

Assessing the Impacts of Child Trafficking on Children's Educational Development

Case Study: Hangha Community, Kenema District

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Abstract

Trafficking of children is one of the fastest growing illegal trades, yet there is very little documented evidence on the problem, particularly in developing countries. This study analyses the domestic child trafficking in Sierra Leone, focusing on its nature, forms, incidence and implications on educational development. It also investigates the role of stakeholders in fighting children trafficking. Based on interviews and questionnaires with trafficked children families in Kenema district, Eastern region and trafficked children in Hangha community, it was found that children of school age being forced into situations of labour and sexual exploitation every year as a result of extreme poverty in the rural areas. Despite the guarantee in country's constitution and existence of policies for Free Basic Education, the parents still supposed to pay "hidden" costs for uniforms, examinations, desks and supplies, this made most parents or guardians unable to pay, hence, large number of children not attending school/drop-out from school and trafficked to mining, agricultural plantations and urban areas and become labourers.

Further, the study revealed that since governments' programme made education free and compulsory for every child to attend school up to secondary school level, no parents have been arrested or prosecuted despite the thousands of children, including trafficked children, found as house helps, hawking and begging in the streets. None of these trafficked children have been questioned as to their parents or guardians and increase in the number of trafficked children cases in Kenema district, Sierra Leone. Also, it was found that the Anti-Trafficking Act of 2008 adopts the definition of trafficking in persons as contained in the Parliament but focuses more extensively for prostitution and sexual exploitation and neglecting other forms of labour. There is no significant programme on rescue, rehabilitation and re-integration of internally trafficked children into school in particular and the society in general. The most vulnerable group to trafficked children in Sierra Leone are girl child, mostly trafficked for forced labour and sexual exploitation. Trafficking of Children is perpetuated through deception by relatives, informal employment agencies, trafficking syndicate and illegal child adoption. The key factors contributing to trafficking of children in Hangha community, Kenema district, Sierra Leone are poverty and better-life syndrome. Trafficking of Children impacts negatively on education sector in various ways including denial of access to education necessary to break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy that creates trafficking conditions, national labour force ill-equipped to compete not only regionally but also at global level where knowledge stock determines ones success. This study recommends a community education programme for prevention of child trafficking and abuse, both community leaders including traditional and religious leaders, teachers, parents or guardians where the initiative should consist of awareness on harmful practices using children.

This study adopted a quantitative and qualitative approach where 91 sets of questionnaires were distributed to the participants selected using convenience sampling. Data were then analysed using van card coding sheet and a few analyses were carried out such as correlations analysis and regression analysis.

Hold complicit officials, including security officials and community members, accountable for trafficking offenses, including for the sex trafficking of girl child and unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers. These are possible recommendations to mitigate child trafficking below:

Improve access for humanitarian actors to provide assistance to trafficking victims, including in girl child camps and military facilities holding potential trafficking victims.

Expand existing efforts to identify trafficking victims among vulnerable groups such as petty traders, drivers, and community stakeholders. Vigorously investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers-including labour traffickers and those who force children to beg-and impose sufficiently stringent sentences involving imprisonment.

Based on this review of existing literature, it is obvious that child/human trafficking exists here in Sierra Leone, more especially Kenema district and it's on high increase to some extent. Just as discussed under the causes of child/human trafficking, poverty, lack of knowledge, illiteracy are some of the reasons for child/trafficking in Sierra Leone, Kenema district to be precise.

Key Words: Human Trafficking, Educational Development

1. Introduction

Child trafficking, or trafficking in persons, is a form of modern-day slavery and millions of people around the world, including children are victims of this crime (DeStefano, 2007). Human trafficking is the exploitation of human beings, especially vulnerable populations, and is recognized as one of the most severe abuses of human rights today. Violations of human rights are both a cause and a consequence of human trafficking (Robinson, 2002). Research denotes a wide range of statistics concerning the magnitude of the problem with estimates indicating the range varies from four to 27 million (Bales, 2005; Laczko, 2005).

Trafficking in persons is a human rights issue that has gained increasing recognition and prominence in the past decade. It is increasingly being covered in the media, recognised as an issue by the general public and addressed by government and civil society actors throughout the world. In spite of the increased prominence of the issue, there is limited concrete and verifiable information about the phenomenon. This is particularly the case in Sierra Leone where, until, recently, trafficking was an unrecognized phenomenon and no studies have considered the subject. This study is intended as a first step in mapping the nature of child trafficking in Sierra Leone.

A variety of potential solutions has been suggested and implemented which could be categorized as four types of actions: - broad protection, prevention, law enforcement and victim assistance. The Child First National Guidance for Protection and Welfare of Children (CFNGWC 2011) sees a child as a person under the age of 18 years excluding a person who has been married. The United Nations Centre for Human Rights (UNCHR) and World Health Organization (WHO 1999) defined a child as a person less than 18 years. Hence, a person under the age of 18 years therefore is a minor. In any culture, a minor is given special protection.

Childhood thus is a stage every child goes through in life, regarded as not able to make serious decisions and legally under the care of a responsible adult. Piaget 1952 theory of cognitive development described childhood as consisting of two stages – preparatory stage and concrete operational stage. Also in developmental psychology, childhood is divided up into the developmental stages of toddlerhood (learning to walk), early childhood (play age), middle, childhood (school age) and adolescence (puberty through post puberty). All these various childhood stages could affect a child's attitude formation. The term child trafficking is therefore anything which individuals and institutions do or fail to do which directly or indirectly harm children or damage their prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood (Wambui 2000). Baldry (2003) noted that child trafficking is the physical or mental injury done to a child which may include beating that is physical harm done to a child who has no control of his own. It includes any act of misuse of a child in any form such as physical and mental torture. Neglect is an act of inhibiting the child from obtaining essential needs for a normal life which may include food, shelter, clothing, education and

protection from danger. Carrel and Hoekstra (2010) postulated that neglect is when children do not receive adequate food or shelter, medical treatment, supervision, care or nurturance to such an extent that their development is damaged or injured. Neglects such as leaving a child alone without appropriate supervision, not ensuring that the child attends school or not enrolling the child at school, having infection because of poor hygiene or lack of medication, not giving the child medical help when required.

This study finds that child trafficking is an issue of concern at Hangha. Sierra Leone is primarily a source country both for internal trafficking (from rural to urban areas) as well as trafficking abroad. To a far lesser extent, Sierra Leone may be a country of transit and destination. Child trafficking victims were both male and female of varying ages. While this assessment primarily considered child trafficking, it was noted that adults were also trafficked from and within the country. Trafficking occurs for a range of different purposes including sexual exploitation (prostitution, marriage), labour (domestic work, mining, fishing, trading and vending, agriculture), begging and petty crime, adoption and into the fighting forces. While there are no statistics available to assess the rate of child trafficking, this study found that child trafficking is apparently occurring quite frequently. This conclusion is based on the rate of (negative) migration experiences by community members in the six districts surveyed as well as a consideration of vulnerable groups in the country, a portion whom appear to have been trafficked. The most common manifestation of child trafficking appears to be internal cases for the purpose of forced labour and sexual exploitation. This affects both boys and girls. In the absence of confirmed statistics on trafficking, it is perhaps sufficient to note that the various preconditions for trafficking noted in other countries also exist in Sierra Leone. These include economic causes (poverty and material aspiration), political and legal factors (war, corruption, and porous borders), cultural factors (normative migration, child labour, early marriage, etc.), social condition (limited education, violence in the home) and individual characteristics (rebellion and peer influence). As such, child trafficking must be an area of concern generally for government and civil society as well as factored among the more pressing child protection issues. The current child protection structure does not currently accommodate the specific needs of trafficked minors nor have there been programmes to prevent child trafficking.

However, there is currently much commitment to addressing this issue amongst government, NGOs and international organization. A barometer of this commitment is the recent passage of the ant trafficking law. It is imperative that continued efforts be focused on child trafficking to address the current situation as well as prevent the further escalation of the problem. The assessment outlines, in addition to the current state trafficking in the country, the various legal, policy and programmatic efforts underway in the country that can be mobilized against child trafficking. Also discussed are the gaps and issues to be considered in on-going counter-trafficking efforts.

2. Problem Statement

Child trafficking is a common problem found in almost all societies around the globe, hence it could be seen as a global problem that has caused the under-growth of many nations across the world, particularly our own nation - Sierra Leone, and by extension Kenema District Hangha community, which happens to be the study area of this research.

The way boys and girls are given maltreatment is something shocking to many researchers across the globe; therefore, this portion of the study aims at identifying those worst cases of human trafficking and look at the role society plays in addressing or putting an end to such problems. Some of the areas of notice pertinent to the stakeholder's role in addressing Child trafficking in the study area are: "It ought to concern every person, because it is at the basement of our common humanity. It ought to concern every community, because it tears at our social fabric"

Despite increased attention and response to the topic of human trafficking, the empirical state of the literature has seen only marginal developments over time, leaving the magnitude of the problem unknown. Trafficking in children, or child trafficking, is human trafficking, but refers to persons under the age of 18. Children are trafficked globally and domestically for both labour and sex. Child sex trafficking is a

particularly intolerable form of human trafficking due to the natural and inherent vulnerability of children (ILO, 2008; Vieth & Ragland, 2005) and represents a severe form of child maltreatment (Estes & Weiner, 2005). Furthermore, according to the U.S. Department of Justice (n.d.), it is illegal to lure, transport, or obtain a child for the purposes of prostitution or any other illegal sexual activity under federal law of Sierra Leone. Perpetrators of these acts are considered traffickers or pimps and benefit in some manner from the sale of a child, resulting in a profit or gain of something of value. Research on human trafficking has not moved beyond estimating the scale of the problem; mapping routes and relationships among countries of origin, transit, and destination; and reviewing legal frameworks and policy responses. Little empirical research on the efficacy of U.S. governmental policies and organizational efforts to combat the problem has been conducted (Unicef S/L, Gozdziaik & Collett, 2005). Even less is known about trafficking in children, challenges in victim identification, and specifically the perceptions of professionals working for the welfare of children.

All too often, sex trafficking of minors in Sierra Leone is hidden from public view. There is a lack of research focusing on child trafficking, specifically, related to child welfare and the level of awareness among child welfare professionals of the phenomenon within the study area and the country as well.

Moreover, it is considered among the most difficult forms of child maltreatment to detect or investigate (Estes & Weiner, 2005; Williams & Frederick, 2009). Although it is widely accepted that human trafficking is a major social problem paired with the difficulty in understanding the complexities of this phenomenon, identification within the child welfare system remains understudied. The definition of child sex trafficking is ambiguous, with numerous misconceptions in regard to this specific form of child maltreatment (Adelson, 2008; Clawson, Dutch, Solomon, & Goldblatt Grace, 2009; Laczko & Gramegna, 2003; Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2010; Schauer & Wheaton, 2006; Skilbrei & Tveit, 2008). Due to these misconceptions, cases of child sex trafficking are often reported under more standard classifications of child maltreatment, such as sexual abuse and child married.

3. Methodology

The sample selection technique that was adopted for this research was stratified random sampling technique. The sampling technique was a representation of every stratum within the study area. The sample size of this particular study is, as thus: Teachers and pupils of secondary Sch. at Hangha tow 20, Business Men and Women within Hangha 15, Non-governmental organization (NGOs) 10, Commercial bike rider 13, Stakeholders within the study area 10, and Youths group within the study area 13, Security personnel within the research area 10.

4. Effects of Child Trafficking on children's educational development.

Human trafficking can have physical, emotional, and psychological effects on anyone involved. It has the power to impact someone's life forever. Here are some common ways human trafficking affects victims and perpetrators. As you read through this section, keep in mind that many traffickers also experience trauma because of what they see and do to others, and many traffickers have been victimized themselves at some point in their lives.

❖ Mental Trauma

The Sierra Leone police department explains that, "Because traffickers dehumanize and objectify their victims, victims' innate sense of power, visibility, and dignity often become obscured. "Victims of human trafficking can experience devastating psychological effects during and after their trafficking experience. Many survivors may end up experiencing post-traumatic stress, difficulty in relationships, depression, memory loss, anxiety, fear, guilt, shame, and other severe forms of mental trauma. The types of physical and psychological abuse human trafficking victims experience often lead to serious mental or emotional health consequences, including feelings of severe guilt, posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, substance abuse (alcohol or narcotics), and eating disorders. Victims of trafficking often need psychological care as part of comprehensive medical treatment. Providing culturally appropriate and trauma-informed

mental health treatment can be challenging. Some of the commonly reported barriers and challenges to helping victims with their trauma include:

- Limited availability and access to appropriate mental health services.
- Difficulty establishing trusting relationships with survivors.
- Mandated treatment efforts may be counterproductive when working with victims. This is particularly relevant in communities where the only means to access mental health services is to be kept in a locked treatment facility.

In addition to the challenges noted above, it is also important to recognize that after such trauma, some victims may not feel comfortable with their sexuality. Individuals who experience severe exploitation may consider same-sex interactions. Service providers need to be aware, ready, and comfortable in helping victims through this process, as it can be a coping skill to deal with their traumatic experience by disassociating with their born gender. In order to meet the mental health needs of survivors of human trafficking successfully, it is important to first ensure basic safety and service needs. Establishing physical and psychological safety is a prerequisite in working with trafficking victims with trauma history. This requires working collaboratively with those involved with the case to assess current client safety needs and planning. Ensuring that task force members involved in a case span across systems of care can help in addressing multiple needs.

Similarly, to assessing a client's physical and mental health, it is important that providers working with victims have access to a range of trauma-specific interventions, including well trained clinicians who are willing and culturally competent to work with victims. There are many treatment approaches for poly-victimization, particularly for adolescents, including the use of educational support groups to address skills development, interpersonal connections, and competence and resiliency building. Address trauma bonding. Some traffickers have a complex emotional relationship with their victims, similar to a relationship where domestic violence is present. In this "relationship," the trafficker wields complete control and induces commercial sex acts or forced labor in order to make money. Control and obedience are maintained through a combination of emotional manipulation, feigned affection, cultural beliefs about debt, and physical and emotional abuse. Victims often develop traumatic bonding and identification with their trafficker. Trauma bonding with an abuser is a survival strategy for victims of abuse and intimidation. For example, a victim who was abducted and raped may, years later, describe the captor as a "great person" with whom he/she formed an emotional bond, thus showing characteristics of a victim suffering from a trauma bond. Trauma bonding also does not have to be romantic in nature; it is essentially a false sense of relationship to another. Ensuring that mental health professionals trained in trauma bonding are available within your victim services response can be critical.

Though there are many challenges to meeting the mental health needs of trafficking victims, an effort to create a comprehensive approach across multiple systems of care offers the promise of responding to victims where they most need it. Building long-term trusting relationships, ensuring flexible models of treatment, and peer-to-peer support will empower and build self-esteem in your clients.

❖ Physical Trauma

Many victims also experience physical injuries. Those who have been sexually exploited are often abused by their traffickers and customers. They may be raped, beaten, and subjected to abuse over a long period of time. There is also a higher risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, infections, diabetes, cancer, and other illnesses. A lack of proper medical care allows these conditions to spread and worsen-often affecting an individual's health permanently.

Trafficking victims often suffer from serious physical abuse and physical exhaustion, as well as starvation. Typical injuries can include broken bones, concussion, bruising or burns, as well as other injuries consistent with assault. Some of these serious injuries can cause lasting health problems and may require long-term treatment. Because women who have been trafficked have been subjected to multiple abuses over an

extensive period of time, they may suffer these health consequences in a manner consistent with victims of prolonged torture.

Sexual assault is a traumatic event with physical and emotional effects on the victim. Sexual assault is any sexual activity between two or more people in which one of the people is involved against his or her will. The sexual activity involved in an assault can include many different experiences. Women can be the victims of unwanted touching, grabbing, oral sex, anal sex, sexual penetration with an object, and/or sexual intercourse. Trafficking victims are often made to participate in sexual activities through physical or non-physical force, which can consist of pressure from someone with authority over them, bribery or manipulation or impairment from alcohol or drugs. After experiencing sexual assault, a woman may experience a range of physical consequences and emotional reactions, including severe stress and depression. More information on reactions women have to sexual assault and therapeutic techniques that may be helpful to them can be found under Sexual Assault.

Women who work in the commercial sex trade are vulnerable to sexual and reproductive health complications, including sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and other gynecological problems. Women who have been trafficked into the sex trade may often not have access to, or are not allowed to use, condoms or other methods of birth control, and may only have irregular gynecological examinations. Such women face the risk of unwanted pregnancies and miscarriages. Women who work as prostitutes experience high rates of abortion, sterilization and infertility.

This type of physical and sexual abuse described above leads to severe mental or emotional health consequences, including feelings of severe guilt, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, substance abuse (alcohol or narcotics) and eating disorders. In extreme cases, the mental anguish can lead to self-mutilation and/or suicide. Victims of trafficking often need psychological care as part of standard medical treatment.

Victims of forced labor may work in dangerous conditions for long hours doing repetitive tasks. They may also be exposed to dangerous contaminants or work with heavy equipment. As a result, many are subjected to serious infections, respiratory problems, injuries, impairments, and exhaustion. When trafficked for sexual exploitation, women are subjected to extraordinary physical, sexual and psychological violence which puts them acutely at risk for developing not just short-term physical ailments but also lasting mental illness that can profoundly alter their ability to navigate effectively in the social world. Survivors may be dealing with HIV infections, experience gynecological issues, succumb to substance and alcohol abuse, and suffer the prolonged effects of physical injury. The impacts on their mental health include anxiety, depression, self-harm and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Violent exploitation may also result in survivors developing a mistrust of care-giving individuals and systems, which can severely hinder service delivery. Sex trafficking disrupts caregiving by hijacking the victim's relationship with trust and security.

This severe rupturing of attachment relationships can have a significant impact on survivors-disrupting their sense of self and affecting their ability to leave exploitative situations, rebuild them emotionally and engage with services. After periods of imposed isolation, a loss of autonomy and forced servitude, survivors report feeling helpless and hopeless, struggling to feel competent with life skills, ashamed about their past victimization, and angry about missed education and job training.

Many feel lost in their personal search for identity and meaning. Regulating difficult emotions and interpersonal relationships can be challenging. All told, the effects of sex trafficking are wide-reaching, profound and often not well understood. Signs and symptoms of psychological distress may also fall outside diagnostic categories and manifest in cultural idioms of distress. Systems of care that adequately account for these experiences have a far greater chance of success.

❖ Ostracism

Individuals who are being trafficked can quickly become isolated from friends, family, and other social circles. This may be due to their personal feelings of guilt and shame or because they've relocated and now live far away from their community. Either way, victims can become isolated, withdrawn, and lose contact with most people.

Some individuals who return home or escape a trafficking situation may even be excluded from social groups due to a stigma they now face; they may be shunned by their family and friends and feel unloved and unwanted. Unfortunately, this isolation can make them vulnerable to being trafficked again or lead them to return to an abusive lifestyle.

❖ Lack of Independent Living Skills

Many victims who escape a trafficking situation lack advanced education and the resources needed to live independently. They may not understand laws in the country where they now reside or may not speak the language. They may have been trafficked at a young age and were unable to attend school or go to college.

After being confined to the same job for a long period of time and not being allowed to learn new skills, victims can become dependent. When the time comes, they may have a hard time living on their own.

5. The perception of child trafficking and its implications on children's educational development in Hangha Community, Kenema District, Sierra Leone.

We live in a time in which claims proliferate about a multitude of issues regarding social reality and people's lives. Because some of these issues are understood as adversely affecting a significant part of the population, they create a collective discourse and demands for action. When important societal groups (e.g. politicians, social change groups, the news media and numerous citizens) recognize these claims as legitimate and valid, they become social problems. As such, from a social constructionist perspective, the emergence and recognition of social problems are based on both the empirical evidence of their existence and impact as well as on the perceptions of their implications and need to be solved.

We believe that child trafficking meets this standard worldwide and, specifically, in Portugal. Authorities rescued some 210 child trafficking victims and identified 100 irregular migrants originating from 3 different regions. Many of them required medical, psychological and housing assistance and were taken into the care of protective services.

In addition, in 2021 60 transnational investigations were initiated. Fake or stolen identity documents remain the golden ticket when it comes to helping people cross borders illegally, with such documents seized on every continent. On the first day of the operation, authorities in Tanzania arrested a Ugandan bus driver carrying a box of 169 forged passports from Kailahun and Freetown.

"Operation Libertarian is a five-day snapshot of the global trafficking and smuggling situation, and how multinational, highly organized criminal networks only focus on one thing: profit," said INTERPOL sector at the police headquarters and its regions are weak in investigating child trafficking cases. "With 22 criminal groups dismantled, it also shows what coordinated, global law enforcement action can achieve.

Child trafficking is a crime that impacts virtually all communities. When media outlets choose to beat around the bush when speaking or writing about human trafficking, they reduce the suffering that victims and survivors experience, as well as minimize the harmful actions taken by perpetrators. For example, referring to child sex trafficking victims as "underage prostitutes" reduces the roles of coercion, grooming, and abuse in the lives of these children.

It is time to stop modern-day slavery! No man, woman or child should be forced, coerced or compelled to engage in sexual activity for the financial benefit of another person. Our societies have become desensitized to the behaviors associated with human trafficking and are unaware of its prevalence in our own backyards.

From my experience/research gathered, pornography and strip clubs are at the forefront of desensitizing our society. Popular rap music artists such as Cardi B with her song “Money” and 50 Cent with his song “P.I.M.P.” are sending messages to our youth that sex in exchange for money is socially acceptable. It is scary that music artists our children aspire to be are providing them with a recipe of how to be a human trafficker.

Our children are vulnerable, and the traffickers exploit their vulnerabilities. Children who fall victim to traffickers have their innocence taken away in a matter of seconds. We hear child victims say, “I had no idea it was going to be about sex.” Unfortunately, because of the repeated abuse they have endured and the addictions they have been subjected to our victims of human trafficking are not ideal witnesses. It usually takes exhaustive efforts and multiple interviews before our victims are forthcoming and disclose information that is valuable for a criminal prosecution. On average, victims will return to “the life” seven times. Much like victims of domestic violence; they return to their abusers because of a strong emotional connection and economic dependence.

The physical and emotional abuse that victims of human trafficking experience is unimaginable. Oftentimes they are brutally raped multiple times in a day to make their trafficker money. Studies show that, victims are sold three to five times per day and on a high 20 times per day. Can you imagine being forcibly raped between three and twenty times in one day? Grown women, who have a strong support system, that are raped once in their lifetime succumb to the emotional trauma. Rape is a life-altering experience that no person should ever have to experience, especially children. Sexual assaults of all degrees routinely go unreported to law enforcement because of self-blame, embarrassment, humiliation, and the concern of not being believed.

Yet, we expect our children of domestic minor sex trafficking to report being commercially raped multiple times a night. Society has given victims of human trafficking; a stigma that intimidates them into remaining silent. Our victims get labeled as “promiscuous” and are blamed for becoming victims. The average age of our domestic minor sex trafficking victims is between 12 and 14 years old. Many adult victims of human trafficking that are recovered were entered into this sex industry before the age of 18. Victims will suffer for the rest of their lives. It is our duty to build a rapport and help them feel safe. Remember they don’t know you and usually have difficulty trusting people. Victims of human trafficking live in fear. Traffickers lead their victims to believe that law enforcement officers will arrest them or worse deport them if they are an illegal immigrant.

6. Empowering the Youths with Child Trafficking Cases

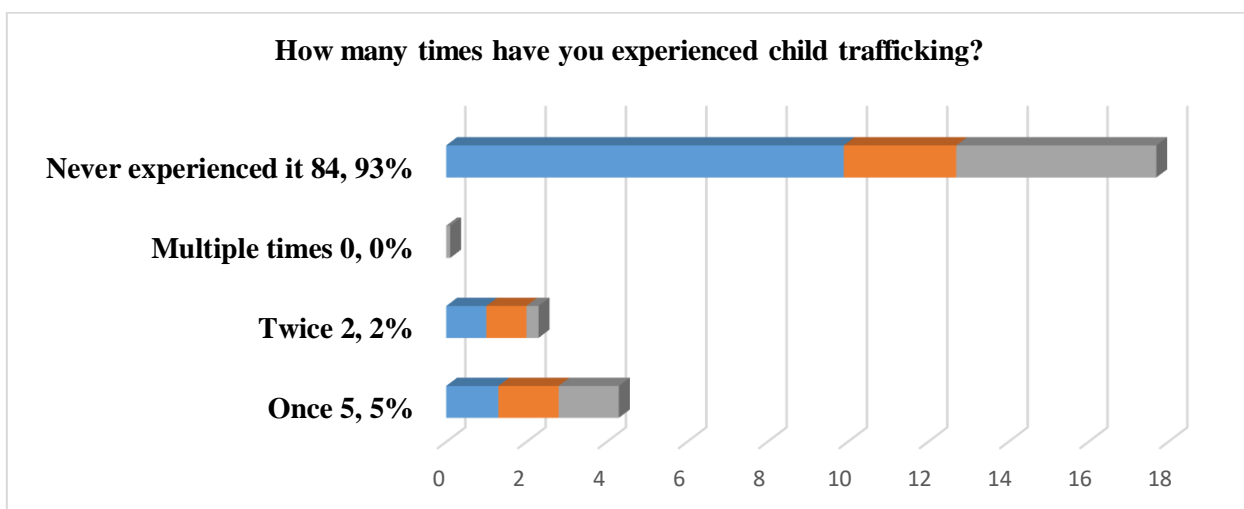
The physical and emotional abuse that our victims of human trafficking experience is unimaginable. Often times they are brutally raped multiple times in a day to make their trafficker’s money. Studies show that on a low victims are sold three to five times per day and on a high 20 times per day. Can you imagine being forcibly raped between three and twenty times in one day? Grown women, who have a strong support system, that are raped once in their lifetime succumb to the emotional trauma. Rape is a life-altering experience that no person should ever have to experience, especially children. Sexual assaults of all degrees routinely go unreported to law enforcement because of self-blame, embarrassment, humiliation, and the concern of not being believed. Yet, we expect our children of domestic minor sex trafficking to report being commercially raped multiple times a night. Society has given our victims of human trafficking a stigma that intimidates them into remaining silent. Our victims get labeled as “promiscuous” and are blamed for becoming victims. The average age of our domestic minor sex trafficking victims is between 12 and 14 years old. Many adult victims of human trafficking that we recover were entered into this sex industry before the age of 18. Victims will suffer for the rest of their lives.

It is our duty to build a rapport and help them feel safe. Remember they don’t know you and usually have difficulty trusting people. Victims of human trafficking live in fear. Traffickers lead their victims to believe that law enforcement officers will arrest them or worse deport them if they are an illegal immigrant. It is the victim’s choice what they share with you and when. We may not like it, but that is their right. We all have

our own ways of coping and healing. We present them with the facts and their options, and we let them decide. They don't know us and we are asking them to share the most personal and intimate details of their life with us. We want them to relive the most traumatizing moments of their lives; this takes strength and courage. One of the greatest things you can give a victim is a sense of control and with control comes power. Allow them to open up on their terms. Listening to a victim tell their story is an incredible opportunity that will bring chills to your body.

During the course of my research, the most satisfying and rewarding investigations I've conducted involve children and women. Internet crimes against children and human trafficking go hand in hand, as 80 percent of domestic minor sex trafficking victims have been advertised on websites such backpage.com, sierraloading.sl/news etc.

7. Discussion of Results



Source field survey- September, 2024

Figure above indicates, 5(5%) of the respondents responded that, they have been victims of child trafficking once, whilst 2(2%) of the respondents ascertained that, they have been victims of child trafficking twice, 0(0%) of the respondents said, they have been victims of child trafficking multiple times, and 84(93%) of the respondents responded that, they have not experience child trafficking in their life. Therefore, majority of the respondents responded that, they have never been victims of child trafficking.

Are you of the opinion that parents are responsible for their children to be trafficked by traffickers?

Opinion	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency (%)
Yes	58	64
No	33	36
Total	91	100%

Source field survey- September, 2024

Table above indicates, 58(64%) of the respondents are of the opinion that parents are responsible for their children to be trafficked by traffickers, while 33(36%) of the respondents are not of the opinion that parents are responsible for their children to be trafficked by traffickers. Therefore, majority of the respondents are of the opinion that parents are responsible for their children to be trafficked by traffickers.

Do you agree with me that poverty and lack of standards guidelines and operational policies in the country are reasons for child trafficking?

Child trafficking policies	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency (%)
Yes	79	87
No	12	13
Total	91	100%

Source field survey- September, 2024

Table above indicates, 79(87%) of the respondents agree with me that poverty and lack of standards guidelines and operational policies in the country are reason for child trafficking, while 12(13%) of the respondents do not agree with me that poverty and lack of standards guidelines and operational policies in the country are reason for child trafficking. Therefore, majority of the respondents does agree with me that poverty and lack of standards guidelines and operational policies in the country are reason for child trafficking.

If yes, what measures must be put in place by stakeholders, state institutions and government?

Measures to put in place	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency (%)
Government should provide financial aids to the poor parents	42	46
The police force should implement policies on cases related to child trafficking	28	31
Parents should engage youth in their country in relation to child trafficking	11	12
The media and Ministry of Basic and Secondary School Education should organize community sensitization	9	10
Other(specify)	1	1
Total	91	100%

Source field survey- September, 2024

Table above shows 42(46%) of the respondents said government should provide financial aids to the poor parents, while 28(31%) of the respondents the police force should implement policies on cases related to child trafficking, 11(12%) of the respondents said Parents should engage youth in their country in relation to child trafficking, 9(10%) of the respondents responded that, the media and Ministry of Basic and Secondary School Education should organize community sensitization and 1(1%) of the respondents responded to other(specify). Therefore, majority of the respondents said government should provide financial aids to the poor parents.

How do you react when your friends or relatives are trafficked?

Reaction	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency (%)
Inform the police about the situations	59	65

Inform the media and Stakeholders about the missing child	24	26
Call for the attention of the youth in search of the child	8	9
Other(specify)	0	0
Total	91	100%

Source field survey- September, 2024

Table above indicates, 59(65%) of the respondents said they do Inform the police about the situations, while 24(26%) of the respondents responded that they do Inform the media and Stakeholders about the missing child, 8(9%) of the respondents said Call for the attention of the youth in search of the child and 0(0%) of the respondents did not responds to other (specify). Therefore, majority of the respondents said they do inform the police about the situations.

Are parents both victims and perpetrators of child trafficking?

Parents	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency (%)
Yes	57	63
No	34	37
Total	91	100%

Source field survey- September, 2024

Table above indicates, 57(63%) of respondents responded that parents are both victims and perpetrators of child trafficking, while 34(37%) of respondents responded that parents are not victims and perpetrators of child trafficking, Therefore, majority of respondents responded that parents are both victims and perpetrators of child trafficking.

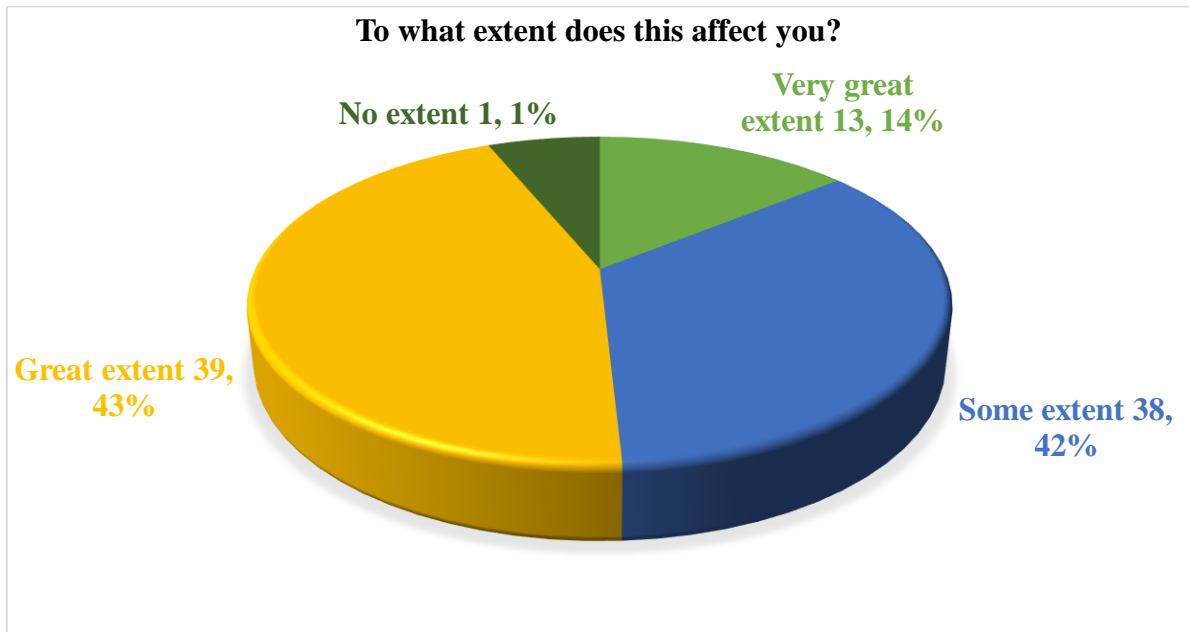
Which of the following are some of the causes of child trafficking in Hangha community, Kenema district?

Causes of child trafficking in Hangha	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency (%)
Poverty	65	71
Conflict, natural disasters	10	11
Lack of standard guidelines and operational policies in the state	11	12
Displacement	3	3
Lack of education	2	2
Total	91	100%

Source field survey- September, 2024

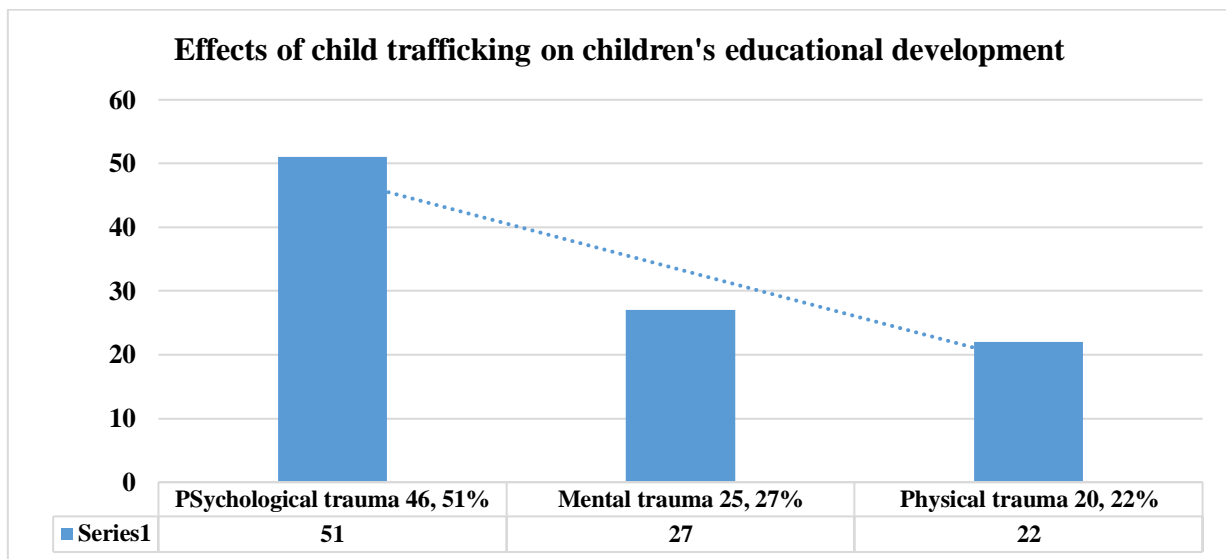
Table above indicates, 65(71%) of the respondents said poverty is a cause of child trafficking in Hangha community, Kenema district, whilst 10(11%) of the respondents conflict, natural disasters are causes of child trafficking, whereas 11(12%) of the respondents responded that, lack of standard guidelines and operational policies in the state are causes of child trafficking, 3(3%) of the respondents said displacement is a cause for child trafficking, and 2(2%) of the respondents responded that lack of education is a cause for child trafficking. Therefore, majority of the respondents said poverty is a cause of child trafficking in Hangha community.

To what extent does these factors affect you?



Source field survey- September, 2024

Figure above indicates, 39(43%) of the respondents responded that to a great extent child trafficking affects them, 1(1%) of the respondents said no extent, while 38(42%) of the respondents responded that some extent, and 13(14%) of the respondents responded that very-great extent. Therefore, majority of the respondents responded that to a great extent child trafficking affects them.



Source field survey- September, 2024

Figure above indicates, 46(51%) of the respondents responded that psychological effects affect children's educational development, whilst 25(27%) of the respondents responded that mental trauma affects children's educational development and 20(22%) of the respondents responded that physical trauma affects children's educational development. Therefore, majority of the respondents responded that psychological trauma affects children's educational development.

What is your position on how the police, media, national stakeholders and state institutions handle reported cases of child trafficking?

Satisfactions	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency (%)
Unsatisfied	56	62
Satisfied	10	11
No opinion/Uncertainty	8	9
Poor communication	17	18
Total	91	100%

Source field survey- September, 2024

Table above indicates, that 56(62%) Of the respondents responded that they were unsatisfied with how the police, media, state institutions, national stakeholders handle reported cases of child trafficking, 10(11%) of the respondents responded that they were satisfied with the way the police, media, state institutions and national stakeholders handle reported cases of child trafficking, 8(9%) of the respondents responded that they had no opinion or were uncertain on how the police, media, national stakeholders and state institutions handle reported cases on child trafficking, 17(18%) of the respondents responded that poor communication is the reason for police, media, state institutions and national stakeholders handle reported cases of child trafficking. Therefore, majority of the respondents responded that they were unsatisfied with how the police, media, state institutions, national stakeholders handle reported cases of child trafficking.

8. Recommendations

- Hold complicit officials, including security officials and community members, accountable for trafficking offenses, including for the sex trafficking of girl child and unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers.
- Improve access for humanitarian actors to provide assistance to trafficking victims, including in girl child camps and military facilities holding potential trafficking victims.
- Expand existing efforts to identify trafficking victims among vulnerable groups such as petty traders, drivers, and community stakeholders.
- Vigorously investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers—including labor traffickers and those who force children to beg—and impose sufficiently stringent sentences involving imprisonment.
- Strengthen international law enforcement cooperation to prevent and investigate child trafficking cases.

Conclusion of the Study

Based on this review of existing literature, it is obvious that child/human trafficking exists here in Sierra Leone, more especially Kenema district and it is on increase to some extent. Just as discussed under the causes of child/human trafficking, poverty, lack of knowledge, illiteracy are some of the reasons for child/trafficking in Sierra Leone, Kenema district to be precise.

There are several recommendations for future action. First, more research needs to be done to determine how the vulnerability of women and children increases during disasters and to document best practices in methods for protecting these vulnerable populations and preventing them from being exploited. Recent disasters, from the tsunami and the Pakistan earthquake to the floods in Central America, provide an

opportunity for researchers to observe the work of organizations conducting relief and reconstruction operations.

All programs-regardless of whether these programs explicitly focus on vulnerabilities to human trafficking-could be studied as sources of good practices for how to combat this global scourge.

Moreover, this provides an opportunity to further examine the root causes of increased vulnerability during disasters and what steps could be taken at all stages of disasters to mitigate these causes. Here is a research that supports the rational nature of crime. This support, however, it is confined primarily to instrumental crimes, such as property and drug offences. These offences are generally crimes of opportunity. In this way, if offenders come across an opportunity to commit an offence, but perceive a high likelihood of capture, they will likely refrain from partaking in the activity. Property offenders tend to stay away from locations that are occupied, have security measures, or are in areas where neighbors look out for one another. Conversely, property offenders are enticed by unlocked doors and windows, secluded areas and unsupervised property. Similarly, it appears that drug dealers tailor their transactions in a similar fashion, as they tend to work in locations where they are able to clearly see anyone approaching and where there is an insignificant presence of watchful guardians

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