parents, poor leadership, unemployment, greed, unequal resource distribution, population growth, violence, rising crime rates, poverty, corruption, and cultural constraints that limit women's access to family and state resources.

Knowledge is defined as justified true belief, requiring that a proposition known by an individual must be true; otherwise, the person does not possess genuine knowledge. The truth condition distinguishes knowledge from mere opinion. This principle also applies to the issue of human trafficking, where some individuals perceive it as a means to quick financial gain, while others view it as a grave societal evil.

Attitude, as a psychological construct, encompasses an individual's cognitive and affective responses towards a particular subject. It is shaped through the interplay between an individual and their societal environment, where beliefs, opinions, values, norms, customs, and traditions are established and adhered to (Bandura, 1977). Attitudes are not inherently ingrained in biology but are constructed based on continuous experiences and acquired knowledge of the world around us. The dynamics surrounding attitudes and behaviours stem from a complex interplay of cultural and functional factors, which are shaped through various processes of socialization, be it informal or formal. These processes imbue individuals with emotional associations, guiding their actions and experiences, ultimately shaping their consistent attitudes. Positive reinforcement for certain actions promotes favourable or positive attitudes towards such actions, while

punishments for other specific actions/behaviours will most likely contribute to the development of unfavourable or negative attitudes.

Attitude towards any behavioural phenomenon such as human trafficking can be effectively influenced and transformed through the instruction of Social Studies. This is because Social Studies is an educational discipline that is value laden and prepares young individuals to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and values for active engagement in society. It equips individuals with reflective abilities, intellectual competence, emotional intelligence, and social skills that enable them to grasp and tackle societal issues in a rational manner.

Social Studies teaching is largely centered on the study of human beings and the strategies employed to address the challenges they will face in day to day life. It delves into how individuals utilize their attitudes, values, and skills for personal and societal development. Therefore the fundamental aim of Social Studies education is ultimately to empower students with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to become effective and responsible citizens (NCSS, 2004). The curriculum is designed to provide students at each grade level with opportunities to apply their knowledge, skills, and values while addressing real-world problems and challenges within their school, community, nation, and the global context (NCSS, 2004).

In the context of fostering a harmonious society, Social Studies assumes a crucial role in instilling values and cultivating attitudes, habits, and other social attributes that facilitate positive interactions between individuals and their immediate environment (Iyamu, 2016). Consequently, the domain of Social Studies carries a profound concern for shaping attitudes, habits, and other social attributes related to societal issues, including the grave matter of human trafficking. Therefore, it is crucial to assess the knowledge and attitudes of students towards human trafficking to gain insights into their perspectives on this pressing problem.

Statement of the Problem

Human trafficking is a grave and pervasive global challenge that poses a significant threat to humanity and yields devastating consequences. Within the context of Nigeria, trafficking in persons can be attributed to several factors, including population explosion and unfavourable economic conditions that have exacerbated unemployment, underemployment, and insecurity, thereby compelling young individuals to seek opportunities outside the country. Presently, a substantial proportion of young people encounter considerable difficulties in gaining admission to higher institutions, and even those who manage to secure admission often graduate without securing employment. Many of them hold the belief that education is unrewarding and that academic qualifications do not lead to wealth accumulation. Consequently, they resort to alternative means such as engaging in trafficking to attain quick financial gains.

Since 2009, Nigeria has undertaken various initiatives to combat human trafficking through collaborative efforts involving the police, customs, immigration, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), and other relevant organizations. These efforts have primarily focused on Edo State, which has gained notoriety as one of the primary hubs for human trafficking within Nigeria, encompassing both cross-border and internal trafficking. Since 1999, the state has garnered national and international attention due to the contemporary trends in human trafficking and prostitution, earning it the infamous title of "the capital of human trafficking". Reports from NAPTIP (2017) affirm that a significant majority of individuals trafficked for sexual exploitation purposes are young women and minors from Edo State. Despite the conviction and prosecution of several individuals involved in human trafficking since the establishment of NAPTIP, this reprehensible practice continues unabated. Consequently, given the escalating prevalence of human trafficking in Edo State, even in the presence of legal prohibitions, it is crucial to examine the knowledge and attitude of secondary school students towards this antisocial and condemnable act. What level of awareness and understanding do these students possess concerning human trafficking? Could their attitudes be influenced by their level of knowledge? Moreover, are there specific socio-economic factors that influence their attitudes towards this pervasive phenomenon? In light of these inquiries, the present study seeks to investigate the relationship between socio-economic factors, knowledge, and attitudes of secondary school students towards human trafficking.

Purpose of the Study

The primary objective of this study was to examine the knowledge and attitude of students towards human trafficking in Edo State. More specifically, the study sought to address the following research objectives:

1. Assess the level of students' knowledge regarding human trafficking.
2. Investigate the attitudes of students towards human trafficking.
3. Explore the potential relationship between students' knowledge and their attitudes towards human trafficking.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the level of students' knowledge regarding human trafficking?
2. What is the attitude of students towards human trafficking?
3. Is there a relationship between the knowledge and attitude of students towards human trafficking?

Hypothesis

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between the knowledge and attitude of students towards human trafficking.

Methodology

The present study employed a correlational survey research design, which was deemed suitable for examining the relationship between variables. The target population consisted of 54,773 students enrolled in public senior secondary schools within the Edo South Senatorial District. This district comprises the following Local Government Areas: Oredo, Egor, Ikpoba-Okha, Ovia South West, Ovia North East, Orhionmwon, and Uhumwonde. A sample size of 840 senior secondary school students was selected from 28 public senior secondary schools in the Edo South Senatorial District, utilizing a multi-stage sampling technique. The sampling process unfolded as follows: Stage 1: The schools were stratified based on their respective local government areas. Stage 2: A proportionate stratified random sampling method was employed to select 20% of the schools from each local government area, resulting in a total of 28 schools (Oredo-3, Egor-2, Ikpoba-Okha-4, Ovia South West-3, Ovia South East-6, Orhionmwon-6, and Uhumwonde-4). Thirty students were randomly chosen from each of the 28 schools, yielding a total sample size of 840 students.

Two instruments were utilized in this study. The first instrument was an achievement test instrument on knowledge of human trafficking, consisting of 25 questions designed to assess students' understanding of human trafficking. These items were adapted from the work of Raji (2015). The second instrument was a questionnaire titled "Students' Attitude towards Human Trafficking" (SAHT), comprising 25 items aimed at eliciting information regarding students' attitudes towards human trafficking. The instrument was validated by three experts and to ensure content validity, a table of specification was prepared for the achievement test.

To establish the reliability of the instruments, a subset of the population was administered twenty copies of the instruments. The Kuder-Richardson formula 20 (KR-20) was utilized to determine the reliability of the instrument for measuring students' knowledge, as it is appropriate for tests with binary response options (i.e., right or wrong answers). The computed reliability value was 0.68. The internal consistency reliability (Cronbach Alpha) was employed to assess the reliability of the instrument for measuring attitude, yielding a coefficient value of 0.77.

The researcher administered the instruments with the permission of the school principals in the sampled schools. The completed questionnaires were collected immediately from the students. Out of the 840 instruments administered, 686 (81.67%) were deemed properly filled, providing all the necessary information for analysis.

Questions 1 and 2 were analyzed using mean and standard deviation, while the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) was employed to test the hypothesis.

Results

The following results emerged from the analysis of data:

Research Question One: What is the level of students' knowledge regarding human trafficking?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Students' Knowledge of Human Trafficking

Variable	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev	HTKT Total Score	Remarks
Knowledge of	686	9899	14.43 (57.72%)	4.48	25.00 (100%)	Above Average (50%)

Table 1 shows the descriptive data with respect to students' knowledge of human trafficking in Edo State. Total respondents N = 686 the sum of their responses = 9899 and with a mean of 14.43 ± 4.48 Standard Deviation. The mean value of 14.43 represents 57.72% of the total obtainable score 25.00 (100%) in the human trafficking knowledge Test (HTKT). From this analysis it can be concluded that students have high level (Above Average) knowledge of human trafficking.

Research Question Two: What is the attitude of students towards human trafficking?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Attitude of Students towards Human Trafficking

Variable	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev	Scale Mean	Remarks
Attitude towards	686	45783	66.74	10.53	62.50	Positive

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics pertaining to the attitude of students towards human trafficking in Edo State. The total number of respondents was N = 686, and the cumulative sum of their responses was 45,783. The mean attitude score was found to be 66.74 ± 10.53 , indicating a standard deviation of 10.53 around the mean value.

It is noteworthy that the mean score of 66.74 exceeds the scale mean of 62.50, which is derived from the mean of the 25 items on the four-point Likert scale (-2.5 multiplied by 25 = 62.50). This signifies that the attitude of students towards human trafficking in Edo State is positive, as their average score surpasses the scale mean ($66.74 > 62.50$).

Hypotheses One: There is no significant relationship between the knowledge and attitude of students towards human trafficking.

Table 3: Pearson's test of Relationship between Knowledge and Attitude of students

Towards Human Trafficking

Variables	N	R	p-value	Remarks
Knowledge	686			
		.345	.001	Significant
Attitude	686			

$\alpha = .05, \quad p < .05$

Table 3 presents the Pearson correlation coefficient, indicating the relationship between the knowledge and attitude of students towards human trafficking in Edo State. The correlation coefficient (r) is calculated as .345, which indicates a positive relationship between knowledge and attitude (i.e., as knowledge increases, attitude improves) among the students.

Moreover, the correlation coefficient is found to be statistically significant at the .05 alpha level, as the p-value is less than .05. Consequently, the null hypothesis stating that "There will be no significant relationship between knowledge and attitude of students towards human trafficking" is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This implies that there is indeed a significant relationship between the students' knowledge of human trafficking and their attitude towards it.

Discussion of Findings

The results of this study showed that secondary school pupils in the Edo South Senatorial District had a remarkable degree of understanding about human trafficking. These results are consistent with prior research by Bales (2005) and Raji (2015), who both noted a high degree of participant understanding of the effects of the Community Based Participatory Education Programme (CBPEP) in the states of Oyo and Osun. The findings supported Roman, Pramila, Asha, and Michael's (2015) study, which found that 76% of the students in the survey showed awareness of or knowledge of sex trafficking, with radio and television acting as their main sources of information.

The high level of knowledge observed in this study can be attributed to the inclusion of human trafficking education in the Social Studies curriculum and the extensive campaigns against human trafficking by NAPTIP and other agencies, which emphasize the associated dire consequences. Additionally, the students' exposure to information about human trafficking through media outlets, as well as their personal contact with relatives and other acquaintance who may have experienced trafficking, could contribute to this heightened awareness. Moreover, the integration of human trafficking education into the Social Studies curriculum likely contributes to the students' understanding of the subject matter and the risks it entails.

The findings of this study reveal a positive attitude among secondary school students towards human trafficking in the Edo South Senatorial District. This positive disposition can be ascribed to the students' knowledge of the topic of human trafficking as revealed by this study. This result, however, contradicts the findings presented by Sharapov (2014), who reported a lack of comprehension and a failure to perceive human trafficking as a problem in the daily lives of many individuals.

The findings from hypothesis one establishes a significant relationship between students' knowledge and their attitude towards human trafficking. This discovery aligns with the previous study conducted by Raji (2015), which also identified a positive correlation between knowledge and attitude concerning human trafficking. These findings are also consistent with the viewpoints expressed by Oyetade (2003) and Akor (2011), who both argue that an individual's attitude is largely shaped by their knowledge of the subject at hand. It can be inferred that people's reactions to situations and circumstances are guided by the information available to them. Therefore, as students' knowledge of human trafficking expands, their attitude towards the issue tends to become more positive, as evident in the responses to research questions one and two. Essentially, students' attitude towards human trafficking hinges on their level of understanding of the phenomenon.

Conclusion

The study revealed a high level of knowledge and a positive attitude among secondary school students towards human trafficking in Edo South Senatorial District.

The analysis was based on 686 completed questionnaires out of a sample size of 840, drawn from a population of 54,773 students in 136 public senior secondary schools.

These findings indicate that the students possess a significant understanding of the concept of human trafficking and demonstrate a favorable perspective towards combating this issue. The results highlight the effectiveness of educational interventions and awareness campaigns, such as those conducted in Social Studies classes and by organizations like NAPTIP, in equipping students with the necessary knowledge and shaping their attitudes towards human trafficking.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. The high level knowledge of human trafficking possessed by students need to be sustained and improved. It is therefore recommended that policymakers, educators, and relevant stakeholders in Edo South Senatorial District build upon these findings by further incorporating comprehensive anti-human trafficking programs into the curriculum. By strengthening students' knowledge and fostering a sustained positive attitude towards human trafficking, it is possible to contribute to the larger goal of eradicating this heinous crime and protecting vulnerable individuals in society.
2. National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP) and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) should do more to promote the knowledge of human trafficking through regular enlightenment campaigns especially on social media as young people get a lot of information through this means which will influence their attitude.
3. Social Studies Associations of Nigeria in collaboration with the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP) and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) should periodically produce bulletins and leaflets, which should be distributed in schools on the dangers of human trafficking, this will help to sustain the high-level knowledge of students towards human trafficking.

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