



**Thesis**

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OSUN STATE,  
NIGERIA**

**AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF  
CHANGING FAMILY STRUCTURES, WOMEN  
TRAFFICKING AND INTERNATIONAL  
PROSTITUTION AMONG THE BINIS OF  
NIGERIA**

**2009**

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INTERNATIONAL PROSTITUTION AMONG THE *BINIS*  
OF NIGERIA**

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***ILE-IFE***

**BEING A RESEARCH THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
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OBAFEMI AWOLOWO UNIVERSITY, ILE-IFE  
OSUN STATE, NIGERIA**

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## **CERTIFICATION**

This research work by Osezua, Oghoadena Clementina has been read and approved as meeting part of the requirements for the award of PhD degree in Sociology and Anthropology of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

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## **DEDICATION**

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## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ECOWAS	Economic Community of West Africa States
E.U.	European Community.
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
F.O.S	Federal Office Statistics
G.P.I	Girl Power Initiative
H.R.W.	Human Rights Watch
I.L.O.	International Labour Organisation
I.R.R.A.G	International Reproductive Rights Action Group
I.O.M	International Organization of Migration
LGA.	Local Government Area
NAPTIP	National Agency for Prohibition of Traffic in Person
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children Educational Fund
UNICRI	United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
WHARC	Women's Health and Action Research
WOTCLEF	Women Trafficking and Child Eradication Foundation
WHO	World Health Organisation
HIV	Human Immune Virus



## ABSTRACT

The study examined the changing family structure of the Binis, identified and analyzed the effects of trafficking on the Bini women and their family structures. Further more, the study assessed the roles played by cultural factors in precipitating trans-border sexual transaction in the region. This was with a view to analysing the changes in the patriarchal family structure of the Bini people occasioned by the prevalence of sex trafficking in the region.

The study relied on qualitative data generated through Household-based Interviews, Key Informant Interviews, Vignette-based Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and Life Histories. Forty households were purposively selected from three Local Government Areas (Oredo, Egor and Uhumwode) which constituted the study area. A total of 18 vignette-based FGDs were held among adult males, adult females and youths using a story of sex-trafficking that ended on “successful” note and a tragic story of a sex-trafficked victim. In addition, fifteen Life Histories were conducted on previously trafficked victims who were selected through snowballing, while interviews were held with five Key Informants who were selected on the basis of their social statuses in the study area. Observation of a wedding and a burial ceremony was done in each of the three selected local government areas. The qualitative data were analysed using *Anthropac* and subjected to content analysis, while Z-Y index tables helped to present study findings.

The results showed that there were changes in the traditional Bini family structures which was hitherto characterized by male dominance and pervasive sexual restrictions on women. Men’s power and authority in some families had been challenged thereby altering the traditional patriarchal structure. Despite sexual taboos placed on women, both married and unmarried women were involved in international prostitution while male partners of such women and their dependants became beneficiaries of such ventures. Consequently, the traditional Bini family structure became eroded as many of the so-called successful women in trans-border sexual transaction now played pivotal roles in important family decisions. The results further showed that women who had succeeded in sex-trafficking enjoyed improved economic status and recognition in their families. It was established that wedding and burial ceremonies were important avenues through which successful women in trans-border sexual trade showcased their wealth and relevance in their families. However, a few of the participants in the FGD, expressed their strong reservations against sex-trafficking despite the huge financial returns. Cultural

factors such as polygyny, large family size and general apathy by male household heads toward meeting family economic needs were identified by previously trafficked victims as the most critical factors which had precipitated trafficking in the region. Other factors identified included male child preference, the inheritance system, excessive sexual taboos on women, poor girl-child status and heavy reliance on the extended kins network. These factors combined, made the Bini family structure vulnerable to the problem posed by women trafficking and international prostitution.

The study concluded that classical patriarchy among the Bini people was a critical factor which had exacerbated the phenomenon of sex-trafficking in the region. Despite economic benefits derivable from trans-border sex trade in the study area, the changes it brought about posed a serious threat to the integrity of the contemporary Bini family structure and its ability to inculcate much cherished values into its members.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

To many scholars who are interested in the interface of the family institution as a crucial indicator of any form of human development, May 15<sup>th</sup> every year has been set aside as the international day of the family by the United Nations, through resolution 44/82. The global observance of this event has continued to reinforce primordial notion about the family as the most essential and basic unit of human existence. The global attention and the universal recognition of the international family day clearly indicate the need to give primal attention to the changing structure and roles of the family in both acculturation and socialization process. Moreover, colossal alterations in structure and functions of families all over the world, which families are currently undergoing in response to social, economic and technological development, cannot be overemphasized.

The family is conceived not essentially as a biological unit; rather it is viewed more operationally as a social construct. UNESCO (1992) therefore defines family as a kinship unit which is essentially made up of primary kin of the household head, but it allows for extension either patrilineal or matrilineal, both vertical and horizontal, even when members do not share common household, the unit may exist as a sociological reality. The family is characterized by common residence, economic co-operation-cum maintenance, reproduction and it is a unit of socialization (Murdock, 1949: 13). Family as a universal institution has basic obligations to its members. Hence, families in all societies are commonly expected to care for and nurture children, provide financially for their members and transmit culture, moral traditions and values (Hartley, 1995). Families are also known to provide for its members a sense of identification, loyalty, social

placement, control of mutual assistance and a concern for the perpetuation of the family unit. Furthermore, Chinoy (1967) observes that the family is the fulcrum in the society where economic relations, political authority as well as religious activities revolve around. Consequently, families are known to perform universal functions for maintenance and continuity of organized social existence of any society (Chinoy, 1967).

The structure of a family is usually defined in terms of the individuals comprising the family unit as well as the relationships and interactions among these members (Oyekanmi, 1995). Family structures are not static. Hence Giddens (1992) observed that changes in the family structure have been attributed to certain social processes like urbanization; the nature of economic production and consumption and changes in employment patterns especially with respect to women who are engaged in paid employment. Humans, their families and the society are inextricably connected. As the society begins to undergo changes, the family which is the nucleus of the society is not left unaltered.

Many Nigerian families are currently under pressure as a result of the intense economic crises and degree of poverty in nation (Onimode, 1989). Available data suggest that the level of poverty and deprivation is such that 34miliom people out of an estimated population 140 million Nigerians live below absolute poverty level. The effects of these phenomena of intense poverty, economic recession, unstable polity and decline in values as depicted in Nigerian nation have on the family structure, to say the least is devastating. Perhaps no where is the change in family structure and function well depicted, than the current imbroglio of women trafficking which has become a national concern.

Also intrinsic in the definition of family structure is the issue of gender relations influenced by cultural beliefs and customs. Unequal gender relations, patriarchal values and familial control over women's labour and sexuality have facilitated the current upsurge in incidences of women trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation or prostitution in Nigeria. For instance, Oppong (1995) argues that the extent to which women can control their own sexual activities and relationships in different familial relationships can be determined by patriarchy or poverty which may warrant women's involvement in risky behaviour. Currently such risky sexual behaviour that is attracting global concern is the phenomena of women trafficking and international prostitution. This phenomenon is currently disintegrating the family structure and taking its toll on the moral fabric of the Aghatise (2002).

Trafficking women for the purpose of sexual exploitation is one of the risky sexual behaviour. Despite the fact that sexual exploitation is not a new phenomenon, the scope of the problem is increasing. It has been estimated that about 5-7 billion dollars is realized through women trafficking and international prostitution all over the world (I.O.M. 2001; Craig, 2007). The International Organization for Migration also records that a staggering number of 700,000 to about 2million women are transported to various parts of the world mainly for the purpose of international prostitution. Craig (2007) described women trafficking for the purpose of international prostitution as the fastest growing organized criminal activity and the third most lucrative criminal business after drugs and arms trafficking.

International trafficking in person refers to all criminal activities having to do apparently with the legal and illegal transfer of persons from one state to another. It

involves two distinct dimensions, trafficking as defined above and the aiding and abetting of clandestine immigration (Luda, 2003). Scholars generally agree that the incidence of trafficking is not a novae issue, but the changes in the global economy have further aggravated the problem, thereby making women and children extremely vulnerable to traffickers. Consequently the incidence of trafficking is likened to modern day slavery (UNICRI/UNODC,2003). The attempt by international community to combat trafficking in person culminated in what is generally referred to as the *PARLEMO Protocol*: The United Nations Convention on Transnational and Organized Crime in December 2002 (Luda, 2003). The protocol defined trafficking in persons

*Recruitment, transportation, harboring, receipt of person by threat or use or force, or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud or deception of the abuse of power or position of vulnerability or of giving or receiving payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person, having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include as a minimum, the exploitation of others or other forms of sexual exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced abduction or services, slavery practices similar to slavery servitude or the removal of organs.*

( UNICRI/UNDOC, 2003:11).

Prior to this comprehensive protocol, the Programme for Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo in 1994 had addressed issues of trafficking in persons. The report enjoined countries in its paragraph 4.9 to ensure that “both preventive and rehabilitation of victims” of trafficking should be put in place. It further added that “countries should prohibit degrading practices such as trafficking in women, adolescents and children and exploitation through prostitution, and pay special attention to the protection and the rights of those who suffer from these crimes and those who are in potentially exploitable situations. Such people include

migrant women, domestic service and school girls. In this regard, safe guards and mechanisms for co-operation must be put in place to ensure that these measures are implemented (International Conference on Population and Development ICPD, 1994). At this juncture, it is pertinent to note that women trafficking phenomenon has a proclivity of being associated with trans-border sexual transaction, otherwise referred to as international prostitution. West African sub-region accounts for over sixty percent of those involved in illegal migration for the purpose of engaging in transactional sex or prostitution (UNESCO, 2004).

Similarly, in Nigeria, these phenomena of women trafficking and international prostitution have continued to impact negatively on her image abroad. For example, available data indicate that about 10,000 Nigerian girls are on the streets of Italy prostituting (Germano, 2001). Another estimate reveals that over 50,000 Nigerian girls, who are illegal migrants, are engaged in trans-border sexual transaction on the streets of Europe and Asia (Loconto, 2002). Also, Ojomo (2001) observes that 10 people were repatriated in 1997, 225 in 1999, 1,092 in 2000, in connection with illegal migration to Europe for the purpose of prostitution. The number of these deportees had increased to 1,957 at the end of 2002 (UNICRI/UNDOC, 2003). The number of women deported from Europe over illegal migration, for the purpose of sexual transaction, has continued to soar even afterwards. Consequently, UNICEF particularly labeled Nigeria as a leading country in human trafficking especially as regards trafficking of the under aged or minors (Skogeth, 2006). The tragic growth of international prostitution in Nigeria has enlisted her as the source of “raw material” for the world’s sex industry in several parts of Africa, Spain, Norway, Italy, Holland, Belgium and Venezuela in South America (Norli, 2006).

Curiously, majority of the trafficked victims deported into Nigeria are from a particular ethnic group in Nigeria, popularly known as '*Benin*'. Benin City is the ancestral home of indigenous *Benin* and also the capital of Edo State in the Southern part of Nigeria. It is currently regarded as a major market for cross border commercial sex work in Nigeria (Aghatise, 2002; UNICRI/UNDOC, 2003, Onyeneoru, 2003). In an attempt to forestall the increasing incidences of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, the Federal Government, the State Government as well as Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have made deliberate efforts towards combating the phenomena. For instance, at the Federal or national level, the National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) was established. It was saddled with the responsibility of prosecuting offenders or traffickers and rehabilitating the victims of trafficking (Federal Government of Nigeria Gazette, 2003). Moreover, to buttress the stance of the Nigerian government towards women trafficking, Nigeria is a signatory to some international conventions, which are directly targeted at eliminating all forms of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. They include:

- International Labour Organization Convention on minimum age and forced labour, 1999;
- Convention for the Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and the Exploitation of others, 1949;
- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discriminations Against Women (CEDAW), 1979
- Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish Trafficking in persons, especially women and children; 2000



*(UNICRI/UNDOC, 2003).*

Nigeria has also responded to other continent specific strategies to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination in order to attaining gender equality. They include the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR) adopted in 1981; and its Women's Rights Protocol in 2003; the ECOWAS Protocol of Democracy and Good Governance, 2001 and the New Partnership for African Development, NEPAD, adopted in July 2001 (National Gender Policy, 2006). Further more, the PARLEMO protocol was incorporated into national legislation through the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law – Enforcement and Administration Act of 14 July 2003. Amendments to the Trafficking Acts came into force on 7<sup>th</sup> of December 2005 (Skogeth, 2006). All these initiatives were put in place consequent upon the government of Nigeria's desire to achieve the Millennium Development Goals which include gender equality in decision making in order to enhance national development.

In Edo state, the house of Assembly amended the criminal codes against trafficking and prostitution in the year 2000 and the amendment was enacted into law on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September, 2000. The amendments were in sections 222, 223, 225, and 233 of the Edo State Criminal Code (Skogeth, 2006). These amendments criminalized prostitution as well as those who sponsored trafficking for the purpose of prostitution (UNICRI/UNDOC, 2003). This implied that the trafficked women for the purpose of prostitution are seen as criminals in the eyes of the law.

Furthermore, there have also been active involvements NGOs, both at the local and national levels in the efforts aimed at eradicating trafficking acts and international prostitution. Examples of such NGOs are Women Trafficking and Child Labour

Eradication (WOTCLEF), at the National level, and Idia Renaissance at the State level. The latter is the 'brain child' of the wife of the former Edo State Governor, Mrs. Eki IgBeninedion, while the former was founded by the wife of the erstwhile Vice President of Nigeria, Mrs. Titi Abubakar Atiku.

## 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

*Sexual exchange of girls and women embodies deep cultural practices, historically embedded in the family and kinship systems*

Maus (1990:33).

*Although trafficking for sexual exploitation is a worldwide phenomenon, any given situation implicates a cultural practice.*

Long (2004:6).

Majority of the studies previously conducted in relation to women trafficking and international prostitution in Benin City identified economic depression, occasioned by Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) as the root cause of this imbroglio (Women's Health and Action Research Centre (WHARC), 2002; Osakue and Okoedion, 2002; UNICRI/UNODC, 2003; Onyeonoru, 2003). There are however no empirical data, which suggest that the *Benin* are the most adversely affected by the economic downturn in Nigeria.

Also, all the studies (WHARC, 2002; Osakue and Okoedion, 2002; UNICRI/UNIDOC, 2003) identified the involvement of close relatives or family members. These studies however attribute the Benin family involvement in illegal trafficking for sexual exploitation to poverty. Again, none of these studies attempted an in-depth analysis on the changes in family structure with the advent of the women

trafficking and international prostitution. Although Maus (1999) and Long (2004) have observed the importance of examining the phenomenon of women trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation by taking into account the family and kinship systems, sufficient attention has not been paid to the changes in family structure among the *Benin* within a historical and cultural context in order to ascertain the internal logic warranting family involvement in sexual trafficking acts among its female members. It has been established that family structures continue to undergo changes in response to alteration in the economic, social and technological environment. Hence the nature of change in values, gender roles and relations and its attendant effects on contemporary family structure need to be captured. Since the family is a primary socialization centre for all humans, its functions and structures, in terms of gender relations are very strategic in building a healthy society where rights of both sexes are well protected especially those who are vulnerable.

Also, there is paucity of available data on the current status of women in the Benin family. Despite efforts by government agencies, the community the civil societies and organization to combat women trafficking and international prostitution, there are indications that the efforts have not fully stemmed the tide. Women continue to be the most vulnerable to traffickers. The need to examine the statuses of women in contemporary Benin family as a result of these global economic changes, the establishment of European countries as ready markets for sex trade and their implications on the contemporary Benin family structure is imperative. Therefore to what extent have women's roles been altered in the present day Benin family as a result of their

involvement in cross-border transactional sex? Have Benin women become more visible and empowered as a result of their involvement in sex trafficking in the region?

Moreover, all the previous studies on human trafficking conducted in Benin City have verified the gendered nature of trafficking for purpose of commercial sex (WHARC, 2002; UNICRI, 2003, Onyeonuru, 2003, Bamgbose, 2005). This suggests that the women who were once restricted with series of taboos and traditions regulations, within a prevailing patriarchal *Benin* culture, are now major 'actresses' in trans-border sexual transactions (Aghatise, 2002). These women earn 'hard' currency for their families (UNICRI/UNIDOC, 2003). These may have implication on the current status within the contemporary Benin family structure.

In contrast to the earlier reasons canvassed by previous studies discussed in the earlier part of this work, this study proposes that there is a breakdown of classical patriarchy, that is, male control and dominance over women in the current Benin family structure, and that patriarchal domination which was previously synonymous with the Benin family is being compromised, due to the inherent financial benefits which accrue from women trafficking. The study argues that the incidences of trafficking and international prostitution have led to changes family structure and gender relations within the "traditional" Benin family. These changes occasioned by the phenomena of trafficking and international prostitution constitute the crux of the matter that this study tried to examine. In order to achieve this objective, it was imperative to appreciate the traditional Benin family structure, especially its ethnography. This helped to situate the study within a socio-cultural environment.

Some research questions have logically emerged from the problem identified above. One may then want to ask, what are the changes in Benin family structure occasioned by the phenomena of trafficking and international prostitution? What are the effects of women trafficking and international prostitution on Benin women and their family structures against the backdrop of the prevalence of trafficking for the purpose of trans-border sexual transactions in the region? Also, what are the contributions of cultural factors in exacerbating these phenomena of trafficking and international prostitution in the study area? In order to provide meaningful answers to these questions, this study was guided by the under listed objectives:

### **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The general objective of this study is to appraise the changing structure of the *Benin* family with the advent of women trafficking and international prostitution;

#### **1.3.1 The Specific Objectives:**

The specific objectives are to-

- a) examine the changing family structure among the Benin people;
- b) identify and analyze the effects of women trafficking and international prostitution on Benin women and their family structures and
- c) assess the roles of cultural factors in facilitating women trafficking and international prostitution among the Benin.

### **1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Despite the fact that rich ethnographic accounts abound on the Benin people during the pre-colonial and colonial epochs, only distorted and scanty literature are available about the contemporary *Benin* family. The city is an ancient capital of Benin Empire that stretched far as to the present day Dahomey in the neighbouring Republic of Benin at the heights of its glory. Till date, Benin City retains a strong traditional and cultural presence (WHARC, 2002). Social Anthropologists have been accused of setting a standard in research without due consideration given to the historical antecedents of the societies in question. For instance, Ekeh (1990) argues that a historical examination of kinship structures in Africa and how they have responded to various changes like slave trade, and European colonization which ravaged the continent calls for critical investigation. The need to examine changes in the Benin family structure is therefore imperative, in the light of the crisis of confidence in which the *Benin* family is currently embedded since the advent of women trafficking and international prostitution.

Moreover, several studies and Newspaper reports have identified the involvement of family members in facilitating recruitment process of potential traffic victims for the purpose of sexual exploitation (Aladeselu, 1999; WHARC, 2002; UNICRI/UNDOC, 2003; Onyeonuru, 2003 Ahantie, 2004). This is strongly indicative of weakened primordial values of the traditional Benin family that was well known for its conservative posture about female sexuality. For instance scholars have stated that the Benin Society constitute just about 17% of societies studied in ethnographic research were all rules regarding to sexual restrictions and taboos about series associated with women's sexuality, are highly pervasive ( Sanday,1981). Young females are being sent by their families as sacrificial lamb to Europe and other parts of the world to be sexually

exploited for economic gains. A situation where young female members of families eventually become breadwinners of such households would certainly have effects on the structure, values and gender relations in these families. Such families support these potential female traffic victims despite their knowledge about the dangers associated with international prostitution like sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS. Money realized through this means is often remitted by these young women to their families. Although several studies like (WHARC,2002; UNICRI/UNDOC,2003; Onyeonoru, 2003; Skogeth,2006) have all established the pervasiveness of trafficking among the Benin, no sufficient account has been given to the changes that are being currently mediated in the contemporary Benin family structure, as a result of these phenomena of trafficking and international prostitution. This study intends to examine the resultant changes the Benin family traditional roles, values and the whole structure.

Secondly, there are no available data on the current status of women in among the Benin. The Benin have been described as a typical example of a patriarchal society (Egharevba, 1949, Ebohon, 1996). Women are generally perceived as inversions of the ideal, hence they are seriously constrained by what is commonly referred to as *awaa meaning forbidden*, (Curnow, 1999). There is a preponderance of gender segregated utensils as women's secretion (menstruation) could serve as a pollutant to persons, household or even land (Curnow, 1999). Further more, there appears to be a strong preference of male children over the female gender thereby again affirming the extent of gender inequality in the Benin society. Consequently women are hardly visible in decision making within the family and society except for those who are of royal parentage. The need to document the current status of female members of the Benin

family, since their economic roles are changing, the extent to which the phenomena of trafficking and international have affected their present statuses and roles would provide relevant data on women to ascertain if they are being empowered or not.

Finally, this study identified several explanatory schemas previously used to explain trafficking and international sex work among the Benin. Previous studies have utilized macro theoretical perspective in explaining the phenomena of trafficking and international prostitution, while micro theoretical model like ethnography which pays close attention to the cultural environment of the study area has not being given adequate attention. Existing social dynamics of a particular society differ from another. This accounts for the reason why some nations are “sending communities” (that is those who traffic) while some are “destination nations” (WHARC, 2002; Mussaccio, 2004). This study bridges the gap in terms of theory by paying greater attention to the families within a socio-cultural context.

## **1.5 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS**

**Gender:** This refers to culturally defined ways of acting as a male or female that becomes part of a person’s sense of self. In other words, children’s feelings of being a boy or a girl are defined more by how they are treated by their parents than by their actual biological characteristics (Stockard and Johnson, 1992). Gender draws attention to socially constructed aspects or differences between male and female.

**Sex:** This refers the biological differences between male and females including primary sex characteristics that are present at birth, which is the presence of specific male or female genitalia and secondary sex characteristics that develop later. Oakely (1974)



introduced the term “sex” and “gender” into Anthropology and also defined sex as the biological division into male or female.

**Trafficking:** Since various agencies have radically addressed the subject of trafficking from different vantage positions, arriving at a definition is an uphill task (Ucarer, 1999). When viewed as a process, trafficking entails several processes of recruitment, transportation and control of victims in final places of destination. Trafficking usually does not occur on its own as there are constituent elements. Hence a definition of trafficking must include the aspect of servitude of victims of trafficking. However, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime which eventually metamorphosed into the PARLEMO protocol defined trafficking as:

*Recruitment, transportation, harboring, receipt of person by threat or use or force, or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud or deception of the abuse of power of position of vulnerability or of giving or receiving payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include as a minimum, the exploitation of others or other forms of sexual exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced abduction or services, slavery practices similar to slavery servitude or the removal of organs.*

**Exploitation:** This is one of the contested concepts in the protocol since it is what distinguishes prostitution by choice from forced migration, or trafficking for the purpose of being sexually exploited. Exploitation therefore implies the process of trafficking, which a person undergoes and then ends up being taken advantage of. Tyldum, Tveit and Brunovski (2005) observed that this is what distinguished the trafficked victim into guilty and innocent; the first being those who engaged in prostitution before their involvement in trafficking incidence while the latter are those who were forced.

**Patriarchy:** The term ‘patriarchy’ is being used to refer to the systematic organization of male supremacy and female subordination (Kamarae, 1992; Stacey, 1993; Aina, 1998.). Patriarchy is therefore a system of male authority which oppresses women through its social, political and economic institutions. Literally patriarchy means rule of the father.

**Family:** The family can be defined as a bio-social unit meaning that the term family has both social and biological aspects (Otite and Ogionwo, 2006). The definition by Murdock, (1949) conveys a more concrete description; the family includes two adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship and has one or more children owned or adopted by the sexually cohabiting adults. The family may be defined as a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption.

**Polygyny:** This is a form marriage where a man marries more than one wife at a time.

**Gender inequality:** Gender inequality refers to the social, cultural, economic, and political disparities between men and women. It describes how men and women are given different opportunities because of their gender. Gender inequality has resulted in the marginalization of many women which in turn perpetuates the inequalities between men and women in society. Due to gender inequality, women all over the world are poorer than men. This has compelled many women to engage in behaviour that are risky to their health. Indeed, there is a relation between the low economic status of women and their involvement in prostitution. (Conseil du statut de la femme, 2002). Poverty and harsh

economic realities are the underlying causes of women bartering sex for economic gain or survival.

**Gender roles:** The society also prescribes arbitrary rules or gender roles ( that is how one is supposed to dress, act, think, feel, relate to others, think of oneself, etc.) based on one's sex (that is whether one has a vagina or a penis.) These gender roles are called feminine and masculine. Gender roles are rooted ideologies of femininity and masculinity which cast women in a subordinate, dependent, and passive position with virginity, chastity, motherhood, moral superiority, and obedience as the key virtues of the ideal woman. In sharp contrast, the dominant ideology of masculinity characterizes men as independent, dominant, invulnerable aggressors and providers whose key virtues are strength, virility and courage (WHO 2003).

**Gender Relations:** Gender relations refer to relations of power between women and men. They are revealed not only in the division of labor and resources between women and men, but also in ideas and representations—the ascribing to women and men of different abilities, attitudes, desires, personality traits and behavior patterns. Gender relations are both constituted by and help constitute these practices and ideologies, in interaction with other structures of social hierarchy such as class, caste, and race. They are neither uniform across societies nor historically static. They are usually seen as socially constructed rather than biologically determined (Agarwal 1997). Also Whitehead (2006) disclosed that one of the specific forms of oppression which women suffer is that in every social relationship and social situations they find themselves gender is present.

According to Whitehead, (ibid) women are being always perceived and treated as members of a gender category about which there are all kinds of stereotyped beliefs, and which is inferior to the alternative gender category, that of men. This is because males are socialized to accept to be providers and heads of the family while women are socialized to be obedient and submissive housekeepers. The cause of such differentiation is the fact that the society views women as being more sexual beings instead of human beings (Charvet 1982; Kambarami 2006) constructed and enforced not only through every day attitudes and behaviours but also through the legal system and social systems (McDowell 1999).

**Empowerment:** Empowerment is first and foremost, about power, that is, changing power relations in favour of those who previously exercised little power over their own lives. Batliwala (1993) defines power as having two central aspects -- control over resources (physical, human, intellectual, financial, and the self), and control over ideology (beliefs, values and attitudes). If power means control, then empowerment therefore is the process of gaining control. The empowerment concept is used to explain how women may be financially empowered in order to be able to gain control or autonomy over their own lives within a patriarchal family.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE *BENIN* PEOPLE

#### 2.1 GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

The *Benin* are in Edo state, which was carved out of the former Mid- Western State (1963-1976) of the defunct Western Region, and later known as Bendel State (1976-1991). The total area of Benin speaking people covers over 4000sq/km (Bradbury, 1957), with a population of about a million people (Federal Office of Statistics, 1995). Benin City is located approximately 250 km east of Lagos, the former capital city of Nigeria. It is the ancestral home of the *Benin* people who trace their genealogy to a common ancestor. There are different ethnic groups currently living in Benin City, but these people are different from the *Benin* since they do not share a common ancestral history. Benin City is called “*Edo*” by its inhabitants and individuals who are from Benin City refer to themselves as “*Oviedo*”, child of Benin, or “*Ovioba*”, subject of the *Oba* (Bradbury, 1957). While *Benin* served as a territorial label, with the advent of the colonial contact *Benin* has been adopted to represent the territorial label in recent times as in Benin Division, Benin City, Benin Kingdom. However, both” *Benin* “and “*Edo*” serve as ethnic and linguistic labels for the indigenous inhabitants of Benin territory (Okpoko and Agbontaen, 1993). The people of Benin were historically referred to as *Benin* or *Oviedo*. This also means therefore that people who are indigenes of Benin City are referred to as the *Benin*. For the purpose of this study, the pre-colonial label “Benin” would be adopted except when there are direct references to the current capital of Edo State, Benin City.

In terms of geographical location, Benin City is on a sandy plain, in the middle of a tropical forest zone of Nigeria. The plains are crossed by numerous rivers and streams, which flow southwards towards the rim of the Niger Delta (Bradbury, 1957). The climate is also very warm and humid with characteristic rainfall, which is evenly distributed through out the year. The region has a good deal of swamp, which is responsible for the abundance of timber (Duchetheau, 1994). There are still bushes and significant reserve of timber in the lower part of Benin. However, there are no physical outstanding rocks in Benin City.

## **2.2 HISTORY OF THE BENIN PEOPLE:**

Apart from archeological findings, knowledge of *Benin* kingdom before 1485 (the year of the arrival of the Portuguese into Benin City) is largely dependent on oral tradition, most of which have been recorded by the Chronicler of *Benin* history, Chief Jacob Egharevba. It is pertinent to note that there are at least three schools of thoughts with regard to the history of the *Benin* people. The first account which appears more popular is that the indigenous *Benin* migrated from Ile-Ife, a town in the South Western part of Nigeria. The second account repudiates the first account, arguing that the indigenous *Benin* have been on the very spot right from creation. *Edo* mythology according to Egharevba (1946) states that *Osanobua*, the high god created *agbon*, the world, and asked his sons to choose what they wanted in order to reign in *agbon*. According to him, the eldest son was the founder of *Ile-Ife*, while the youngest was the founder of indigenous *Benin*.

While the other sons chose material things like wealth, magical skills, the younger son chose a snail shell with sand in it. It was the sand in the snail shells, which eventually became land for the younger son, who then had to barter some parts of the land to his older brothers to dwell. He was thereby able to secure wealth and magical skills, which the older brothers had earlier possessed (Bradbury, 1957). The third account, which was highlighted by Marshall (1939) in the intelligence report on Benin City by the British, states that the indigenous *Benin* migrated from Egypt. Based on the last account, the first dynasty in Benin appeared in 900AD, which led to the emergence of a more organized political institution and social organization (Ductacheau, 1994). The *ogiso* dynasty, in which thirty-one kings ruled, was said to have been terminated by the misrule of *Owodo* (Egharevba, 1946). One of the remarkable events in Benin history was the introduction of brass casting from Ile-Ife, by *Oba* Oguola in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries which Bradbury (1957), notes marked a period of expansion for the Benin kingdom. Also, the coming of *Oba* Ewuare the great consolidated the modern day settlement of the *Benin*. *Oba* Ewuare built huge walls and ditches around Benin City, and enforced the rule of primogeniture (succession by the eldest son). He also appointed a military commander of the kingdom who is referred to as the *iyase* (*Prime Minister*).

The arrival of the Portuguese was a very significant aspect of the Benin history. This was during the mid fifteenth century (Bradbury, 1957). Although the Portuguese sought to christianise the *Benin* people on the contrary, the Benin were more interested in a commercial intercourse with the Portuguese (Igbafe, 1979). Igbafe added that the great demand for slaves by the Portuguese became a valuable means of wealth for the *Benin*, with the *Oba* of Benin being the royal monopolist in the sale of slaves to the Portuguese.

Obiyan (1984) maintains that failure to pay tributes by the Portuguese triggered the exercise of the royal prerogative of closing the market or even stopping the trade temporarily.

Also worthy of note in the history of *Benin* was the forceful annexation of the *Benin* kingdom by the British in 1897. The ruling *Oba* was deposed to Calabar, a town in the southern part of Nigeria, where he died. This led to the decline of the empire (Igbafe, 1979). Many of the indigenous *Benin* fled from Benin City. However, with the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates by Fredrick Lugard in 1914, Benin City became an integral part of the defunct Western Region. Currently, the present Benin Monarch is *Oba Erediauwa II*. He was coronated as the *Oba* of Benin kingdom in 1979 after the death of his father, *Oba Akenzua II*. The palace is still the custodian and citadel of tradition in cotemporary Benin City.

### **2.3 THE ECONOMY**

Benin had an economy, which was basically agrarian. Rubber plantations were very dominant in pre-conquest Benin. Its commercial extraction was a great source of income for the kingdom of Benin. Also food crops cultivated in this region include yams, plantain, palm trees, coconuts, cassava and various kinds of vegetables. Several specialized guilds were also predominant. Benin was also known for brass casting, carving, beading and blacksmithing, which organized into various guilds. Hence, Marshall (1936) observes that these guilds were formed to supply the *Oba's* needs.

Women assisted their husbands in the farms (Bradbury, 1957). They also played important roles in the house of *Iwebo*, the guild that was directly responsible for making



special clothes and beads for the *Oba* (Agbontaen, 1990). Another significant aspect of pre-conquest Benin economy was sales of slaves, ivory and pepper. Also, *Ughoton* (Benin port) was an important commercial centre where these economic transactions with the Portuguese took place.

#### **2.4 SOCIAL ORGANISATION OF THE *BENIN* PEOPLE.**

Obiyan (1988) posits that in pre-colonial Benin, the extended family was the coalescence of the economic, social judicial, religious and political functions, making it the foundation of the Benin social organization. It was however made up of several nuclear families 'owa or individual family. This comprised of the father, '*ehra*' with his wife or wives, '*iyé*', who then is the mother and the children, '*imon*'. Polygyny was predominant with every wife, who had a male child described as a 'gate' (Egharevba, 1949). According to him, the concept of gate, or '*uhro*' played significant roles with regard to inheritance and succession in the Benin family. He also observes that there were distinctions between wives in a compound. These distinctions were based on the status of their husbands. For example, the wife of the eldest male head of a family was referred to as *Okhuo odion*, while the wife of a titled man was referred to as *Eson*. Descent is patrilineal and residences are virilocal or patriarchal.

The eldest son, '*omordion*', in Benin custom played significant roles in the organization of the family. Hence, Igbafe (1979) buttresses that primogeniture is the general custom in Benin. Under this system, rights and ritual offices are passed to the eldest son. He was also very strategic in terms of property inheritance. Other movable properties were however shared among the senior sons according to the number of

'gates'. Consequently, the family estate known as '*igiogbe*' was usually an all male affairs. Women did not inherit husbands' property. In the same vein, widows could be inherited in the same way properties are inherited (Bradbury, 1957).

There were different kinds of family forms among the *Benin*: the nuclear, and the joint and the extended family types (Bradbury, 1957). The joint family consisted of an elderly man, with his wife or wives, and his unmarried sons, and in some case, married sons and their wives. On the other hand, the extended family was a combination of joint families.

Bradbury (1957) states that kin groups or extended families did not lay claims to tracts of land but rather the village or community head did. The village head was a representative of the king or 'Oba' of Benin. Each adult was directly dependent on the village as a whole in order to have access to land, in the cases of people who did not inherit any land from their patrilineages. The king had rights over land in *Benin*. Land ownership was also an all-males affair. This, perhaps, is why the issue of '*igiogbe*' is very crucial in Benin (Osarumwense, 1999). Also, due to the prevalence of ancestor worship among the *Benin* people the benefits of family inheritance were largely restricted within a circle of males. (Bradbury, 1957).

The reason why women could not inherit property under Benin custom was to ensure that she did not confiscate them for the use of her family member (Usualele, 1999). Women could not own estates or landed property prior to colonial contact (Ebohon, 1996). However, women can now acquire landed property due to the colonial impact on Benin tradition (Osarumwense, 1999).

Also, *Benin* social organization was based on the age grade (Egharevba, 1949). Age was the basis of authority and defined who was accorded respect (Bradbury, 1957). There was a hierarchy in terms of economic and social class in Benin. They were the nobles, the commoners and the slaves (Igbafe, 1979). The Benin monarchical system is one of the oldest in Western Africa. The Monarch is referred to as *Oba*. The *Oba* of *Benin* is the traditional head of all the *Benin*. He had absolute powers and was generally revered by his subjects. He was also believed to have a divine origin, so his authority could not be questioned. Hence, the popular saying among the Benin people- “*gie ebvon Oba se,*” that is, “the king’s decree must stand.” Even in contemporary times, the *Benin* Monarch wields great influence over the *Benin*.

## **2.5 SOCIAL CLASS AND SOCIAL MOBILITY:**

Two broad social classes existed in pre-colonial Benin kingdom. They are nobility (*adesotu*) and the Commoners (*ivbiotu*) (Marshall, 1939). The nobles were further subdivided into three distinct groups or societies; the *Iwebos*, *Iweguae* and *Ibiwe*. The commoners were generally referred to as the *ivbiotu*.

Marshall added that members of the noble generally lived apart from the other class and did not participate in the administrative guilds. With the European contact, the economic landscape changed with the introduction of money into the traditional economy. New currency as a means of exchange culminated the disappearance of slaves’ possession and other war booties hence marking an end or a great reduction in economic distinction between the two dominant classes. This was because economic activities were

now thrown open to all classes in Benin instead of being the preserve of the nobles. This led a decline in clientage which marked the previous class system and the subsequent replacement with a new class of Benin who bought themselves into the rank of the aristocrats through their wealth within a short while (Simpson, 1936). He added that the exclusiveness of the previous aristocratic class was threatened with the emergence of the nouveau riche, hence the former's decision to maintain a greater cohesion by creating an almost closed up system which made social mobility into the class very difficult. Simpson explained that certain titles became the exclusive preserve of this class while lesser titles were made accessible to the emergent aristocratic group.

Class distinction was also portrayed in the patterns of dressing among the Benin people. Okpokun, Agbontaen-Eghafona and Ojo (2005) explored the relationships between various classes in tradition Benin and dress patterns. They explained that Benin dress patterns reflected the social hierarchy which was characteristic of the Benin people with the Oba at the apex. They observed:

*“At the apex of the social pyramid of the Benin Kingdom is the Oba. His people jealously guard the primacy of his personality as a cultural object and his mood and motions take precedence over everything else in the earth or above the earth. He is the icon of collective pride and prestige of his people.”*

There were three broad kinds of costumes in traditional Benin: the palace costumes, the chief or noble costumes and the commoners' apparels (Okpokunu, Agbontaen-Egafona and Ojo, 2005). With the advent of colonialism corresponding social change had occurred in the style and patterns of dress worn by contemporary Benin. However, dressing is still very important to an average Benin man who pays great attention to what he wears. As Curnow, (1999) succinctly puts it, clothes make men in

Benin and yardages and exorcisms are a badge of wealth. Dress is therefore a major avenue through which class distinction is maintained and perpetuated. For instance, certain coral beads and ivory are still the exclusive preserve of the Oba, while the chiefs can wear only certain designated attire (Curnow, 1999).

## **2.6 MARRIAGE, DIVORCE AND ADULTERY**

Marriage held a central place among the *Benin* and was regulated by many taboos and restrictions. Girls were usually betrothed at infancy while their suitors were expected to render some services to prospective fathers in -law. At puberty, the girls were considered ready for marriage (Egharevba, 1949). Marriage payments are usually low (Bradbury, 1957) in comparison with the Ibos of the South-Eastern Nigeria. Virginitly was greatly priced with regard to women. The mother of a bride who was found to be a virgin after sexual intercourse was rewarded, and so was the bride by her husband (Egharevba, 1949). Furthermore, a woman was considered as stranger in her natal home after marriage, since she was seen as another man's property (Ebohon, 1996) Marriage to a 'white man' was considered abominable (Igbafe, 1979). Women could be inherited in much the same way as property (Bradbury, 1957). Divorce among Benin women is viewed as a colonial impact; however, it was granted to women of noble parentage (Usuanlele, 1999).

Women's quarters were separate from the men. Women were also perceived as an inversion of the ideal; hence they were put under several ritual restrictions, *awaa* (Curnow, 1997). Curnow further explains that sexual contact was minimized with women, in order not to abate the potency of protective charms, which were commonly

used by men in pre-colonial era. To avoid spiritual contamination, bathrooms, buckets were gender segregated. After sexual contacts, a man must thoroughly cleanse himself in order to keep his spiritual powers intact. It was also contrary to Benin customs for a woman to live separately from the husband that is outside the same geographical location except in cases of illnesses or a disagreement.

Widowhood practices subjected women to a mandatory mourning period of seven to twenty one days, after interment of the widows' late husbands. Widows were expected to lie on bare floor, wearing rags with charcoal smothered on their faces. Okogie (1992) states that, widows ate with broken plate, cups and used their left hands in eating. They were also expected to mourn their dead husbands by their graves. Okogie (1992) finally notes that Benin widows were made to declare their innocence from any involvement over their husbands' death before an ancestral shrine.

Also of notable social significance is oath taking among Benin women. It was customary for women to be subjected to series of oaths (Ebohon, 1996). For example, Ebohon (1996) reveals that married women in Benin were made to swear oaths of marital faithfulness in the family shrine. Also, on the event of the death of a man, his wife or wives were also made to swear at the village shrine '*ogwedion*' to establish their innocence over their husbands' death.

## **2.7 COLONIAL INFLUENCE**

Finally, ethnography of the *Benin* will be inconclusive without citing the forceful annexation of the *Benin* by the British, which culminated in several killings of the indigenes popularly known as the 'Benin Massacre' in 1897. It has been argued that this

event had delirious impact on the family structure (Igbafe, 1979; Usuanlele, 1999). They further disclosed that many of the indigenous population migrated out of the present Benin region, which resulted in massive depopulation of Benin City that is still observable today. Similarly, the colonial wage economy and the forced taxation, which were introduced by the colonialists led to massive male migration, monetization and commoditization of the African economy. Some scholars have linked the current devalued status of women in the Benin to colonialism (Osarunmwense, 1999; Usanlele, 1999).

## **2.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter reviewed the ethnography of the Benin people by examining the historic place of pre-colonial Benin Empire, social political organisations and the economic arrangements. It also highlighted basic cultural values by highlighting roles play by the cultural institutions in Benin and the status of Benin women in relation to these cultural institutions. Finally this chapter highlighted some of the changes occasioned by colonial intrusion into the empire and noted that these consequences are still being experienced today.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE**

#### **3.1 CLARIFYING THE CONCEPT OF FAMILY**

For most functionalist Anthropologists, family is defined in terms of the needs it fulfills in the society (Murdock, 1949; Spiro, 1954). For example, Murdock (1949) defines the family as a social group in which there is a common residence, economic co-operation and reproduction, which includes adults of both sexes at least two, who maintain a socially approved relationship, one or more children, biological or adopted offspring of the cohabiting pairs.

Although Murdock attempted a universal definition of the family institution, by arguing that common residence, co-operation, reproduction and sexual relationship are crucial features associated with the institution. A close appraisal however indicates that these features may not be universal like he had claimed, for example, Mark and Rathbones (1983) argue that the family structure in the African context was significantly different from the European family. Similarly, Hayden (1995) observes that with the recent increase in co-habitation and the emergence of the gay or lesbian families, the definition of Murdock has become grossly limited in accounting for these developments.

Due to these divergent views in defining the family, some social Anthropologists have proposed the term 'kinship' as being more identifiable (Levi Strauss, 1966; Benders, 1967). Yet others have argued about the need to adopt the term 'household', since it was considered more inclusive and definable (Yanagasiko, 1979).



In the light of the above, this study has operationally adopted the definition of the family by Bender (1967:493). Bender conceives the family to be a jurally defined and corporate kin group whose members may share a common residence. For Bender (1967) the 'shared property' or access to these properties constitutes a group into a family. Despite the shortcoming of this definition, like the poorly clarified concept of the word 'kin', the researcher finds it useful because of the adoption of the term, 'shared property.' This is a critical factor, which is pivotal to the study of the Benin family.

### **3.2 FAMILY STRUCTURES AND CHANGE IN AFRICA**

Discussing the African family is not easy due to the largeness of the continent and the variegated ethnic mosaic. Nonetheless, family or kinship is of utmost significance to Africans (Therborne, 2003). This was vitally so in the pre-colonial Africa. Men usually held kin power even though there were variants of this (Radcliffe Brown and Forde, 1950). Some scholars have also argued that the African family roles and structure cannot be completely divorced from slave trade. For instance, Illife (1995) disclosed that three million slaves were exported across the Atlantic in the nineteenth century alone. This phenomenon, he argues, had implication on the structure and the roles of the families in the continent. Also, of no less severe consequence was the colonial impact. For example, the colonial conquest in Congo assumed genocidal proportion. According to Hoschild (2000), the total population of the Congos was halved with a loss of about ten million people.

Similarly, the forceful annexation of the *Benin* kingdom in 1897 by the British, which culminated in the killings of the indigenes popularly known as the 'Benin

Massacre' had negative impact on the family structure (Usuanlele, 1999). Furthermore, Usuanlele notes that many of the indigenous population migrated from the region, which resulted in the massive depopulation, which is still observable today. No doubt, all these had serious social and cultural implication on the African family structures and role.

In the same vein, the colonial wage economy and the forced taxation, which was introduced by the colonialists, led to a massive male migration, monetization and commodification of the African economy. Some feminists have linked the current devalued status of most women in Africa to the emergence of the wage economy (Boserop, 1977; Leacock, 1978). Also significant are the contributions of Amadiume (1997) and Nzegwu (2004), who have argued vehemently, denouncing colonialism as the major factors, which led to the change in the structure and roles of the African family, and the suppression of the female gender.

The extended family was the most predominant family structure, which was synonymous with Africans. Hence Sofola (1973) asserts that the distinguishing features of the African family include: provision of social support system, educational or socializing responsibilities of the young members of the family. The concept of brotherhood was also stated to be very prominent within the African context, where the need to be protective of your brothers' interest was of great significance. Sofola concludes that shared ownership, communitarian ethics, respect for the elderly and generosity were regarded as critical.

### **3.3 KINSHIP AND GENDER RELATIONS IN THE FAMILY**

The arguments have persisted over the years about the nature of kinship, whether it can be viewed only in biological terms or it can be socially constructed. However, within the African context, the social nature of kinship is well affirmed. Kinship constitutes the basis of citizenship, fealty, and economic agreement. It determines the way people behave to each other, rights and obligation people have towards each other, who to marry, and how property is to be transmitted from one generation to another (Shiedner, 1969). Kinship determined residence and descent (Radcliffe -Brown, 1950) and also determined the rule of exogamy (Levi Strauss, 1949). Levi-Strauss (1949) observes that the rule of exogamy made it imperative for a form of communication between humans, which resulted in a form of social exchange. Levi- Strauss notes that since women were one of such exchanges in marriage, this warranted the establishment of the rule of incest

Also, in the study of kinship, the proclivity for generalization by early Social Anthropologists on kinship system in the family has been queried. For example Shiedner (1969) posits that there was a need to be sensitive to local ideas of relatedness. Yanaiasako and Collier (1987) also emphasize the need to take into cognizance the relationship between gender and kinship. One can therefore suggest that there is also a great variation in the extent to which kinship systems function within the family system of any given society. Some of the variables include extent to which consaguineal and affinal relationships are based, the ways in which relatives are recognized, various rights and obligations and the language used to denote kinship within a given context.

Moreover, Feminist Anthropologists have produced a corpus of research details about the gender roles in the family. For a long time, the argument was that the subordination of women in the family and the society as a whole was universal. Consequently, Ortner (1974) in her groundbreaking research compares the subordinate position to the nature-nurture debate arguing that culture sought to always control nature. Highlighting the asserts that women's social place in the domestic domain, which brought her close to the role nurturance, has further accentuated her subordinate status of being close to nature. Hence, men are associated with 'up,' 'right', 'high', 'culture' and 'strength' while the women are associated with the opposites 'down' 'left,' 'low,' 'nature' and 'weakness' (Ortner, 1974; 72). Furthermore, the author concludes that these were not merely biological traits, but that they were cultural constructs which underpinned expectations, rights, and roles values of being male or female.

Ortner's position about the universal subordination of women was criticized because it was considered ahistorical in its mode of analyses. Leacock (1978) observes that colonization and the emergence of capitalism had grievous implication on the status of women, which were not captured by Ortner's accounts. Ortner rejects the private/public dichotomy as a reason for women's subordination maintaining that the development of private property as noted by Engels (1972) led to the devaluation of women in the family. Leacock (ibid) concludes by also taking a position in favour of the universal subordination of women.

On the contrary, Sacks (1974) queries the universal subordination of women as posited by the previous accounts. Rather, Sacks (ibid) posits that ethnographic and historical documents supported the variability of women status in the family. Sacks (ibid)

observes that since the modes of production were not universal, consequently, in places where production was based on kinship systems, women and men were likely to have the same relationship to means of production. While emphasizing the variability of women's status in the family, stating that the status a woman occupied as a 'wife' usually differed significantly from her status as a 'sister', Sack's perspective became very influential in explaining gender relations within the context of most African families especially in pre-conquest Africa. However, Sack's analysis escaped the proclivity for universal gender asymmetry based on women and their position in the domestic domain.

Also, Sudarkasa (1986) maintains that the status of women in indigenous African societies reveals that, except for the Islamized societies of sub-Saharan Africa, women were conspicuous in high places in pre-colonial times. She argues that women in pre-colonial Africa were queen-mothers, queen-sisters, princesses, chiefs, and holders of other offices in towns and villages. This position as expressed by Sudarkasa (ibid) further buttresses the arguments of the imperativeness of taking a historical analysis of the status of women in African society.

These universal models of analyses have been dubbed 'western' or 'Eurocentric' by most third world scholars (Sudarkasa, 1981; Amadiume, 1987; Nzegwu, 2004). Nzegwu (2004) in her recent research reveals that the Ibo women of the South-Eastern Nigeria enjoyed 'sexual autonomy' even within a marital union. Citing the case of *Nri* society, she opines that the family sanctioned trans-marital relationships by women. Sudarkasa (ibid) further contests that family 'grafts' were outcomes of such relationships maintaining that the Ibo women were valued as 'daughters' and 'mothers'. Hence the desire for being a mother outweighed any notion of adultery among the *Nris*.

T'shakkka (1977) has also earlier highlighted the importance of motherhood in the African societies in typical extended family. Adding that motherhood was regarded as the pivot of femaleness, T'Shakka (ibid) affirmed the support a woman received right from conception to the period of delivery, and even in raising the child in many African Societies. Consequently, nurturance was a distinguishing feature of the African woman.

The examples of the Ibos of the South -Eastern Nigeria and others studies highlighted above describe the women position within the family. Despite the fact that there are studies, which have confirmed that most African women enjoyed a higher status in the family in relation to postcolonial era, it is evident that these scholars also have a proclivity of generalizing within the African context. This was the same reaction they posed against the 'western' scholars. There is a dire need, therefore, to take into cognizance the variability of these experiences and then attempt comparative analyses within reasonable parameters.

Finally, literature, which attributes the current inferior position in the family to colonialism and the emergence of the capitalist modes of production, are replete. There are obvious discriminations of unimaginable dimensions against women in contemporary times. Panos, (1998) notes that women are still being discriminated against across the world, based on the cultural patterns of societies. For example, non-consensual sex is regarded as normal in a marital union, which accounts for the high incidences of marital rape. Also, women do not have access to critical resources like land. They cannot inherit landed property and are discriminated against in access to formal education. Moreover Aina, Aransiola and Osezua (2006) argue that women's sexual rights and sexual health are currently undermined because of the patriarchal structure of most Nigerian families.

This is a direct consequence of her inferior position within the family. Even the phenomena of women trafficking and sexual exploitation are regarded as one of the extreme forms of violence

### **3.4 PATRIARCHY AND THE FAMILY**

Patriarchy is described as the locus and the centers of power men have in the families. It vests men with power at both the family and community levels (Nzegwu, 2004: 2). Feminist scholars have observed that the word “patriarchy” was traditionally referred to as male headed household before the current resurgence of the feminist movement in the past two decades which sought to analyze the origins and conditions of men’s oppression of women (Kamarae, 1992). The term ‘patriarchy’ is being used to refer to the systematic organization of male supremacy and female subordination (Kamarae, 1992; Stacey, 1993; Aina, 1998.). Patriarchy is therefore a system of male authority which oppresses women through its social, political and economic institutions.

Patriarchal structure has been described as a major feature of traditional society. It is conceived as structure of a set of social relations with material base which enables men to dominate women (Lerner 1986; Stacey 1993; Aina 1998). Patriarchy is further conceived as a system of social stratification and differentiation on the basis of sex, which provides material advantages to males while simultaneously placing severe constraints on the roles and activities of females. Consequently, Aina (1998) argued that patriarchal societies clearly defined sex roles, while various taboos ensure conformity with specified gender roles. For instance, traditionally, men do not participate in domestic work, including child rearing, since such tasks are considered to be the exclusive domain

of women. Moreover, males are generally perceived to possess qualities such as courage, vigor and strength. Majority of scholars agree that the single distinguishing feature of patriarchy is male dominance and control (Walby, 1990). Hence Walby (1990) definition of patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” lays emphasis to the concept of domination and oppression. Pateman (1991), on the contrary, reveals that there were variants of patriarchy, which relocates the basis of men’s rights to the political arena or the civil society.

However, a notable observation made by Walby (1990) is that patriarchy is not an individual affair, but institutional, that is, power or control vested in a group of men. Contending that it was immaterial if only a few men lacked power, but that men as a group are uniquely privileged and the women are uniquely disadvantaged. For the purpose of this study, Walby’s definition will be adopted. This is due to an emphasis on group control and dominance, which are useful in understanding the Benin family patriarchal structure. Another aspect of Walby (1990) structure of patriarchy that is vitally relevant to this work is the latter’s observation that on the relationship between patriarchal relations within sexuality and male violence. This argument was further extended by MacKinnon (2006) who observes that patriarchal construction of femininity has always inferred a weakness of the female gender which induced sexual provocation tha has ultimately reduced women to a chattel by sex traffickers. As a way of buttressing the objectification of women, MacKinnon, (2006: 41), interrogates the “humanness” of women by posing the following question; “if women were humans, would we be cash-cropped, shipped from Thailand in containers into New Yorks brothel? Would we be



sexual and reproductive slaves....” Such was the degree of sexual objectification and the resultant powerlessness exemplified by patriarchy.

In the same vein Dunlop (2008) opines that powerlessness under patriarchy is the rational explanation of the sexual objectification of women. She argues that the reason women are sold as chattels is essentially because her gender has become sexualized thereby reinforcing male power and domination which is also sexualized. Dunlop (2008) added that the resultant power and gender inequality is at the heart of every society, where masculine dominance (patriarchy) has not been successfully challenged. Consequently MacKinnon (2006) attempts a revised definition of gender as a consequence of the eroticization of dominance and subordination. Mackinnon faults the whole process of gender socialization arguing that it perpetuates the objectification of women in sex trafficking in that social femaleness means attractiveness to the men, which in actual fact is sexual attractiveness. Mackinnon concludes that gender socialization was therefore a process through which women come to identify themselves as sexual beings, as beings that exist for men. It is important to note that the sexualization of male dominance has been attributed by various feminist scholars as the root cause of rape, battery, sexual harassment, pornography and most recently, trafficking for the purpose of prostitution in which case women usually constitute the object of exploitation (LeMoncheck, 1985; Walby,1990; Dunlop, 2008). This is essentially what patriarchy is all about. On the contrary, Nzeogwu, (2004) argues that from a patriarchal standpoint, when mothers engage in sexual relations with men outside their spouses then it compromises patriarchy. Using the Igbo of the South Eastern Nigeria, Nzeogwu argues that sexual autonomy by Igbo women as evidenced in their involvement in trans-marital

relationships was a clear example of compromised patriarchy. Hence Nzeogwu observed that pre-colonial Igbo society did not fit into the example of a typically patriarchal society as portrayed by some literature.

Scholars have also attempted categorization of patriarchy, stating that there are variants of it, which are dependent on the context in which it is manifested. For instance, Moghadam (2003) argues that patriarchal societies are pre capitalist formations, which historically existed in Europe, Asia and Africa. Moughadam (ibid) opines that there were variants of patriarchy in these regions but maintaining that residences and property were essentially through the male.

Similarly, Mann (1986) describes the trajectory of patriarchy historically and culturally. Describes a patriarchal society as one in which power is held by a male head of a household Mann further argues that there is a clear separation of private and public spheres. In the public sphere, Mann maintains that power was shared with other patriarchs according to the principle of stratification in that society, while in the private sphere, the patriarchs enjoyed arbitrary control over all junior males and women. Mann (1986) concludes that the trajectory of patriarchy was the erosion of the public versus private dichotomy by employment trends, emergence of a universal citizenship and the nation or state intervention in the family's welfare. These changes, the author maintains culminated into neo -patriarchy.

Hirchons (1984) posits that patriarchy is still different from classical patriarchy as it demands, that a senior man had control over everyone else, including younger men, while the women and children were subject to distinct forms of control and subordination. Adding that women in this context were viewed as property, Hirchons

(1984) reveals that the honour of the family in a classical patriarchal society was largely dependent on the honour of the women in that family. Consequently, virginity and good conduct were significant measures of positive control by the patriarchs in a family.

### **3.5 TRENDS IN TRAFFICKING FOR PROSTITUTION: A GLOBAL CONCERN**

Due to the subterranean nature of trafficking and prostitution, there is an exceeding difficulty in obtaining statistically precise number of those trafficked in different parts of the world. However, there are estimates by the United Nations and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) which suggests a rise in illicit trade. In 2002, the Expert Group Meeting organized by the United Nations in response to the upsurge in trafficking, it was disclosed that a staggering number of 700,000 are trafficked every year for sexual exploitation across borders and sold into modern slavery. Further more, the United Nations estimates that trafficking industry has increased dramatically due to its low risk and lucrative nature. Hence, the United Nations observed that over \$5 to \$7billion is realized every year as over 4million people are moved from one country to another. What makes trafficking lucrative according to the UN is that traffickers can make five to twenty times more money from a woman, than the case of drugs or arms trafficking. Incidentally, the main beneficiaries of this money are the syndicates that are involved in organizing the act of trafficking.

More recent information available discloses the in-human nature of the crime as well as its pervasiveness around the world. For instance, Maltzahn (2001) disclosed that over 50,000 women and children are trafficked each year into the United States, and

another 50,000 are trafficked into Europe for commercial sex work. A conservative account of people trafficked to other parts of the globe, especially Western Europe, The Middle East, Japan North America and Australia in the year 2000 include 250,000 person from South East Asia, 150,00 from South Asia, 100,000 from the former Soviet Union and Latin America, 75,000 from Eastern Europe, and 50,000 from Africa (Agbu,2003). Further more, Agbu, (2003) observes that 35% of those trafficked globally constitute children under the age of consent. Consequently, human trafficking has been described as a global problem and a modern form of slavery which threatens human existence and requires urgent global attention and intervention.

Of these numbers, women and children are the key target groups because of their unequal socio economic status and their lack of awareness of their legal rights (Onyejekwe, 2005). These vulnerabilities of women and children are also associated with the factors clearly elucidated by UNIFEM, (2001). They include:

- Development policies which promote tourism and patterns of development that depend on temporary migrant workers, particularly females;
- An expanding commercial sex industry with high monetary returns attractive to crime syndicates;
- Globalization and economic liberalization policies that results in relaxed controls and opened borders between countries which facilitate population mobility;
- Weak law enforcement mechanisms and measures to penalize offenders' exploitation by corrupt law enforcers and officials.

The intrinsic connection between trafficking and prostitution has been well documented (Barry, 1995; Jeffereys, 1997; Derks, 2000; Raymond, 2001). This is due to

the gendered nature of trafficking itself. Leidoholt (2004) however noted that trafficking could also be for other reasons such as domestic servitude, illegal and bonded labour, false adoption, organ harvesting and other criminal activities. Moreover, the Palermo protocol which came into force in December 2000 clearly states categorically what exploitation means- “Exploitation shall include at the minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others and or other forms of sexual slavery, servitude or the removal of organs”.

A recent research conducted by the University of North London’s Child and Women Abuse Studies Unit, revealed that six out of the ten women brought into London brothels have been trafficked from the Ukraine (Macan-Markar, 2001). The phenomenon of sex trafficking has therefore continued to pose a serious concern with respect to the sexual health of trafficked women especially in the era of HIV pandemic which is an inevitable consequence of this form of trans-border sexual transaction.

### 3.6 **TRAFFICKING AND HUMAN SMUGGLING:**

In December 2000, the United Nations convention against transnational crime, adopted a protocol to combat trafficking in persons, especially women and children. The Palermo protocol adopted the definition of trafficking as

*Recruitment, transportation, harboring, receipt of person by threat or use or force, or other forms of coercion, or abduction, or fraud or deception of the abuse of power of position of vulnerability or of giving or receiving payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include as a minimum, the exploitation of others or other forms of sexual exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced abduction or services, slavery practices similar to slavery servitude or the removal of organs*

*(UNICRI/UNIDOC, 2003:11)*

On the other hand, human smuggling is defined by the UN Protocol Against Human Smuggling of Migrants as the procurement, in order to obtain directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefits of illegal entry of a person into a State party of which the person is not a national or permanent resident.

The main distinction between human trafficking and human smuggling lies in the purpose of the movement of people: the purpose of smuggling is the illegal border crossing whereas the aim of trafficking is the exploitation of persons (Tyldum, Tveit and Brunovski, 2005) In other words, attempt to prevent trafficking is primarily the concern about the protection of States against illegal migration while anti-trafficking work is primarily concerned with the protection of individual person against exploitation and abuse (EC,2004). The existence of a trafficked person potentially poses a challenge as to how to identify the victims either as being trafficked for sexual exploitation or smuggled in illegally across national borders. Tyldum, Tveit and Brunovski, (2005) disclosed that even the victims themselves may not even know the ultimate purpose for which they are being moved. They added that at the point of border crossing, victims of trafficking commonly believe that they are smuggled into the country to earn money under non-exploitative condition only to learn that they have been deceived.

The attention being given to distinguishing the concepts of trafficking from human smuggling is considered a political tool by most nations to ensure a degree of sovereignty by putting in place stringent immigration rules. For instance, O'Connel and Davidson (2005) posits that the blurring of trafficking and human smuggling has being

reinforced by governments' interest in curtailing immigration flow into their nations as though they were measure towards protecting human rights.

### **3.7 HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND PROSTITUTION:**

Trafficking is traditionally associated with prostitution (Derks, 2000). There have been series of campaigns against this protocol by the pro-sex workers activists, who conceive sex work as labour (Hoschild, 1983; Chapkins, 1997; Dozoema,2000). Commercial sex-work is regarded as prostitution by the anti-sex work activists. The former are agitating for a review of the United Nations convention on trafficking. Miriam (2005) observes that this apparent opposition is based on the argument of the pro-sex work activists that not all prostitution is forced, rather some are voluntary. She also states that pro- sex work activists view sex as work or legitimate labour. Commercial sex is therefore regarded as a "normal" outcome of global economic change. Tyldum, Tveit and Brunovski, 2005:16, distinguished three main fronts or positions of prostitutions as they relate to women trafficking. The first group consists of the abolitionists which oppose all forms of prostitutions. This group is supported b the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW). The second group argues that prostitution could be distinguished between "free" prostitution and trafficked/forced prostitution. This position is now prominent in the international human rights discourse, and it is enforced by the Global Alliance Against Trafficking (GATW). The last category perceives the debates on sex trafficking as diversionary and an attempt to ignore the human rights of sex workers. The Network of Sex Work Project (NSWP) supports this position. The Abolitionist view prostitution as inherently exploitative and therefore argues that migrant women are

subjected to this form of explanation on this basis. The opposite side of the coin is the other debate as posited by Doezema, (2002) who observes that trafficking for the purpose of sexual transaction was highly exaggerated by the Abolitionist to eradicate all forms of prostitution. Dozoema,(2002) continued that all prostitution are not inherently exploitative but rather the condition under which it is performed would determine if the prostitution is exploitative. Dozoema, 2002 advocates for a decriminalization of prostitution and that all forms of stigmatization against prostitution must be eradicated in order to protect the rights of those involved in sex work.

Similarly, there was also an attempt to justify the earlier position held by Dozoema, above that most of those who are involved in prostitution are not simply passive and defenseless as it is being portrayed in literature but rather most of these women are rational actors, making decisions that they consider profitable to them (Vocks and Nijboer, 2000). Furthermore, this perspective suggests that two critical factors make women get involved in prostitution despite the risk of trafficking in Netherlands, the study area of this research. They include among others, strong pressures to attain culturally defined goals by having monetary success which may serve to reduce their disadvantaged position and the social bond in the family. They added that families could play a role to reduce such risk taking behaviour when they play supportive roles economically and emotionally. Consequently, based on the study in Netherlands as highlighted above by Vocks and Nijboer (2000), these victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation or international prostitution based on their recruitment were identified;

- 1) Kidnapped or sold victims- those who never had a chance to make decision on their own but had been kidnapped by a partner or friend and in most cases were



involved in prostitution in their home countries. These victims are usually from families where ties are weak.

- 2) Deceived women-those who are given false information with respect to the nature of their employment that before leaving their home countries. These women are usually in a financial quagmire which gives a false impression of Western societies as an ultimate destination were these victims' entire aspirations to achieve financial fortune can be actualized.
- 3) Exploited women-those in this category are women who work in sex industries in Europe but had insufficient idea of the circumstances under which they were expected to work. Most of these women come from dysfunctional families no strong family ties with little or no education. Some of them also have previous experience in prostitution.

Faris, (2002) agrees that some of these women who have been trafficked to Europe as prostitutes know that they are going to work as commercial sex workers. What they do not know is the degree of violence, which they were going to encounter, he concludes. This violence according to (Loconto, 2002) ranged from the use of force to severe beating and, in some cases, killing. Augustin (2000) however maintained that the concept of "prostitution" erases the diversity of the sex industry which includes other phenomena as sex shops, soap bubbles massages dancing shows in bars and so on. Hence the overemphasis being placed on trafficking for the purpose of engaging transactional sex may not adequately capture the other aspects of "prostitution" as literature tends to portray it. Perhaps an argument which cannot be discountenanced is the position held by some feminist scholars who

consider prostitution as an inevitable outcome of patriarchy were the bodies of women are eroticized, sexualized and commoditized as observed in literature which have been cited earlier.

### **3.8 EXPLANATION ON THE CAUSES OF TRAFFICKING AND INTERNATIONAL PROSTITUTION**

Several factors have been explored as the causes of trafficking and international prostitution. These include family disintegration, feminization of poverty, and feminization of migration, globalization, and patriarchy.

- a) **Family Disintegration:** There have been series of studies across cultures that have linked family trafficking prevalence to abusive and seriously dysfunctional families. In a study carried out by Alexandra and Lazaouri (2003) in Romania, findings revealed that the profile of vulnerable girls to trafficking, where those who come from abusive family environment associated with series of violence and neglect. In the United States, child victims of trafficking that were studied revealed that inadequate safety nets, insufficient family bond and inability to cater for the economic needs of the children (Duncan, 2004).
- b) **Gender:** Trafficking for the purpose of international prostitution is attributed to the gender relations. Indeed, social constructions of gender relations and sexuality of the female tend to make them vulnerable to being sexually exploited. Majority of those who are trafficked are women and girl. Hence, trafficking for the purpose of international prostitution is generally viewed as a highly gendered transaction (Hughes, 1999; Williams and Masika, 2002: 7; Bamgbose, 2005). Trafficking and trans-border sexual transactions therefore represents an accurate picture of the

disadvantaged position of women in most societies of the world, wherein their bodies are merely seen as commodities or properties to be sold and bought in a male dominated society. Some feminists have used the concept of patriarchy as the root cause of trafficking and international prostitution and a manifestation of patriarchal dominance. Even in matriarchal societies where women were considered to enjoy privileged access to critical resources such as property children and money, the advent of urbanization and modernization has significantly reduced the status of women in these societies (Lisborg, 1988).

- c) **Feminization of Poverty:** Economic recession and insecurity make women more vulnerable to poverty in comparison to her male counterparts. This has led to what is generally referred to as the feminization of poverty (Aina, 1996; IOM, 2002). Available data suggest that 70% of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty are women (UNDP, 1995: 4). More recently, another report indicates that majority of the 1.5 billion people who live on less than one dollar a day are women. The number of such women have continued to soar as the decade roll past. It can therefore be said that poverty has a feminine face. Feminization of poverty has been largely attributed as the main cause of prostitution related migration among women in Asia and Africa countries. Limited economic opportunities of women make them dependent especially in the face of economic environmental hostilities. This dependence creates vulnerability among the women
- d) **Feminization of Migration:** An increasing number of women are migrating in the past decade thereby debunking traditional migration myths about men's dominance in migration. Women have been previously described to migrate

mostly for marriage related reasons, but recently, women have been discovered to also migrate on their own (Martins, 2003). This is a certainly a due to the fact that in traditional economies that require some forms of migration as was the case in some West African countries and in some parts of Northern Nigeria, migration was essentially male dominated (Makinwa –Adebusoye, 1993). Indeed even in sedentary agricultural societies in Africa, supplementary income was usually sought by male agriculturist who migrated into plantations to cultivate cocoa and coffee as in West Africa countries (Makinwa-Adebusoye, 1993). The increased participation of women in the hitherto gendered labour force has orchestrated a high demand for people in the domestic arena in the areas of children and elderly care, housekeeping and so on (Martins, 2003). This situation has further created less access of women migrants to formal employment outside their homes thereby mediating an environment for vulnerability to international prostitution.

- e) **Global Demand:** The demand created by western economy in which cheap and exploitative labour is in great demand has necessitated the rise in the incidence of trafficking and sexual exploitation otherwise known as prostitution. Many studies have attributed this factor as the root cause of trafficking and international prostitution (IOM, 2001; Hughes and Denisowa, 2002). These argue that there is currently a demand of women in the sex industry largely due to the need for their services as big cities in the West tolerate prostitution. For instance, in Italy, Netherlands, prostitution is legalized and has been decriminalized. Similarly, Adepoju (2004:6) argues that child trafficking in the region is especially within Sub Saharan Africa is a demand –driven phenomena, the demand in the labour

market for children and sex trade coupled with abundant supply of children from poor families. There appears to be consensus that trafficking for the purpose of international sex-trade is greatly indicative of the gap between the rich and the poor countries, the lack of opportunities for young people and the devalued position of women which make them particularly vulnerable to their exploitation in the sex industry (Musaccio, 2004). Furthermore, the lack of prospects in countries of origin of these trafficked women including the pain of poverty and social exclusion has further heightened vulnerability of these women especially in the light of perceived opportunities in more developed economies of the world. Moreover, this accounts for the categorization of countries as “sending countries” and “destination countries” (Musaccio, 2004).

Another side of the coin to the argument above that sexual service is highly demanded as a result of globalization is the discovery by Anderson and O’Connell Davidson (2003) in a cross cultural study carried out to ascertain if the demand for prostitute in destination countries mediated trafficking into such countries. After a thorough and comprehensive study, they observed that beyond the demand for sexual service, many other factors within the destination countries which include social, cultural, historical determined demand. They argue that in most cases, the supply or availability of these women is what goes on to generate demands rather than the demand generating supply (Anderson and O’Connell Davidson. 2003).

### **3.9 THE NIGERIAN SITUATION**

Statistics of Nigerian involvement in trafficking vary widely. Reports by the Nigerian Police Force and Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication (WOTCLEF) disclosed that since March 1999 and an April 2000, an estimated number of 1226 women trafficked outside Nigeria were deported from various countries. This number excluded those who died, those who were maimed, those who sneaked back into the country as were as those stranded on the streets of Europe and Asia (Daily Times, 2001). In 2000, the Saudi Arabian government registered their displeasure over the influx of Nigerians into the countries for the purpose of transactional sex trade (National Concord, 2000).

Although many of the women usually repatriated are trafficked to Europe; Holland, Belgium, France with Italy being the favorite of those from the South -South, reports from WOTCLEF also disclosed that a large number of women have been trafficked to the Arab World and far East and lured into prostitution. Nigeria is currently been described as a leading country in human trafficking with UNICEF classifying her as a leading country of origin (UNICEF, 2005). Despite the fact that prostitution has always existed in Nigeria the phenomena of trafficking for the purpose of international prostitution is relatively recent (NPC/UNICEF, 2001; Onyeonoru, 2003). The preferred destination of those involved in sex trafficking is Italy for those trafficked victims from Edo State, a state in the Southern part of Nigeria (Aghatise, 2002; Onyeonoru, 2003 Ahatise, 2004). Furthermore, the capital of Edo State, metropolitan Benin City is considered by many reports on trafficking as a major market of cross border commercial sex work (Orubuloye, 1994; NPC/UNICEF, 2001). In a more derogatory manner, Benin

City is now being dubbed as the sex capital of Nigeria (Orubuloye, 1994; Onyeonoru, 2003).

High rate of unemployment among the youth and rising level of poverty has been attributed as a crucial factor in explaining the root causes of international sex trading in Nigeria (Germano, 2001; Aghatise, 2002). This led to a mass exodus of youths to Europe with an intention of seeking greener pasture. Traffickers took advantage of the situation and began to deceive young women and girls into Italy, one of these European countries (International Organisation for Migration, 1996).

Nigeria is a signatory to a number of International Conventions and Protocols related to human rights, trafficking and prostitution. At the Federal level, Nigeria has two codes of criminal law. They are the criminal codes governing the South of Nigeria of which the current study area is a part and the penal codes which govern the Northern States. Relevant sections of the criminal codes which address specifically trafficking for the purpose of trans-border sexual transaction, includes Section 222A, 223,224,225A227 365 and 369 and Section 271-281 of the penal code (UNICRI/UNDOC,2003).

Furthermore, the 1999 Federal constitution has provisions which prohibit slavery and sexual exploitation especially in Section 34. Recently, the *Trafficking in persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act* was passed into law on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 2003. The act which was signed into law by the immediate past President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo established a National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP) which was saddled with the responsibility of enforcing laws against trafficking. This was a response to the growing concern of Nigerians involvement in organized crime especially trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Nigeria is also a signatory to many International Conventions. Some of these Conventions have been domesticated. Some of them include:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948
- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW, 1979.
- Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of Prostitution of Other, 1949.
- African Charter on Human and People's Rights, 1981
- International Labour Organisation Convention on Minimum age on Forced Labour, 1999.
- Convention of Rights of Child, 1989.
- United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, 2000.

This suggests Nigeria has put adequate legal provisions in place to protect women's rights with regards to trafficking and international prostitution, but the implementation and enforcement remain a controversial matter altogether.

### **3.10 ORIGIN AND TRENDS OF TRAFFICKING AND INTERNATIONAL PROSTITUTION IN EDO**

Sex work or prostitution is known as "*igbeagha*" in Benin language (Adeshina, 2006). There are different perspectives that the phenomena of trafficking and international prostitution in Benin City can be traced back to the early 80's when the Italian construction company referred to as Dunmez came into Benin (Oyeonouru, 2003). The strategic location of Benin City as a nodal town in Nigeria further heightened the vulnerability of young ladies in the City to local prostitution. Onyenouru (2003)



maintains that that some of the Benin girls married these Italians who in return built houses for these young girls and showered them with the American dollar which at the time exchanged for less than one Nigeria Naira. The neo liberal economic reforms which culminated in the devaluation of the naira against the American dollar served as a great impetus in making sex industry a big deal in Benin City (Aghatise, 2002). It was further noted that this Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), occasioned by this neo-liberal reforms in the 1980's marked the beginning of brain drain for the educated and skilled populace of the state, and the beginning of trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual transaction and an a concomitant upsurge in the rate of illegal migration.

Another perspective attributes the history of sex trafficking among the Benin as exclusively to the period of deep socio-economic hardship in Nigeria occasioned by the Structural Adjustmnt Programme (SAP). This period was described as the collapse of fundamental core values which also witnessed a rise in social problems of diverse magnitude and intensity, such as unemployment, corruption, retrenchment hunger and desolation (Adesina, 2006). It was at this period that several people adopted various strategies for survival. Guest (2004) observes that the cross border movement began when Nigerian women (mostly from Benin extraction) began to travel to Italy to work in tomatoes field in search for livelihood. After these women experienced life in Europe and there was a very good reason for them to go back to Italy in the face of the economic downturn which the nation experienced during the Structural adjustment era. These migrant women's action was based on their presupposed familiarity with the terrain and their discovery that they could make more money from sex work in Italy and then change their family fortune all at once, then come back home and live honourably.

Adesina (2006) argued that those who query the question the localization and pervasiveness of international prostitution among the Edos should have observe that there was a major shift in the values of the nation at time, since ill-gotten wealth became idolized, with a rise in drug peddling, decayed social infrastructures, widespread unemployment, institutional corruption and all forms of child abuse became the order of the day. She added that this era also coincided with the emergence of the prosperity message in some Pentecostal and spiritual churches that played significant roles in justifying the new crave for wealth at any cost.

Furthermore Adesina's write up, "*Between Culture and Poverty, the Queen Mother Phenomenon*", observed that, there was indeed in pre-colonial Benin Empire, several pointers to the existence and perhaps significant prevalence of local prostitution contrary to opinions held by certain scholars like Iyi -Eweka (2003). Recounting the story of the historic emergence of Queen Idia, the Iyioba, in the history of Benin, whose brass mask was eventually used as a symbol of the Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in 1977, Adesina (2006) observed that as a result of prevailing marital infidelity even among the ruling class and a pervasive belief system that women, (Benin women) were not to be vouched for when it had to do with sexual relation, resulted in a heroic fight to preserve Oba Esigie, her only son's royal throne from alleged conspirators. These conspirators and political saboteurs, in the royal court as Adesina disclosed, was headed by the then Oliha of the kingdom, against the incumbent Oba, was as a result of extramarital adventure in the royal courts. In conclusion, Adesina (2006) observed in line with many other Benin scholars, that despite the contentious literature that depicts a

Benin man as lecherous, extant literature about pre- colonial Benin society is suggestive that the Benin culture is considerably intolerant of sexual recklessness.

Similarly, poverty has been attributed as the leading cause of trafficking and a strong push factor in women trafficking and international prostitution (Isiugo-Abanihe and Odiagbe, 1998, Orubuloye *et al.* 1999; Onyeonoru, 2001). The pervasiveness of sex trafficking among the women of Benin extraction has become worrisome especially in the face of parents involvement in trafficking their female children (Ndaiye, 1999; Onyenouru, 2003). Available data suggest that in Italy alone, about 20,000 Benin girls are involved in sex work while about 3,000 of these girls re in Turin, a city in Italy (NPC/UNICEF; 2001 Luda, 2003). In recent times, Benin City has become synonymous with international sexual transaction (Orubuloye, *et al.*, 1994; NPC/UNICEF, 2001, WHARC, 2002; Onyenouru, 2003; UNDOC/UNICRI, 2003; Skogeth, 2006). Furthermore, in a comprehensive research carried out in Benin City, the study observed that virtually all the law enforcement agents interviewed, disclosed that the major source of victims trafficked to Italy in Edo State were Benin. They however debunked the claims that all trafficked victims were all Benin, but rather alluded to the presence of a cartel in Benin City which facilitates illegal traveling arrangements for potential trafficked victims. Virtually all law enforcement agencies in Nigeria agree that the Benin predominate in illegal migration for the purpose of prostitution in Europe (UNICEF, 2005).

Other factors identified as push factors within the Benin society include polygyny, low status of women, the system of primogeniture which creates social insecurity for

widowhood practices and traditional religious institutions that have facilitated trafficking (Onyeonoru, 2003; Aghatise, 2004).

### **3.11 WOMEN TRAFFICKING AND PROSTITUTION**

While it has been observed that global interest in human trafficking and sex trafficking peaked for about two centuries now (Kempadoo, 2005), this is based on earliest position taken by the Abolitionist of slavery and every systems of bonded or indentured labour, that necessitated the activism which surrounded the discourse, that trafficking as a phenomenon, is typically gendered and racialized. Hence the interest in the phenomenon has continued to generate global concern. The defunct League of Nations Convention in 1929 just like the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in persons and of the Exploitation of others underscored the inherent evil associated with trafficking for the purpose of international prostitution (Samarasinghe, 2007).

In evaluating the global trend in trafficking activities all over the world, Kempadoo (2005) argued that the interest in trafficking waned globally, for a while, but was greatly resuscitated in the Vietnam War where feminists began to highlight the predominance of sex tourism, militarized prostitution and the attendant development of sex industries. By the beginning of the twenty first century, the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons especially women and children shifted focus towards criminalization and illegal migration (Kempadoo, 2005). Be that as it may, available data suggest that illegal trafficking usually involved some degree of coercion or even deception by traffickers. For example, the Human Rights Watch (2001)

likens the phenomenon to slave-like practices. Even the studies conducted in Benin City on human trafficking for the purpose of sexual transactions have established significant forms of coercions and deception (UNICRI/UNDOC, 2003). Furthermore, Malthazan (2001) discloses that women are sold like commodities, many times over, thereby increasing the profits realized by traffickers. He further reveals that less risk involved in sexual trafficking of women and the outrageous profits associated with sex- trafficking has continued to make trafficking for sexual exploitation more attractive to human traffickers than illegal drugs or arms transactions.

Another perspective to the phenomena of trafficking and international prostitution highlighted is the issue of consent. Bhabha (2005) observed that the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime had two distinct protocols, the Trafficking Protocol which came into force in December, 2003, and the Smuggling Protocol which came into force in January, 2008. Since our focus is essentially on the phenomena of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, then not much attention would be paid to the protocol on smuggling.

Generally there is a paucity of accurate data on trends and magnitude of human trafficking around the world. Due to the clandestine nature of trafficking, volumes of women trafficked in Nigeria for the purpose of international prostitution is very limited. Several studies suggest that Nigerian women make up the largest percentage of illegally trafficked workers in Italy. Loconto, (2002) discloses that in Italy, between 1994 and 1998 alone, about 116 Nigerian girls were killed in sex-related violence.

Young women, who are potential victims of sex-trafficking, are usually recruited by organized syndicates, which have both local and international network (Giwa -Osagie,

1999). She states these syndicates, through some of the known family members, enticed the victims with material benefits of traveling 'abroad'. She also reveals that desperate parents have sold property to enable their children travel to Europe for prostitution. The traffickers usually procured traveling documents for these women, which are usually confiscated as soon as the victims arrived at their destinations (Parrandang, 1999). This was to ensure compliance to the directives of the traffickers and the *madams* (Onosode, 1999). He explains that the *madams* are like the slave owners, to whom the trafficked women are supposed to hand virtually all their earnings from prostitution.

There is a consensus among researchers that the amount of money, which the trafficked victims are required to remit to their *madams*, is usually outrageous. This is further exacerbated by the oath of compliance and secrecy, which the victims have been previously subjected to. Abhulimen (1999) discloses that pubic hair, fingers or toe-nails of trafficked victims were used by traffickers for rituals or '*juju*', prior to their departure from Nigeria. Studies have also revealed that due to the involvement of rituals in trafficking and international sex slavery among the *Benin*, disclosing the identities of the traffickers and the *ritualists* by victims is usually very difficult (UNICRI/UNODC, 2003).

The traffickers, according to the UNICRI/UNODC (2003), comprise specialized groups. While one group dealt with issues of recruitment, another group dealt with the procurement of traveling documents, and one other group handled the ritual processes. The study further reveals that while some of the traffickers had loose net-works, other trafficking syndicate had formidable and well organized networks. Most of these networks of traffickers cut across international boundaries, with membership drawn from

highly placed indigenes of Benin and some prominent Nigerians. The study concludes that most of the people charged with human trafficking in Benin City, were not often prosecuted due to lack of evidences.

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# **CHAPTER FOUR**

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In undertaking a theoretical analysis with respect to changing family structure and the phenomenon of women trafficking, the political economic theory, which is widely adopted by most social theorists in explaining social change in the African context, is inadequate (Bujra, 1986; Potash, 1989). Also, Sacks' (1977) discussions on the variability of women status within the family opens up possibilities of useful analyses of the complex variations in social roles and relationships and their relevance to specific contexts. This form of theoretical perspective will erode pre-existing temptation of viewing women as passive agents reacting in similar ways to macro forces like colonialism, capitalism, globalization and modernization. Furthermore, middle range theories such as Cadwell's wealth flows theory and Robert King Merton's Anomie theory have been engaged to explore the various aspects of the phenomenon of sex-trafficking and finally two gender based theories; radical feminism and unified gender analysis model. Finally, the political economic theory will be adopted along side with other theories so as to capture the various factors at the micro level factors are definitely impacting on women's economic decisions, but at different levels and degrees.

### **4.2 POLITICAL ECONOMY THEORY**

The political economy theory is a modification of Marxist analysis of poverty and unequal access to means of production in human societies. The crux of the argument lies



in the formation of capital which is an essential aspect to the accumulation of wealth in any economy. Hence this theory hinges on the proposition that poverty and underdevelopment are inevitable outcomes of unequal terms of trade as depicted in a global world of unequal social relations to capital and other means of production.

Capital as Marx (1976) notes, highlights the economic law of motion of modern societies. The economic law of motion, he likened to the physical law that governs the earth's motion. Marx (1976) observes that the capitalist mode of production and the relations of that production, produce an intercourse that corresponds to it, that is capitalism. He added that the mechanism of capitalist production is the mechanism of production, wherein capitalists employing numerous wage workers, take possession of all of the products produced by the labor of workers and in return, gave them a wage. He concluded that a society where such a mechanism has come to be the dominant power, is a society where the capitalist mode of production prevails or simply put: a capitalist society. Consequently he posited:

*In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or – this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms – with the property relations within the framework of which*

*they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure.*

Hence Aina (1985) considers capital as the foundation of the Marxists science of economy. Also crucial to the theory of political economy is the relatedness of the economy of any nation to the political attitude in that nation. In other words, the political economy theory treats economics as an extension of politics and relations of production as they influence production, distribution, consumption of goods and services as well as the political management of these economic variables and functions (Inter Pares, 2004).

The utility of differentiating between traditional economics scope and the political economic theory cannot be over-emphasized. While the traditional economics treat people and society as functions of economics, the political economy theory holds that economics is a function of people and their societies influenced by the particulars of social and political relationships and structures of power. (Inter Pares, 2004). Marx proposes a direct relationship between relations of production and forces of production, which he observed determines the mode of production. Furthermore he posits that the modes of production and people's access to means of production directly affect the social structure.

For Marx, the emergence of capitalism culminated in the categorization of the family into the private sphere, which ultimately led to alterations in the family roles. Traditional Marxists identifies private property accumulation as a necessary precondition that culminates in alteration of family structures, which they argue, laid the basis for sexual inequality. Sacks (1974) links the changes in family structure to economic

changes, describing private property ownership to include cultivated lands and domesticated animals in an agrarian society. Household property were owned by women since matriarchy was the existing rule. In support of the thesis by Sacks (1974) on sexual inequality, Engels (1972) reveals that there was a historical defeat of the female sex when the descent rule changed in favour of men in order to enable them transmit their property to their own “blood”, Engels further added that that was the beginning of female oppression in marriage, which changed family structures from a communal family to essentially nuclear families.

Similarly, Wallerstein in his contribution to the nature of emergent social structure occasioned by economic relations argues that the development of capitalism has culminated in what he referred to as to the development of a world system (cited in Haralambos and Holborn, 2004). The capitalist economy has created an international economy which he disclosed is based on exploitation of some areas or region by the other areas of the globe. The world system theory identifies core areas and the peripheral areas, which are constituted essentially as a result of the political superstructure in place. Consequently, the more powerful countries or the core countries that are perceived as economically viable and therefore more superior, exploit the peripheral societies otherwise perceived as the less developed economies. The periphery or the peripheral areas are those areas that provide the raw materials to the core and are heavily exploited by it (Ritzer, 2000). In contemporary times, capitalism is the basis which accelerates the growth and development of world –economy which Wallerstein (1974) describes as capitalism that is more potent than the political domination or military supremacy which characterized previous eras. The world-system theory concludes by stating that capitalism

which ultimately culminates in a world-economy, is predicated and enabled by some factors such as the collapse of feudalistic system of government; geographical expansions through colonization; development of different labor control zones and the development of core states which later metamorphosed into core states of capitalist world-economic system.

The world system theory explains the demand being orchestrated by the core capitalist states which are the developed economies in the West which includes Europe, the United States and those countries which constitute the Scandinavian countries as they pull both human and material resources from the peripheral countries. These countries have continued to thrive on human and economic raw materials from the peripheral countries of those that constitute the global South or otherwise known as the third world countries. The features of these countries include high rates of unemployment, an inevitable outcome of a deregulated economy, increased burden of government debts resulting in inability to provide its citizenry with the basic social amenities. Hence Sassen, (2002:257) remarked that the growing despondency of the government and the whole economies of the global South has “promoted and enabled the proliferation, survival and profit making of activities that involve migration and trafficking of poor women”

There are evidences which affirm that poverty in these countries of the global South which Wallestien (1974) referred to as the peripheral states, have a gendered component. In other words within the discourse of a structurally adjusted economy and the attendant consequence of increased poverty, women are usually more affected than their male counterparts. This perhaps led to the emergence of the term “feminization of

poverty” by the 70s by Diana Pearce (Thibos, Lavin Loucks and Martins, 2007). Feminization of poverty refers to the concentration of poverty among women particularly female-headed households (Fukunda-Parr, 1999). Fukunda-parr (1999) added that studies however show that the term also encompasses other categories of women as well as children. Feminized poverty is seen as a lived reality which extends beyond the lack of income.

Although feminized poverty presupposes women’s inability to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter, it implies more inclusively, the absence of choice, the denial of opportunity and the inability to achieve life goals (Thibos, Lavin Loucks and Martins, 2007). Available data indicate that poverty is becoming increasingly feminized. For instance the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference for Women in Beijing in September, 1995 disclosed that over a billion people in the world today are women who are living in a deplorable state of poverty especially in the less developed world (United Nation, 1996). This growing visibility of women’s poverty according to Moghadam (2005) can be attributed to four main factors; the increase in female headed households; the neo liberal economic policies including structural adjustments and the post socialists market transitions and finally, the intra-household inequalities manifested in the bias against women and the girl child.

Among the Benin of Southern Nigeria, available literature on the vulnerability of the women and girls of this extraction to trafficking and international sex trade is closely linked with the last two factors identified by Moughadam: neo liberal policies as well as the intra-household gender inequalities, as significant factors leading to women’s vulnerability to being trafficked (WHARC,2002; Onyeonoru, 2003). Women’s lack of

property rights in land or access to employment, early marriages, incomplete education, lack of rights in divorce and lower economic wages are critical factors that tend to perpetuate intra-household gender inequality which has further led to increased feminized poverty (Moughadam, 2005). The case is exactly the same with respect to the experiences of many Benin women and girls, as have been observed earlier in the study.

A similarly important aspect of the political economy is the discussion on the concept of globalization as an important economic process, impacting on the sex industries, household structures and the whole process involved in migration. While Wallerstein gave preconditions that will continue to accelerate economic world system development through the process of capitalism, the increase in technology and communication was not given adequate emphasis. This is one of the crucial factors that has fostered the growth of economic global activities and has made the world a global village.

Globalisation also refers to a world in which in which societies, culture, politics and economies have in some sense come closer together (Kiely, 1998:3). According to Giddens (1999:4) globalisation is the “intensification of world wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happening are shaped by events happening miles away and vice versa.” Globalisation is also described as a force which rides on the back of earlier waves of global exploitation, including European colonization spanning the previous 500 years, but later re-emerged with the coalitions of these three institutions- the General Assembly on Tariffs and Trade, (GATT), the International Monetary Fund(IMF) and the World Bank (Harwthornes, 2004). Globalisation benefits have been viewed from two broad perspectives, consequent upon its emergence; that it

would facilitate a catch up development for the developing economies and the other contending view is that globalization would further accentuate the underdevelopment of less developed economies. Globalisation is also closely linked with the development of new technologies of communication. The development of satellite televisions and information technologies are critical elements in the emergence of what has been described a global culture culminating in new social order.

In the same vein, Lisborg, (1998) described globalization as a process by which global exchange of commodities, services, capital and people interact because of the possibility of connection are becoming increasing manifold quick and efficient. Extant literature reveals that in the past few decades, movements across national border have been on the increase. So also the links and degree of interconnectedness between economies of both source and destination countries of trafficked victims have continued to intensify (Tyldum, Tviet and Brunoskivis, 2005). This upsurge is attributed to globalization which has fostered improvement in transportation facilities, communication through internet and cellular phone, which enable potential migrants to be well aware of economic opportunities outside their localities. In recent literature, forced migration which includes the phenomenon of trafficking has been attributed to be a major outcome of globalization. Hence Harris (1995) describes the arrival of an integrated world economy as one that has a profound effect on the socio-political structures. Harris argued that the consequence of this integration was that world interest and universal morality are struggling to be reborn.

Economic inequality has continued to trigger migration as people generally seek to leave poor countries or less developing economies, to a more prosperous or developed

economy. Hence Voks and Njiber (2000) posited that television movies, billboard, advertisement and tourism are avenues which portray the situation of victims in their own countries as poor and paint an unrealistic picture of the West about living and working in these Western nations.

Another account in support of globalization as it affects trafficking was expressed by Martins (2003) who posited that for forced migration or trafficking to occur, three factors must be present: demand/pull from receiving counties; supply /push from source countries and network to link the supply with the demand. He added that this explained the variation in pull factors in different places while the existing networks are usually family or community based, as migrants usually go to places where they already have relatives. He added that recruiters or agencies could also serve as a network. Perhaps an important aspect of the globalization is espoused by Sassen (2002) who situates the discourse of sex trafficking within the globalization paradigm. Sassen (2002) consider the phenomena of trafficking and international prostitution as a gendered process of contemporary globalization. She argues that a crusade against international prostitution was indeed a refusal to appreciate the wider “social-moral” context in which these phenomena occur. She added that that the occurrence and pervasiveness of sex trafficking was an indicator of the “feminization for survival” of highly vulnerable migrant women (Sassen, 2002:274).

Feminists also within the globalization paradigm argue that hegemonic masculinity has been glamorizing the “international” space and feminized the domestic life (Hooper 2000:67-68). Hooper adds that it is imperative to have a good understanding of the intersections between hegemonic masculinities in the constitution of governance at



the global, national, state, community levels in order to be able to adequately give analysis of sex trafficking. In conclusion, Hooper (2000) observe that norms of hegemonic masculinities have contributed to the feminizing of sex trafficking and has also reinforced primordial discourse on the public/ private dichotomy, while muting the effects of globalization on the women and the overall political economy.

One of the strength of the political economy theory is its ability to explain global economic processes underlining social life of a society (Fajemilehin, 2000). It also captures the commitment to materialism and the institutionalization of corruption (Aluko, 2001). This has ultimately culminated in the shift of value system and a drastic change in traditional moral order. Hence, Oloruntimehin (1995) observed that there was an alteration in the value system unlike what obtained in the past. Hence values founded on honesty, hard work, trust and good name is now tilted towards dishonesty, huge profits for little work, distrust and the acquisition of wealth at the expense of good name, integrity and reputation.

The political-economic theory has been used severally in explaining the change in the family and its involvement in the trafficking for the purpose of prostitution (Odiagbe, 1998; WHARC, 2002; Bamgbose, 2005). For example, the rise of trafficking and international prostitution has been linked to the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) adopted by the government in order to restructure the economy (Aghatise, 2002). The mass retrenchment, employment embargo, freezing of public service salary and the devaluation of the domestic currency, coupled with the rise in inflation, all had delirious effects on family structures in Nigeria (Oyediran and Odusola, 2004). They argue that the

poverty level in Nigeria rose with SAP and women and children were more affected due to the gendered orientation of poverty in Nigeria.

Furthermore, Benin City can be described a civil service town. This is due to the vast number of government *parastatals* in the city. Although Edo State is part of the oil producing areas in Nigeria, the benefits of oil revenue have not made any visible impact on its economy. Rather, in *Gelegele*, one of the oil producing communities in Edo state, gas flaring resulting in environmental pollution is common feature (Omorodion, 2004). Describing the detrimental effects on the health of women, Omorodion argues that in the event of unskilled job opportunities presented by these multinational companies, men were usually the major beneficiaries. Thus, the author concluded that the socio-economic predicament of women has continually left them at the lower rung of the society.

The relevance of this model to this study is that it captures the political and economic environment in which the family is located. It takes cognizance of macro policies like liberalization, globalization and the colonial histories of most African nations of which Nigeria is an integral part. Also important is the ready market which the global economic forces which have placed on economies in transition. The high demand for prostitutes by these developed nations has being identified as a major factor perpetuating the phenomenon of trans-border sexual transaction. However, this study views this theory has not sufficiently addressed why the phenomena of trafficking and prostitution are endemic among the *Benin*. There is therefore the need to complement this macro level analysis with middle range theories and micro theories in order to capture other dynamics within the family and the Benin community. These are the wealth flows theory as posited by Cadwell, the anomie theory and lastly the radical feminist theory.

### **4.3 WEALTH FLOWS THEORY**

Wealth flows theory proposes a direct link between family structure and female fertility decisions which has a direct implication on the structures of families (Cadwell, 1976). The theory posits that there are two types of family structure which differed essentially on the basis of wealth flows among them. In the traditional societies, net wealth flows are primarily upwards from younger to older generations and individual interests are subjugated under corporate interests. On the other hand, in more developed economies, the wealth flows downwards as parents are expected to provide for children's well being.

Furthermore, the theory proposes that economic decisions in all societies are economically rational and are usually responses to familial wealth flows. Consequently, in families with high net upward wealth flow, there is a proclivity to have many children, since children are perceived as wealth and security in old age. The reverse is the case with a net downward wealth flow, since children are usually very few. Hence changes in the family structures are direct function of these upward and downward wealth flows. Cadwell (1980) observed that changes in the values of traditional societies through formal education brought individualistic values to the fore, thereby producing downward wealth flows, which is characteristic of developed nations.

The importance of Cadwell's theory lies in the explanation provided about the emotional attachments and cultural values placed on children in various societies. Wealth in this context was defined as "all money goods service and guarantees that one person provides to another" (Cadwell. 1982). This theory also has implication on status and

political position as well as material wealth and its transfer across life course between generations. Cadwell (1982) concluded that values system regarding support in old age and the relationships between the individual and the larger family are principal determinants of interfamilial wealth flows.

The relevance of this theory to this study is its utility in explaining certain cultural factors that are synonymous with the Benin family. These include the value placed on polygynous marriages and the number of children and male-child preference, all of which can be attributed to the perception of children as principal avenues of old age security. Therefore, it is believed that the more the number of children, the more financial and emotional security Benin parents are likely to enjoy. When these children are typically female children, there is also a likelihood that fertility decision would be positively affected in that there would be a need to have more children in anticipation that a male child would be born. In fact more wives are married to facilitate the birth of a male child, since primogeniture is the custom among the Benin.

The major shortcoming of this theory is that it has not sufficiently explained the link between changes in the family structure affects or is affected by the pervasive phenomenon of sex trafficking. Moreover, the children in this kind of social-cultural context are also likely to experience pressures from parents and in order to meet the growing demands of parents and sometimes sibling and even the extended family kins, children become vulnerable to social vices.

#### **4.4 ANOMIE THEORY**

Anomie or strain theory has its origin from Durkheim's theory of anomie. Durkheim (1951) used the term to describe a state of lawlessness or a condition that of hopelessness such that suicide becomes almost inevitable. Durkheim's anomie is a social condition in which there are very limited aspirations for people in the society coupled with a break down of regulatory mechanism. Hence a disruption in the collective order leads to a state of anomie. Merton (1983) extended the frontiers of the theory to explain the challenges of a modern society in meeting the growing aspirations of its citizenry. The anomie theory as propounded by Merton states that an integrated society is as a result of the balance attained between the existing social structure (approved social means or institutions) and the culture (approved goals). Anomie results when there is dissociation between cultural goals and the approved means of achieving these goals. According to Merton (1983) anomie creates a situation where actors try to achieve cultural goals but reject the institutionalized norms and the means through which these goals can be achieved. These actors engage illegal or socially unacceptable means of achieving their goals.

Researches in trafficking and cross border sexual transaction indicate that many of the victims of trafficking are desirous of becoming "successful" and wealthy in order for them to alleviate the poverty in their homes. However, previous researches affirm that high percentages of trafficked victims are school drop outs and others are into vocational training of some sort.

#### **4.5 RADICAL FEMINISM THEORY**

The radical feminist perspective emerged as a critique of traditional Marxism which did not genuinely pay attention to the oppressive position of women, but rather contributed to the oppression (Eisenstein, 1984). Radical feminism is primarily concerned with the analysis of the oppression of women as women (Kreper, 1972). Radical feminists in turn posit that the society is essentially patriarchal and primarily oppresses women. The theory hinges on two basic premises: (i) that women are absolutely valuable in themselves, and (ii) that every woman everywhere is oppressed violently by a system of patriarchy (Atkinson, 1974; Millet, 1970; Douglas; 1990 Jeffery; 1991; Chesler; 1994). These proponents conceive every institution in the human society as inherently exploitative and oppressive of women. Such institutions identified by these theorists include race, class, age, heterosexuality, ethnicity and gender systems (Ritzer, 2000). Of all these are systems listed above, the most critical and crucial in exacerbating the oppression of women according to radical feminists are the gender systems through the institution of patriarchy.

Patriarchy is conceived as the first structure of male domination and has remained largely insidious against womanhood, and also enduring thereby perpetuating gender inequality (Chesler, 1994). Patriarchy therefore is the most significant institution to radical feminism and is usually associated with all forms of violent oppression, domination and exploitation against women. Mackinnon, (1979) identified some of the oppressive and exploitative practices against women, facilitated through the institution of patriarchy as chastity, heterosexuality, motherhood and underpaid wage labour. Enforced prostitution, rape, sexual abuse among others also constitutes what radical feminism

perceive as sexual violence enabled through patriarchy (Barry, 1979; Wolf, 1991; Sanday, 1996). The central argument of radical feminism is the consensus among these theorists about the structured and systematized operation of patriarchy in all human societies, carefully orchestrated and facilitated by the economic, ideological, emotional and legal structures in these societies. This scenario places women at the receiving end, making them barely able to resist patriarchal control and oppression both at the individual level and sometimes at the group level. Consequently, women are generally perceived as sexual objects met to satisfy the unbridled sexual desires of men. They are also viewed as ornamental signs of man's status and power (Ritzer, 2000). Radical feminists therefore seek to abolish this perceived patriarchy (Willis, 1984). They argue that the way to deal with patriarchy and oppression of all kinds against women is to attack the underlying causes of these problems and address the fundamental components of society that support them. Patriarchal theorist is always single-sided as the belief is that all men always benefit from the oppression of all women. Radical feminists believe that eliminating patriarchy, and other systems which perpetuate the domination of one group over another, will liberate women from an unjust society.

The utility of this theory lies in its ability to paint an apt picture of the Benin traditional society and its family structures. The degree of patriarchy has also been observed by radical feminist to vary from one region to the other. As has been observed by various scholars (Egarevha, 1949; Igbafe, 1979; Curnow1999), Benin has been described as a clear example of a highly patriarchal society. Some of the critical indicators of patriarchy are the institution of primogeniture, the excessive sexual restrictions placed on women on chastity; gender segregated utensils and poor status of

women in the Benin society except those who are blue blooded, that is those of royal parentage. Also polygynous marriages are highly prevalent as the number of wives a man has is seen as status booster. Divorce or separation is generally frowned at as women are expected to learn to be totally subservient to their husbands. This study proposes that classical patriarchy is a critical factor that has resulted in the phenomenon of sex trafficking among the Benin.

#### **4.6 UNIFIED ANALYSES OF GENDER AND KINSHIP MODEL**

Based on the previous arguments, the unified gender and kinship model as posited by Yanagasiko and Collier (2004) in analyzing social whole will be adopted in this study. The relevance of this model stems from the fact that it regards 'facts' as socially constructed, which therefore underscores the importance of investigating such facts by taking into account the underlining symbolic meanings. There is also an assumption of 'systemic inequality', which suggests a prestige structure that calls for analysis. This, they maintain, correctly positions the researcher, liberating the researcher from moral evaluation or judgmental inclinations.

This is crucial considering the sensitive nature of the phenomena under investigation. Yanagasiko and Collier (2004) explain that cultural analysis involved gaining insights into the nature of social relationships within specific context. They conclude by stating the need to adopt a historical and comparative analysis in understanding the relationship between gender, kinship and change.

They further posit that systemic inequality will enable one understand subjective meanings of given 'facts' as well as structural location of the respondents Yanagasiko



and Collier (2004) maintain that cultural analysis, which involves the nature of social relationships within specific context, must be examined; the people's evaluation and prestige models, which are usually encoded in their description and interpretations of events or social relationship, must be investigated. They concluded by stating the need to adopt a historical and comparative analysis in the light of the fact that meanings attached to word or events cannot be a historical.

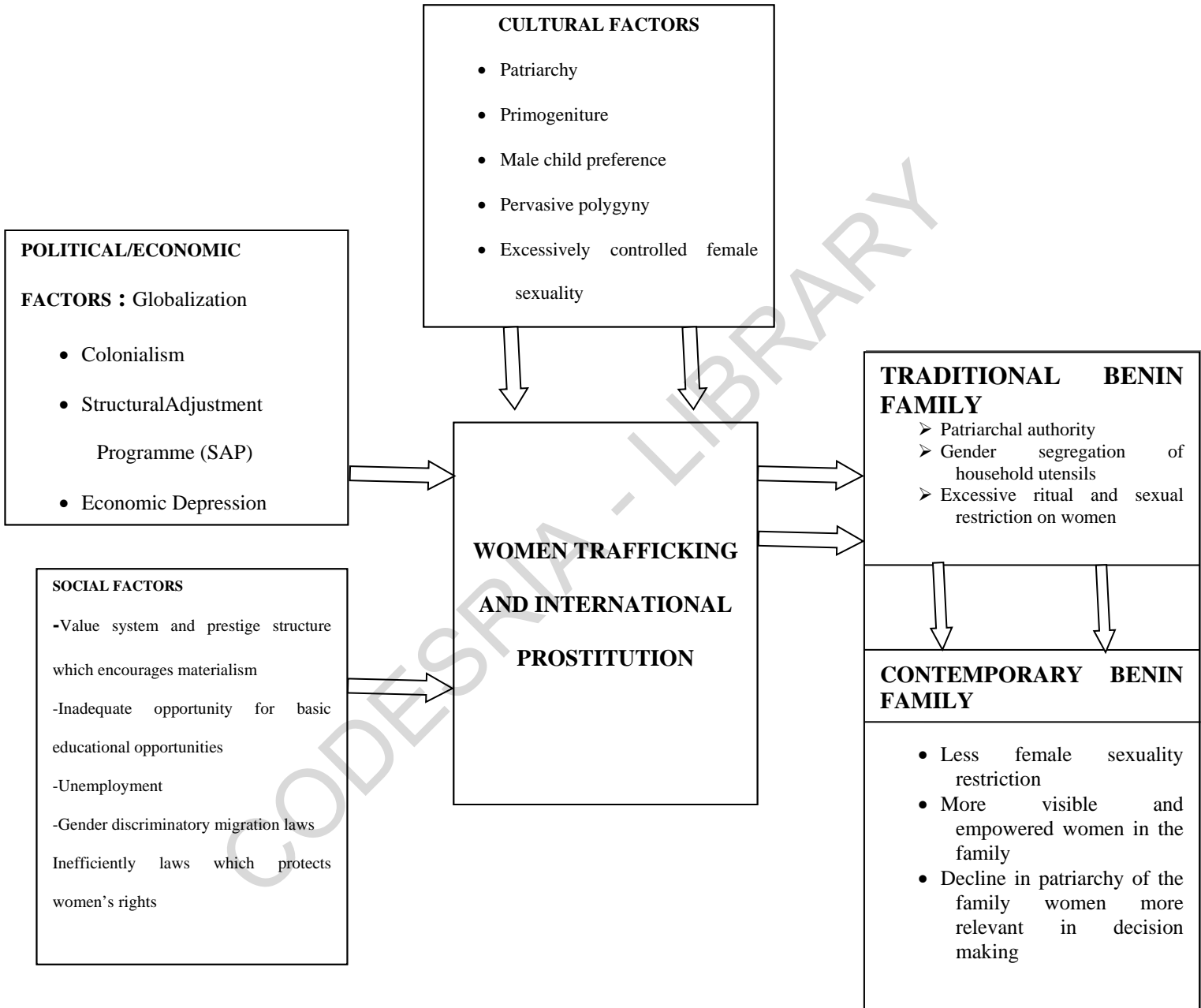
This theoretical model is relevant to the current study in that it emphasizes a culture-specific gender relation analyses. This will no doubt provide adequate insight to the specificity of illegal migration and international sex transaction among the *Benin*. In this case, cultural meanings, which the *Benin* identify as family, roles and expectations, obligation, and values, will be clarified.

Secondly, the model takes systemic inequality as given and therefore emphasizes the need to appraise the value structure of the *Benin*. In this case, cultural meanings attached to gender roles, obligation, status will be examined. Thirdly, the theory accommodates gradual or drastic change, which is buttressed by the adoption of ahistorical analyses and a comparative viewpoint in order to verify the sequence and causes of change.

In conclusion, RoBenins (1975) and Maus (1990) declare that sexual exchange of girls and women embodies deep cultural practices and is historically embedded in many family and kinship systems. The extent to which this can be verified in the context of the Benin family remains an important subject of investigation.

**Figure 4.1**

**CONCEPTUAL MODEL**



The conceptual framework above shows that the traditional Benin family structure as revealed from literature reviewed earlier on, characterized by certain basic features which have been identified above. Some of these features identified by existing literature on pre-colonial Benin as family include; predominant traditional male dominance in the family decisions, community level as well at the economic sphere. Also gender segregated utensils, greater ritual restrictions on the female members of the Benin family, male child preference as well as prevalent polygynous practices were associated with *urhro* concept (inheritance practice that gives attention to only male children born by the women in a polygynous union).

Curnow (1999) had earlier argued that based on an ethnographic study carried out in some African countries, the Benin was one of the seventeen societies which had prevalent discriminatory practices and several ritual restrictions against the women with a highly dominant patriarchal control of the female sexuality. This position runs contrary to Sudarkassa (1986) assertion about the status of women in indigenous societies that women in the then pre-colonial Africa had relatively better status in the pre-colonial era than during this post colonial era. However, the proclivity for generalizing African women experiences have been queried based on the model or theoretical orientation of the unified analyses of the gender and kinship model of analysis adopted by this study. The model involves taking a historical comparative analysis of the relationships between gender, kinship and change within a specific context (Yanagasiko and Collier, 2004).

Furthermore, contrary to previous studies on the phenomena of trafficking and international prostitution among the *Benin* of Southern Nigeria, macro factors such as colonialism, introduction of the wage economy, the structural adjustment policy,

globalization and demands placed on an institution of traffickers by the global demand for sex workers otherwise known as prostitutes have continued to affect the nature and incidences of trafficking in the region. All these factors are taken into account by the political economic theory. However, no study has given premium attention to other micro factors within the context of the Benin Society. Some of the factors which have not been given adequate attention include; the cultural and belief systems of the Benin, the prestige structure, property rights and inheritance and forms of inheritance (*igiogbe* and *uhro concepts*) and what has been described as classical patriarchy which was borne as a result of the interaction of these micro factors on the existing dominant patriarchal structure.

An interaction of the identified political economy, the social and cultural factors have exacerbated the prevalence of sex-trafficking in the region which has also mediated a change in the Benin traditional family which ultimately culminated into trafficking of the female members of the family for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Also vital is the history of the Benin with respect to the prominent role the City played in the event of slave trade. What one may want to ascertain is if women trafficking is a translation of the previous slavery to a more contemporary sex slavery of the female gender.

Again, the prevalence and predominance of trafficking and international prostitution among the Benin people may lead to the emergence of more financially “empowered” women who will become more visible in decision within the Benin family structure. Paradoxically, there will be a shift of patriarchy from the family into the hands of an institution of international traffickers which implies a hyper patriarchy at the global level.

#### **4.7 STUDY PROPOSITIONS**

- a) There have been changes in the Benin family structure (especially marital relationships) occasioned by the phenomena of women trafficking and international prostitution
- b) There are significant changes in the status and roles of wives and daughters in the contemporary Benin family since the advent of Trafficking and international prostitution.
- c) Classical male dominance in Benin family has played a major role in establishing Benin women as major actresses in sex trafficking.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 5.1 STUDY AREA

The research was conducted in three (3) Local Government Areas (LGAs) *Oredo*, *Egor* and Uhumwode out of the seven (7) Local Government Areas which constitute Edo South Senatorial District, Edo State. Studies have shown that this region is most widely affected by the phenomena of trafficking and international prostitution (UNICRI/UNIDOC, 2003). There are seven (7) LGAs which constitute Edo South senatorial zone are listed as follow:

- a) Oredo Local Government Area
- b) Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area
- c) Uhumwonde Local Government Area
- d) Ovia North-East Local Government Area
- e) Ovia South-West Local Government Area
- f) Orhiomwon Local Government Area.
- e) Egor local Government Area.

### 5.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREAS

#### 5.2.1 Oredo Local Government Area

Oredo local government has its headquarters in Benin City with a total population of 3742,671 (2006 Population estimates). Oredo local government covers a total area of 249.1971sqkm with a population density of 1,416 persons per sqkm. Major communities

in Oredo include: *Oko, Etete, Obayagbon, Ugbague, Okhoro* and *Obagie*. Economic activities in Oredo are; agriculture, furniture making wood processing arts and crafts and cottage industries. Agricultural products cultivated in Oredo include cassava, yam, cocoyam, plantain, melon, pepper, okro, palm kernel, tomatoes, vegetables, pineapple and rubber. Also some natural resources in the local government include petroleum, rubber, timber and kaolin. Major places of attraction in *Oredo* are the palace of the *Oba* of Benin, the National Museum, the Benin Moat and the *Emotan* Statue. There are several numbers of public and private secondary schools such as *Edo* College, *Adolo* College, *Idia* College, Western Boys' High School, while some of the private schools include Greater Tomorrow, *IgBeninedion* Educational Centre among others. There are also several health facilities both private and government-owned. The prominent government owned hospitals are the University of Benin Teaching hospitals (UBTH) and the Central Hospital.

### **5.2.2 Egor Local Government Area**

Egor local government has its capital as Uselu. It has a total population of 339,899. (Federal Republic of Nigeria, Official Gazette, 2006).The Local Government Area covers 862.3402 kmsq. Major communities in the area include *Ogida* and *Useh*. Brass works, bronze works are commonly practiced. Agricultural products produced in the Local Government Area include cassava, yam, plantain, melon, pepper, okro, palm kernel, tomatoes, vegetables and pineapple. There are several public secondary and primary schools.

### **5.2.3 Uhumwode Local Government Area**

Uhumwode local government has its capital as Ehor. It has a total population of 120,813 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, Official Gazette, 2006). The local government is the biggest in terms of landmass. Major towns in the area include *Igieduma*, *Obagie Obadan* and *Ugbiyokho*. Agricultural products produced in the local government include pineapple, plantain, melon, pepper, okro, palm kernel, and pineapple.

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Figure 5.1

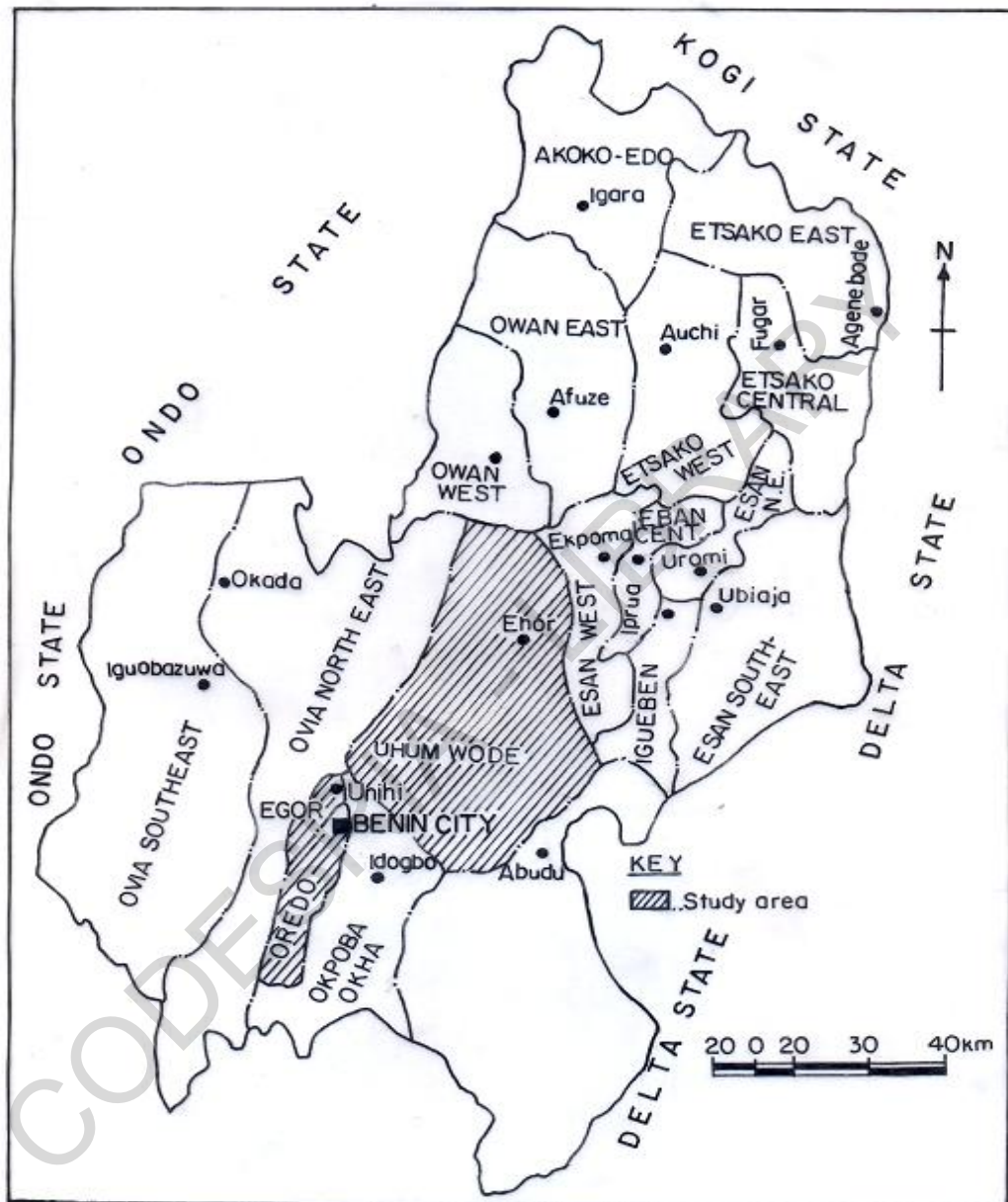


Fig. Map of Edo state showing the study area.

### **5.3 SAMPLING PROCEDURE AND DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES**

Since this is an ethnographic study which sought to understand the depth of social phenomena within a specific historical and social-cultural context, the study therefore employed an array of qualitative data collection techniques. These include; (i) household/family based interview, (ii) Focus Group Discussions using Vignette stories, (iii) Key - informant interview, (iv) Life histories (iv) Observation method

Forty (40) households were purposively selected from each local government based on two criteria; ethnic origin and socio- economic status. A total of 120 household/family based interviews were conducted in all. Household heads were targeted to provide information on their households. The family based interview guides were in two parts: family records which elicited information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the households, while the second part obtained information on the changes in their family structures. Data obtained through these avenue provided information on the changing family structures among the Benin. A total of 18 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) using vignette stories were conducted on three categories of people; adult women, adult men and youths. Each FDG category consisted of 6-12 participants. The vignettes<sup>1</sup> stories were in two parts; (a) the story of trafficked victim that ended on a “happy note” and (b) the story of a trafficked victim that ended on a “tragic note.” In each local government, the three categories of participants were exposed to both the “happy” and the “tragic” stories. This added up to six (6) FGDs in each local government area. Data obtained through this method helped identify and analyze the effects of trafficking on Benin women and their family structures. Five (5) key- informants which included a male and a

female who are versed in Benin culture and the family institution, a representative of a Non Governmental Organization (NGO) who had done extensive work in trafficking among the Benin, an opinion leader and a government official were targeted. Information sourced through this technique provided insight to the cultural factors that precipitated trafficking and international prostitution among the Benin.

The snowball sampling technique was used to select female victims of trafficking for the purpose of international prostitution. Life histories were conducted on 15 victims to have in-depth information on their family profiles. Data obtained from life histories provided insight to the family profiles of victims, hence complemented the data on in-depth understanding of Benin family structures. Observation of two social events: a burial ceremony and a wedding ceremony were conducted. These complemented the key informant technique and aided understanding of the value structures of the Benin. In all, 120 household interviews, 5 key-informants interviews, 18 FGDs, and 15 life histories were conducted. Secondary data were obtained from relevant archival materials and relevant biographies.

#### **5.4 PREPARATION OF THE COMMUNITY**

The researcher interacted with the NGO, IRRAG who had done extensive work in sensitizing people against human trafficking in Metropolitan Benin City. Through these avenues, contact was established with some academics in the University of Benin City, who had also been part of researches in human trafficking. Key informants were identified who incidentally are opinion leader in their own rights. Each community head

was informally sensitized in order to ensure maximum co-operation at Uhumwode Local Government area. However, in all the three Local Government areas, more informal mobilization was done on the community leaders, influential (opinion leaders) and religious leaders and all their consolidated efforts made this field work realizable

## **5.5 RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING**

The required numbers of interviewers were recruited at Egor and Oredo Local Government area due to their closeness to each other. These interviewers were trained for a week in order to be able to negotiate a successful interaction with the household heads. Role playing was conducted severally under the supervision of the researcher in order to test for accuracy of questioning and reporting. In Uhumwode Local Government area, a separate training was organized for the interviewers who were recruited from the local government area. The rationale was to ensure that interviewers who are very familiar with the geographical and social terrain of the locations were selected. Another justification for recruiting the interviewer was their fluency in Edo language and ability to also transcribe this information obtained in the local dialect to English language.

## **5.6 FIELD WORK AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Due to the sensitive nature of this study, household heads, FGD participants, Key informants and victims of trafficking were duly informed about the nature and purpose of this research. Details of the purpose of the research were explained to them. This was to ensure that there was no form or coercion or deception in order to ensure voluntary participation. Also, information obtained from all the categories of respondents were read

to them after the interview and those of them who sought anonymity were granted. Field work lasted for a period of 16 weeks. However, several visits had to be paid to verify information that was generated at the early stage of analysis.

## **5.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

Analysis of data obtained from family records were analyzed using SPSS Scientific Package for Social Sciences computer software to present descriptive (univariate and bivariate) analysis. Univariate analyses are presented using simple frequencies and percentages, while for bivariate analysis, cross tabulations were adopted. The bivariate analysis explored relationships between socio-demographic characteristics of household heads and the structure of the households.

Recorded household interviews and focus group discussions conducted were transcribed. The researcher coded all transcribed interviews independently for reliability. Anthropic software was used to analyze the various qualitative data obtained through the various techniques. Content analysis, case report methods and Z-Y index tables helped present data on trends and issues on the changing family structure, and an assessment of the phenomena of trafficking and international prostitution among the Benin.

## **5.8 PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN THE FIELD**

Some problems were encountered during the field work. These included:

- a) Refusal of households to participate in the interview. Many household heads were reluctant to participate in the interviews on the ground that they thought that researcher and the interviewers were government agents. Hence, a number of them were hostile while a few others stated that they had no time. Others

commenced the interview but stopped at a point because they felt that the questions were too many and personal. This determined the socio economic status of household heads who participated since a sizeable number of them were retirees and those who are in the informal sector, who had some time to spare.

- b) The inability to get a representative view of the female gender in various household visited. In some cases, when there was a request to interact with the oldest female in the household, this was usually turned down as the males insisted that they were in a better position to provide authentic information about their families.

## **5.9 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The validity of data generated was based on the responses generated to the questions of the field instruments used: household interviews, key informants and life histories and focus group discussions. Another limitation is that this study is an ethnographic study that focused exclusively on the Benin people. Generalization of the findings based on its scope is limited to Edo State.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter focuses on the socio-economic and demographic descriptions of family structures and their household heads in three Local Government Areas: Oredo, Egor and Uhumwode Local Government Areas. It also presents socio-economic and demographic descriptions of the FGD participants, key informants and previously trafficked victims who were interviewed. The chapter examined the changes in the Benin family structures and the effects of these changes on Benin women and their families. It also assesses the contributions of cultural factors in facilitating women trafficking for the purpose of international prostitution in the identified region.

#### **6.2 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILY /HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURES AND HOUSEHOLD HEADS**

##### **6.2.1 Characteristics of the Benin Family Structure**

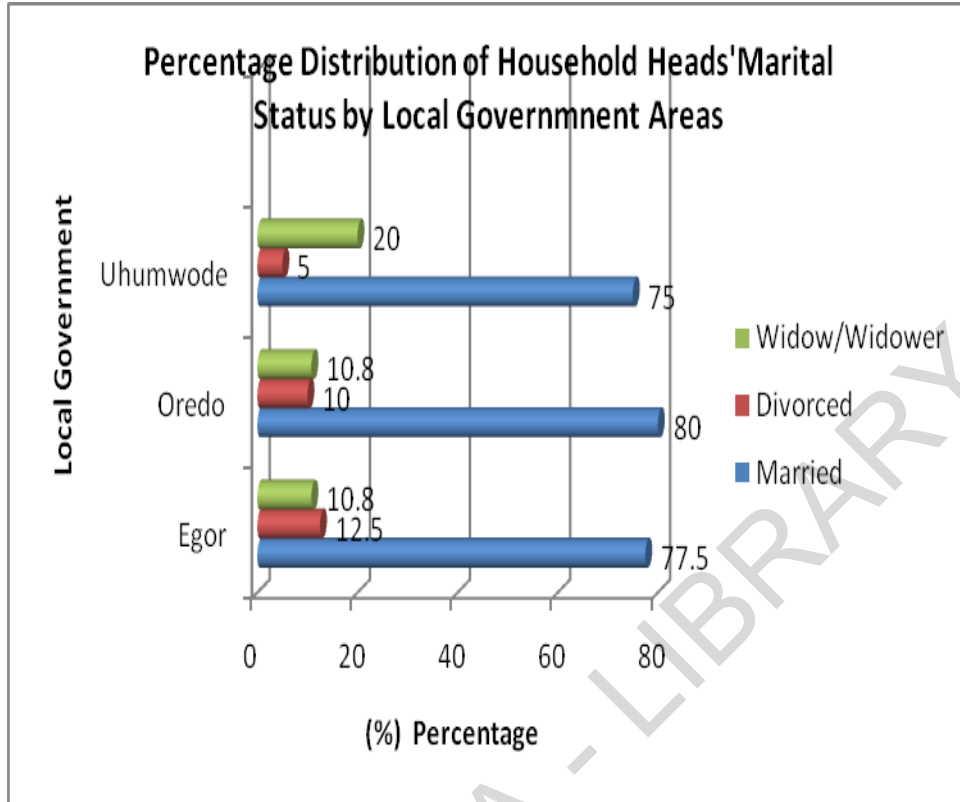
The purpose of this section is to provide a descriptive summary of the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the Benin family. The socio economic characteristics used in describing the Benin families include: household composition, sex composition, type of household head, family type and family income. A total number of 40 households were selected in each of the three local government areas. Ethnic origin and socioeconomic considerations were the criteria for selection. Table 6.1 shows the percentage distribution of family structures /household heads socio-economic and demographic characteristics by Local Government Area.

Table 6.1 shows that more households, have a total of eight or more living together as a family in Egor (75%), with a mean of 8.2 which is closely followed by Uhumwonde (67.5%) with a mean of 7.7 and then Oredo with 65.5% households with a mean of 7.5, having more than eight persons or more residing in a particular family at a time. In terms of sex of those who constitute the various families or households studied, Uhumwonde (rural) had the highest percentage distribution of households who had more than eight of their members being females and residing in the family house. Egor has the least percentage distribution of households (10%) where total number females currently domiciled in the family house are more than eight. Hence, only 16.5% of the households visited had female membership being more than eight. The local government with the highest number of males, that is, which has more than eight adult males at a time, residing in the family house is Oredo, with (22.5%) of the entire households studied. The mean score of males in all the households studied in the three local government areas for 3.0, while the mean score for the total number of females is 3.5.

Table 1 show that majority of the household heads in Oredo interviewed are married (80%). On the other hand, Uhumwode has the least incidence of divorce or separation (5.0%). This buttresses the degree of importance which marriage institution is accorded among the Benin. Also, more widow and widowers are in Uhumwode (20%) of the entire households studied. This could be attributed to the fact that Uhumwode is rural area where many people who have lived in the urban areas in their active days retire to in their old age. Fig 6.1 shows the marital status of household heads.

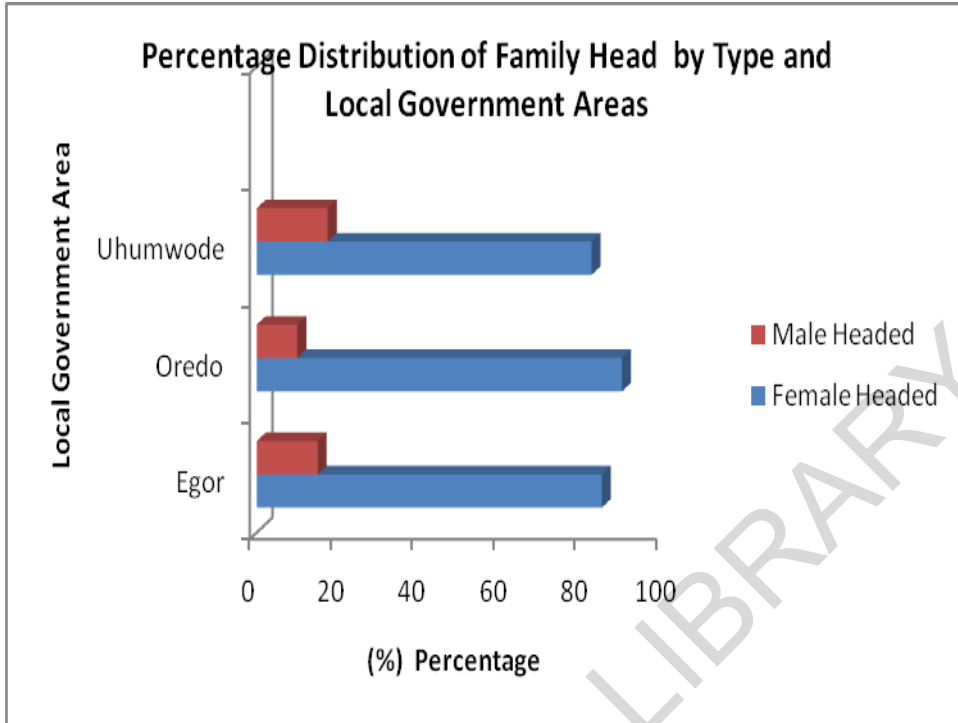


**Figure 6.1**



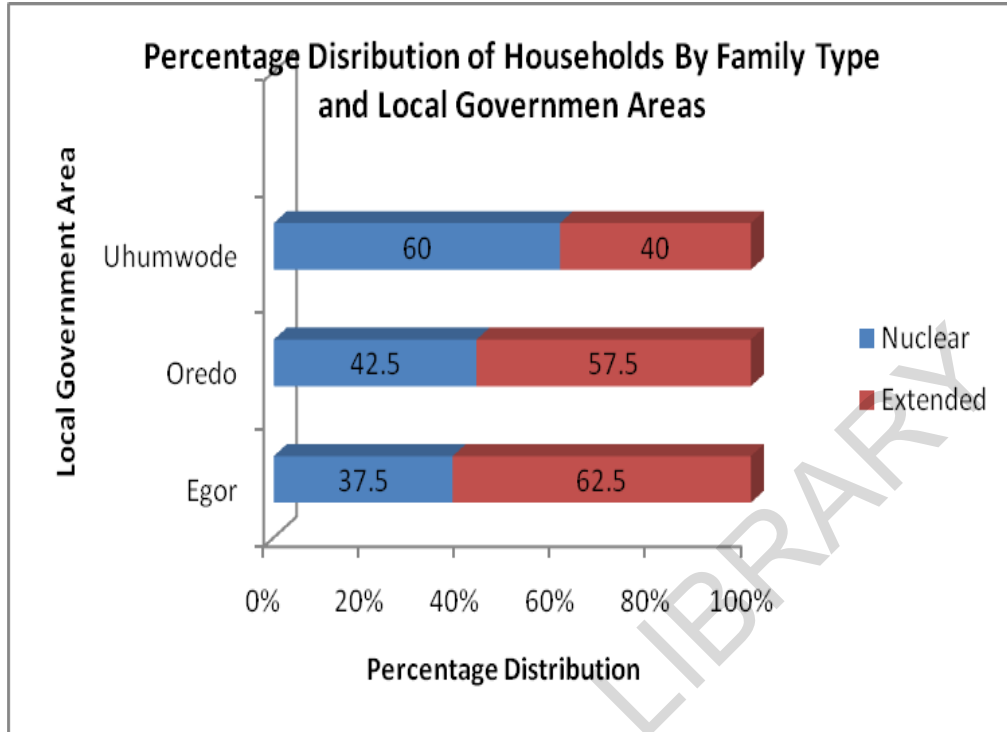
Data on type family head revealed that there are more female headed households (17.5%) in Uhumwode than the other two Local Government Areas. Egor has the highest number male headed household accounting for 85% of the entire households studied in the local government area. The study defines female headed households as families in which the female gender becomes the bread winner as a result of the demise of the spouse, or for some other social reasons, where the husband is not available, thereby making the woman the principal source of income. The increasing numbers of female-headed households in the rural areas could be attributed to a major factor such as rural – urban migration among males.

**Figure 6.2**



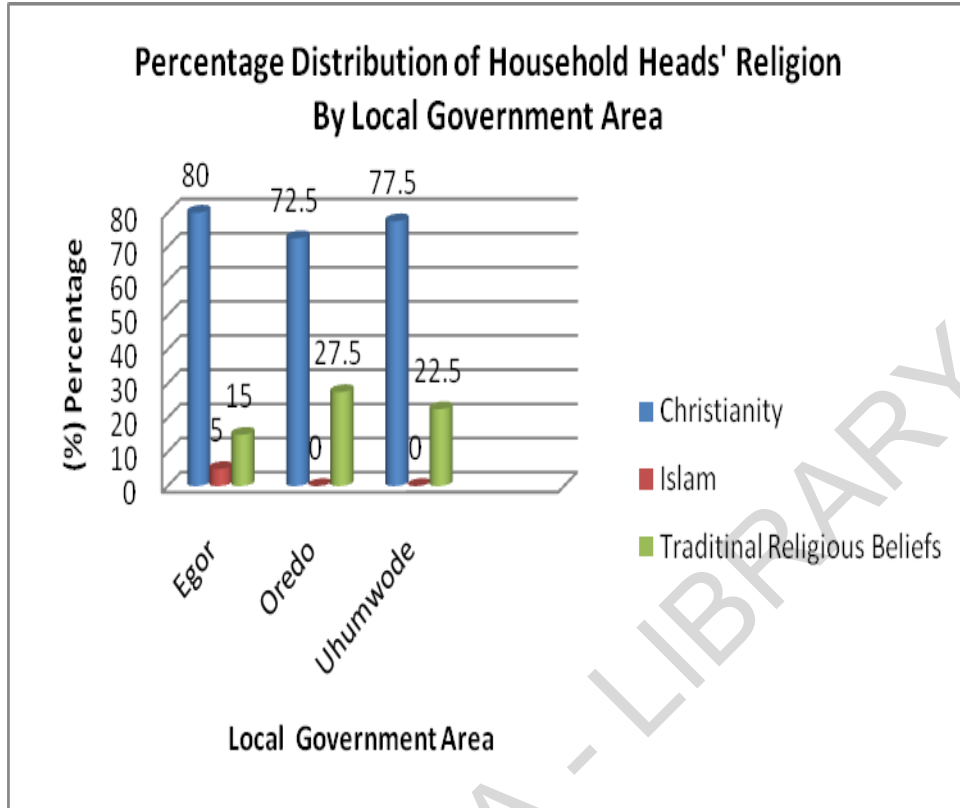
Extended family practice is still predominant among the Benin. Fewer number of nuclear families are found in the two urban LGAs (Egor, and Oredo) when compared to Uhumwode a rural settlement. Interestingly, the data reveal that there are more extended families in Egor (62.5%), closely followed by Oredo (57.5%) with the least number of extended families in Uhumwode (40.0%). Nuclear family was defined as a family with the parents and the direct biological children for the purpose of this study. Egor and Oredo consequently have higher numbers of extended families. This may not be unconnected with the status of these two Local Government Areas as destination centres for many rural migrants from the suburbs. Oredo and Egor are located in the heart of Benin City.

**Figure 6.3**



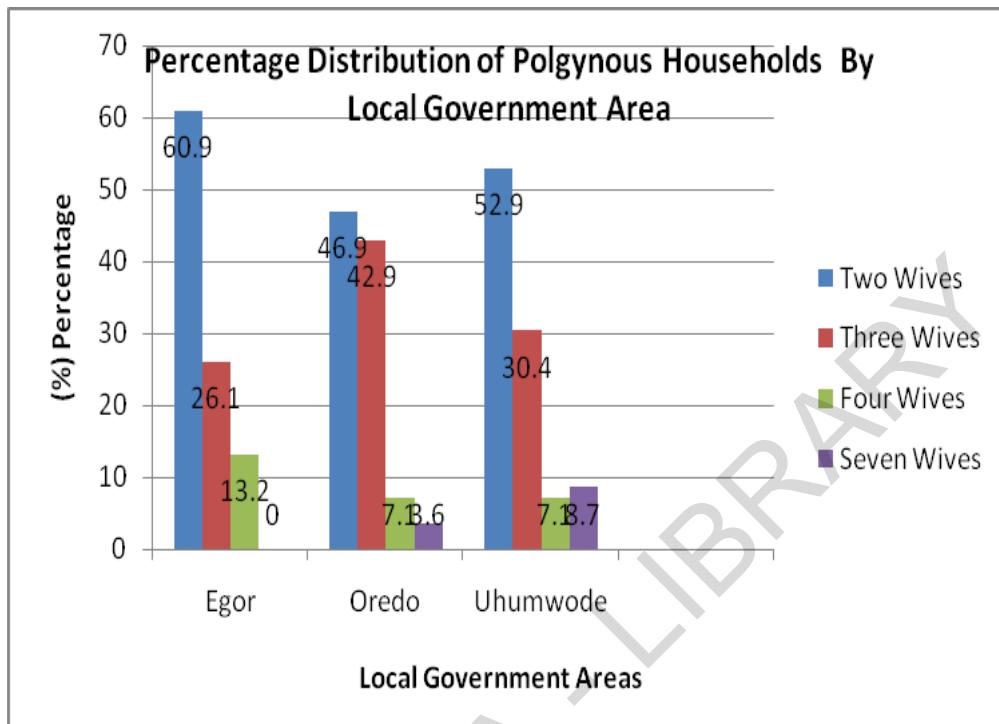
The percentage of distribution of household heads based on religion show that majority of the respondents in the three Local Government Areas covered are Christians, that is 72.6 % of the entire sample studied. Only 5.0% are Muslims in Egor, while traditional religious belief is relatively predominant in Oredo (27.5%) and then closely followed by Uhumwode (22.5%), and then Egor with the least percentage distribution (15.0%). This may be attributed to the proximity of Oredo to the palace, the major custodian of traditional belief system in the region. The presence of several titled chiefs, chiefs, religious shrines that are being administered by priests and priestesses in Oredo also account for a relatively high predominance of traditional religious belief system.

**Figure 6.4**



The data on polygynous marriage among the Benin show that majority of them are still polygynous despite the predominance of Christianity. The distribution of polygynous households revealed that Oredo has the highest incidence of polygynous marriages with a total of 28 households practicing polygyny. In terms of the range of wives, Uhumwode recorded the highest number of wives, with two of the household heads having at least seven wives. Several scholars including Egharevba (1949) Bradbury (1956), more recently Aghatise, (2002) corroborate this finding that polygyny is still prevalent among the Benin.

**Figure. 6.5**

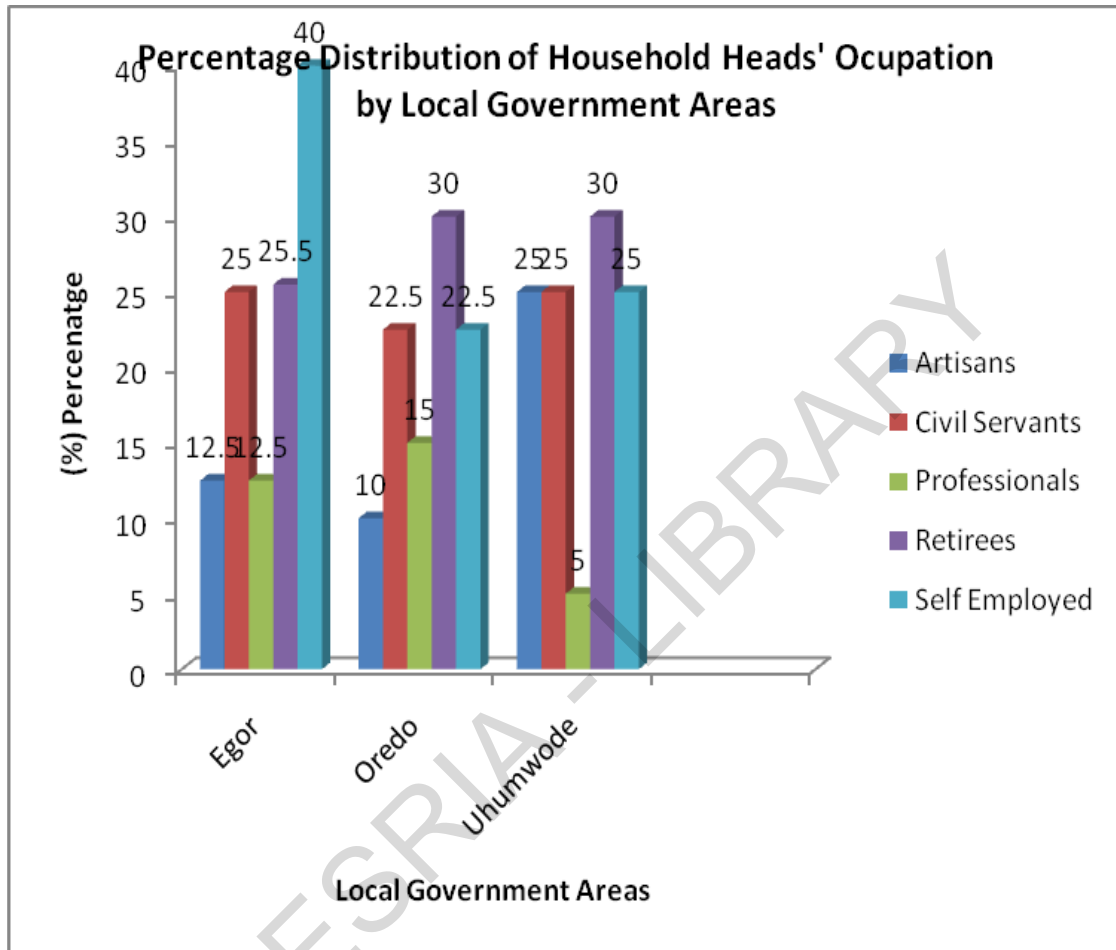


The occupational statuses of the family heads show that there are more artisans (25%) in Uhumwode than Egor and Oredo local government areas. The artisans include the automobile mechanic, the electricians, furniture makers, and welders, blacksmithing among others. Also, the highest numbers of professionals are in Oredo (15.0). Civil servants include teachers working in state or private schools or federal ministries, Local Government staff, etc. On the other hand those in the professional cadre include Bankers, Engineers, Medical Doctors and Nurses working in both government-owned and private-owned establishments. Retirees are more predominant in Uhumwode (20%) while the least number is found in Egor (10%) and lastly Oredo (17.5%). The data show that there are more civil servants in all the three local government areas studied when compared to

other occupations. This is attributable to the presence of many people who are defined as civil servants for the purpose of classification. Civil servants include teachers working in state or private schools or Federal ministry, regardless of their position in these establishments, local government staff, etc. Another reason could be the presence of several government parastatal and the conspicuous absence of industries in Benin city. Hence many studies conducted before now have described the city as a civil service town (WHARC, 2003).

Retirees are more predominant in Uhumwode (20%). A significant percentage of the households interviewed are self employed and these include farmers, market men and women, motorcycle riders, recharge card sellers, hairdressers, etc. Figure 6 clearly shows the occupational status of the household heads.

**Figure 6.6**



Majority of the household heads interviewed disclosed that their income was in the range of N10, 000-N35, 000. More of such respondents are in the urban areas (Egor, 52.5 and Oredo, 45%) of those interviewed. Again, in both Egor and Oredo, only 2.5% of the household heads disclosed that their monthly income is over a N100, 000.

**Table 6.1: Percentage Distribution of Family Structures /Household heads' Socio-economic and Demographic Characteristics by Local government areas**

Family Composition	Local Government of Origin							
	Egor		Oredo		Uhumwode		Total	
	N=40	%	N= 40	%	N=40	%	N=120	%
Less than Eight people in a family	11	27.5	14	35.0	13	32.5	38	31.7
Eight or more people in a family	29	75.5	26	65.5	27	67.5	82	68.3
<b>Sex Composition</b>								
Females less than eight	36	90.0	33	82.0	31	77.5	100	83.3
Eight or more females	4	10.0	7	17.5	9	16.5	20	16.6
Males less than Eight	32	80.0	31	77.5	33	82.5	96	80.0
Males more than Eight	8	20.0	9	22.5	7	7	24	20.0
<b>Family Head Type</b>								
Male headed households	34	85.0	31	90.0	28	82.5	93	77.5
Female headed households	6	15.0	9	10.0	12	17.5	27	22.5
<b>Family Type</b>								
Nuclear Family	15	37.5	17	42.5	20	60.0	52	43.3
Extended Family	25	62.5	23	57.5	20	40.0	68	56.7
<b>Polygynous Households</b>								
Two wives	14	60.9	13	46.9	12	52.9	39	52.7
Three wives	6	26.1	12	42.9	7	30.4	25	33.8
Four Wives	3	13.2	2	7.1	2	7.1	7	9.5
Seven wives	0	0	1	3.6	2	8.7	3	4.1
<b>Marital Status of family heads</b>								
Married	31	77.5	32	80.0	30	75.0	93	77.5
Separated/Divorce	5	12.5	4	10.0	2	5.0	11	9.2
Widower/Widow	4	10.8	4	10.8	8	20.0	16	13.2
<b>Occupation of family heads</b>								
Artisan	5	12.5	4	10.0	10	25.0	19	15.8
Civil Servant	10	25.0	9	22.5	10	25.0	29	24.2
Professionals	5	12.5	6	15.0	2	5.0	13	10.8
Retirees	10	25.5	12	30.0	12	30.0	34	28.3
Self employed	20	40.0	9	22.5	10	25.0	19	15.8
<b>Religion of Family Heads</b>								
Christianity	32	80.0	29	72.5	31	77.5	92	76.7
Muslim	2	5.0	-	-	-	-	2	1.6
Traditional Religious Beliefs	6	15.0	11	27.5	9	22.5	26	21.7
<b>Family Head Monthly</b>								



<b>Income</b>								
Less than N10,000.00	9	22.5	9	22.5	12	30.0	30	25.0
N10001, -N35,000	21	52.5	18	45.0	16	40.0	55	45.8
N35,001 – N65,000	07	17.5	10	25.0	10	25.0	27	22.5
N65,001- N100,000	2	5.0	2	5.0	2	5.0	6	5.0
# 100,000.00 or more	1	2.5	1	2.5	0	0	2	1.7

**Source: Survey Report, 2008**

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### 6.2.2 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Key-Informants

Table 6.2 provides the demographic information on the key informants who were selected for the study. In all, five (5) key informants were interviewed as shown in Table 6.2. All the key informants fell within the age range of 31 – 85years of age. All except one (1) are Christians. The least qualification that key informants had was a Nursing and Midwifery certificate while the highest qualification obtained by the key informants is a doctor of philosophy (PhD) degree.

The Chief Priest of the Great Benin kingdom is a first class chief who is traditionally referred to as the “*Isekhure*” of Benin. The office of the *Isekhure* is hereditary and considered very strategic to the coronation of every Oba of Benin according to the Benin customs and tradition. The *Isekhure* is the one who is traditionally and culturally designated to anoint the *Oba* of Benin, hence his status as one of the primary custodians of Benin cultural heritage. His palace is conspicuously erected at Sakponba Road. The chief is widely traveled and his versatility in matters relating to Benin is well known.



**Figure 6.7:** Chief Nosa Isekure, the Isekure (Chief Priest of Benin kingdom) and the researcher during the interview session



**Figure 6.8:** Chief Nosa Isekure, the *Isekure* (Chief Priest) of Great Benin Kingdom, a Key Informant in his official regalia.

Another Key Informant is Jane Osagie, who has done extensive advocacy on the lot of female children with specific reference to sexual and reproductive rights of women within a hegemonic patriarchal culture. Jane Osagie has led several campaigns in Benin City in popular markets like the Oba market, New Benin and Oliha markets to sensitize women so as not to be vulnerable to traffickers' antics. Her NGO is known as International Reproductive Rights Action Group (IRRAG). Jane Osagie has also done collaborative researches with front liners NGOs like Girls' Power Initiative (GPI), Women's Health and Action Research Center (WHARC), etc. In spite of threats as a result of her unrelenting campaigns against trafficking, she has however remained undaunted.

The third Key Informant, Princess Kate Oronsaye, a blue blooded octogenarian (daughter of Oba Eweka II and an Aunt to the present Benin Monarch) popularly known for her compassionate disposition towards abandoned children. She had sojourned in the Western part of Nigeria where she pioneered many of the maternity homes. She however returned home to establish the first orphanage home in Benin City. This orphanage is reputed as being the oldest in Benin City and has enjoyed some forms of assistance from successive governments in Edo State. She is highly revered in Benin because of her dedication to the cause of women and children especially as she still actively runs the orphanage and a maternity home where she is ably assisted by her eldest son, a Professor of Fisheries.



**Figure 6.9: Key informant, Princess Kate Oronsaye, Retired nurse and pioneer of the renowned Maternity home in Benin City with the researcher in the course of an interview**

Another key informant who was selected in the study is Dr O.S.B. Omoregie, a septuagenarian, an opinion leader and the proprietor of OSBO academy which has an affiliation with an American University. He is a former university don at the University of Benin, an author who had the rare privilege of being groomed and mentored by the Late G. Egarevba, the popular chronicler of Benin culture. He is currently a social crusader of the need to preserve Benin language and culture through his writings, and his curriculum at OSBO is designed to integrate the study of *Beninology*.



**Figure 6.10: Another Key Informant an opinion leader and the head of OSBO Academy which is committed to the study of Benin and affiliated to an American University**

**Table 6.3: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Key Informants**

<b>Serial No</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Educational Qualification</b>	<b>Status in Benin Society</b>
1	Male	60	Married	Traditional Religion	Masters Degree	First class chief and the current Chief Priest of the Great Benin Kingdom
2	Female	52	Married	Christianity	Masters Degree	Co-ordinator of a notable privately owned NGO in Benin City (IRRAG) who has championed the fight against human trafficking and international prostitution
3	Female	85	Widow	Christianity	Nursing/Midwife Certificate	Foremost octogenarian who pioneered the first orphanage home in Benin. She is of royal parentage
4	Male	71	Married	Christianity	PHD	Opinion Leader and Erudite scholar in Benin customs traditional practices. Proprietor of the famous OSBO Academy.
5	Male	31	Married	Christianity	LL.M	Assistant Legal Adviser, NAPTIP, Benin City



### **6.2.3 Characteristics of Life History Respondents.**

A total number of 15 life histories were conducted with respondents selected using a snowball technique. The mean age of the respondents is 24.3 years with the minimum age of respondents being 15 years and the maximum age recorded being 36 years. Six (6) out of the fifteen respondents have no means of livelihood and this represents 40% of the entire group. All other victims interviewed are involved in low wage paying economic activities like hair dressing, shop attendant (sales girl) and petty trading. The apparent lack of gainful employment by the girls is closely correlated to the educational qualification of these girls. For instance 8 (53%) of the girls have primary or uncompleted secondary education while the remaining 47% of respondents have SSCE alone. In terms of Local Government of origin, a total number of five respondents (33.0%) are from Oredo Local Government Area, closely followed by Egor (4), Uhumwode (2), Ovia North East (2) and Oriomwhon (1). All of the victims of sex trafficking are Christians (100%). As regards the marital status of the respondents out of 15 of them, 14 representing 93% of the total respondents are single. This is also in consonance with the mean age of the respondents which was placed as 22.6 years. Only one of them is married and while a single case of divorcee was recorded. The data on life histories of the respondents reveal that 12 (80%) of them are from polygynous homes. Table 6.3 below presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the life history respondents.

**Table 6.3: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Life Histories Respondents**

Name of victim	Sex	Age	Occupation	Highest Educational Qualification	Local Government Of Origin	Religion	Marital Status	Type of family Structure (Respondents family of Orientation)
1)Paulina	female	27	Unemployed	Primary school	Ovia North East	Christian	Divorced	Polygynous
2) Beauty	Female	36	Petty trader	SSCE	Oredo	Christian	Married	Monogamous
3) Oghowmen	Female	26	Nothing	SSCE	Oredo	Christian	Single	Polygynous
4) Omoyemwen	Female	27	Hair dresser	Primary school	Ovia North East	Christian	Single	Polygynous
5) Josephine	Female	26	Petty Trader	Uncompleted Secondary School	Oredo	Christian	Single	Monogamous
6) Loveth	Female	15	Unemployed	Uncompleted secondary school	Egor	Christian	Single	Polygynous
7) Adesuwa	Female	16	Sales girl	SSCE	Uhumwode	Christian	Single	Polygamous
8) Judith	Female	24	Hair Dresser	SSCE	Uhumwode	Christian	Single	Polygynous
9) Mercy	Female	24	Hair Dresser	Uncompleted Secondary School	Orimwhon	Christian	Single	Polygynous
10) Charity	Female	30	Apprentice	SSCE	Egor	Christian	Single	Polygynous
11) Gift	Female	18	Sales girl	Uncompleted Secondary school	Ovia North East	Christian	Single	Polygynous
12) Edith	Female	18	Unemployed	SSCE	Egor	Christian	Single	Monogamous
13) Joan	Female	26	Unemployed	SSCE	Oredo	Christian	Single	Polygnous
14) Esther	Female	21	Unemployed	Uncompleted Secondary School	Oredo	Christian	Single	Polygynous
15) Grace	Female	21	Unemployed	Uncompleted Secondary School	Egor	Christian	Single	Polygynous.

#### **6.2.4 Characteristics of Focus Group Discussion Participants**

The age category of the FGD participants across the three locations ranged between 15 and 68 years, with the adult male groups ranging between 40 and 68 while the female adult group ranged between 35 and 60. The youth group age ranged between 15 and 30 in all the locations. In the adults category, (male /female) FGD group comprised of professionals like teachers, architects, social workers and lawyers and non professional such as clerks, salon /hair dressers, market women, artisans, vulcanizers, among others. The youth group comprised of artisans, bus conductor, *okada* riders, but majority of them were students in public secondary school in their Junior Secondary and Senior Secondary classes. Majority of the participants are Christians with some claiming to be traditional belief adherents. The FGD conducted in each location was done by reading out the vignettes which were in two parts; a story of trafficked victim that ended on a tragic note and the second one was a vignette of a trafficked victim that ended on a positive and apparently successful note. Adult male, adult female and youths were exposed to each story making it six FGDs conducted in each local government area.



**Figure 6.11: FGD with women at Oredo local government area**

### **6.3 CHANGING FAMILY STRUCTURES AMONG THE BENIN PEOPLE**

This section explores issues relating to “objective 1” of the study, which examines changing family structures among the Benin. In this respect, the following themes are explored-

- i) Ancestral worship in Benin family
- ii.). Social Structure of the Benin family with respect to the following:
  - a) Status of men and women in Benin society
  - b) Functions or roles of the traditional Benin family.
- iii) Sources and forms of change in the Benin family

### 6.3.1 Ancestral Worship in Benin Family

The pervasiveness of ancestral worship among the people of Benin is widely documented in its oral traditions and documented literature (Egarevba, 1949; Bradbury, 1956; Curnow 1998; UNICRI, 2003). In the course of the field work, a total number of 120 households were interviewed in order to examine the predominance of ancestral worship in the Benin family. This became important based on the research findings which have established the use of shrines as well as the involvement of *juju* in threatening victims of trafficking in order to coerce them not to disclose the identity of the traffickers (UNICRI, 2003; Aghatise, 2004; and Skogeth, 2006). The study showed that out of the total number of 120 families interviewed, 76 of the families (63.3%) claimed that ancestral worship is still an integral aspect of the Benin family life, while only 24 (20%) families stated that it was no longer practiced due to the following reasons: modernization, Christianity, civilization as well as the cost implication of making sacrifices. More respondents in the family based interview in Uhumwode, 34 out of the 40 households (85% of household in Uhumwode) claimed that ancestral worship is still predominant, closely followed by Oredo with 32 out of 40 households (80%) interviewed. Egor came close with 30 out of the 40 household heads (75%) responded that ancestral worship was still very endemic among the Benin. Reasons adduced for the predominance of this ancestral worship in contemporary Benin was highlighted by some of the respondents of the household interviewed. One of them, a 65 years old male household head in Oredo had this to say:

*Our ancestors? These are the dead great-grandfathers, who lived and died well. In those days when a man dies, the first son will put the corpse outside and then draw his father's corpse into*

*the house. When the elders arrive, they will carve a stick, put it by the head of the corpse and invoke the spirit of the dead into that carved wooden stick. That will now be the ancestors which is called “ukhure” in Benin. So any family member who does anything wrong, the “ukhure” reacts negatively”.*

When asked whether the “ukhure” is still being worshipped today, he responded

*“Yes they are still worshipped .The way they are worshipped is through the eldest son He does that by putting his right leg on the ground and pouring small drink on it (libation). That is how each family connects with them”.*

Another 58 years old male household head in Oredo added passionately when asked if ancestor worship is still practiced;

*Our ancestors? They are still very much worshipped today, I believe strongly in them. Whenever I eat food like pounded yam, I throw a small “cut” {piece} to them and when I drink I drop small on my right leg for our ancestors.”*

Again, a 50 years old male respondent from Egor observed the relevance of ancestral worship in terms of their protective function which they perform, hence he observed;

*“I pray to them (ancestors) for protection. No sacrifice”*

A 47 years old female member of a family that was interviewed in Oredo highlighted the role of the ancestors in regulating marital relationships in the Benin family, hence she posited:

*The ukhure is kept and preserved in a way that no one touches it. They are still very much worshipped especially if the family brings in a new woman as wife. The whole family will gather and they will count something for the woman as forbidden things concerning the ancestor in that home. The ancestor in that home is called “elimwin owa”*

In Uhumwode, a male octogenarian and household head argued that ancestral worship was not a thing of the past among the Benin, but that it is still relevant in contemporary times. He stated this contrary to views that ancestral worship was an obsolete practice that was no longer observed. He argued thus:

*“In a typical Benin family, the ancestors cannot be ruled out. This is because everyone has ancestral lineage and it leads to ancestral worship. My family and I still recognize and observe ancestral worship today.”*

### **6.3.1.1 Reasons for Ancestral Worship among the Benin**

The reasons proposed by these respondents for the continuity in the worships of ancestors in the family include the following:

- i) Protective purpose: The ancestors are seen as integral members of the family and death only served as a translation from corporal to non-corporal. This is seen from the explanations of the respondents above.
- ii) For deliverance or divine intervention in the family: It is believed that the *ukhure* can divinely intervene in the affairs of the family members especially when things are not going right. It also served as a source of security for members of a family especially in deterring people from ignoble act that will offend the ancestors.
- iii) Another reason canvassed by most women is that the *ukhure* was the basis of admission of women into a home. She was brought to the family shrine to swear to give allegiance to the family. This ensured total allegiance from a woman to the family of procreation.

One of the key informants (male), an opinion leader further elaborated:

*“Every family had ritual restrictions that were observed by the females. For example, “eman’ode”{previous day pounded yam} was” awaa” (forbidden) in many families. A woman had to abide by these rules. When she entered into a family she had to swear by that family’s shrine that she would not spoil that home (i.e. cause any havoc or bring about disaffection among the agnatic kins. In the event of husband’s death, she also has to swear that she is not guilty.”*

- iv) Ancestor worship is considered as a form of regulatory mechanism put in place to protect the wellbeing of the members of the family, especially the males of a particular family.

On the other hand there were opinions by some other household heads who argued that the ancestral worship as described above was still in existence but was currently practiced by few. Many of them stated that the reasons why it had become unpopular was due to the influence of Christianity on Benin culture, civilization, state of ignorance about how the worship is done as well as current financial costs of performing sacrificial rites associated with ancestral worship. For instance, a 45 years old male household head in Oredo lamented the apparent decline in ancestor worship which he attributed to economic reasons:

*The ancestral spirits are still very important. But today, people now refuse to worship ancestral idols because they cost a lot.*

Another male household head, 49, in Uhumwode explained that he was oblivious of the fact that there was a decline in ancestor worship since he was a Christian. This was inspite of the fact that Uhumwode is a rural area, but evidently characterized with a relatively high number of Christians. Hence, the household head remarked;



*“Although a family must have a lineage we don’t have any link with ancestral worship since this is a Christian home.”*

This view was supported by another adherent of the Christian faith in Oredo, a 39 years old male household head. He disclosed:

*I was born into a Christian home. I don’t have any idea about whether or not ancestral worship is still practiced.*

The previous excerpts confirm the existence of a new generation of believers among the Benin who do not accord respect or even identify with ancestral worship. From the data, one can conclude that not much change has occurred in terms of the Benin conception about ancestral worship since majority of the respondents still acknowledged the existence and involvement of ancestors in human affairs. Also, majority of the heads of household interviewed confirmed the pervasiveness of ancestral worship among the Benin. This finding about the predominance of ancestral worship corroborates earlier findings about the pervasiveness of ancestral worship in traditional Benin society before and after the colonial era and even in post colonial Benin. Hence, the Benin can still be described as a relatively conservative society in relation to traditional belief systems in place. While some of the traditional beliefs structures are still conspicuously in place in the ancient city, what appears to have changed is the way people respond to the presence of these ancestral shrines which are more often located in the family houses. In other words, people’s attitude towards them and the values that were attached to them are undergoing significant changes. Previously, ancestors were known to curtail ignoble acts or social vices by their negative reaction to any perpetrator of any unwholesome behaviour committed by members of a family. Their judgments were instant and their

decisions were held in great esteem and considered sacred. Yet, literature abound about how trafficked women are brought before their family or community shrines to take oaths of secrecy especially to promise not to divulge information about the traffickers and the terms of operations (Parrang , 1998; Giwa Osagie, 1998; UNICRI, 2003).

Literature is replete on the impact of religion on the social structure. For instance, it has been argued that western capitalism was essentially as a result of the asceticism of the Protestants then the emergence of capitalism in Western Europe. In the case of the Benin, the religious/belief structures have not changed significantly but their attitudes towards these religious institutions have undergone significant change. For instance, the apparent translation of the sacred institution of ancestral worship and shrines as from worship centres to places for legitimizing inhuman transactions like sex-trafficking, as most have been significantly employed by traffickers in the region, to facilitate trafficking of women for the purpose of international prostitution, clearly depicts the changes being witnessed in the Benin Society with respect to religious values.

### **6.3.2 Social Structure of Benin**

An insight into the traditional Benin family as it is located within the social structure is instructive in appreciating some changes which the contemporary Benin families have undergone in the last few years. Below are some of the descriptions of traditional Benin in the pre-colonial era, colonial times and in the recent past. A male key informant described the social structure of the Benin which existed before 1900 and has persisted afterwards, thus:

*Traditional Benin before the 1900, every person was born into a group. A child 0-7 was called “omoe” (baby); 7-14, “iworebho” (boy in town); 14-21, “elohae” (sweepers); 21-42, “ighele” (adult); 42-56, “edionekoto” (junior elders); 56-upwards, “edion” (senior elders). The oldest among the group is the “odionwere” (the most senior elder).*

He further expatiated that age groups described above were made up of the males and females to the adolescent group (14-21) at which stage the girls are expected to marry. He added:

*This pattern remained for a long time and it is fascinating to note that after the conquest of Benin, we had extended and nuclear families with the “okaigben” as the head of the extended family.*

Providing more insight about the social structure in which the family is located, another key informant, male, explained;

*Here in Great Benin, we had three broad categories of people, which we can also refer to as family, royalty or the first family; the nobles, which was made up of people who were endowed with certain privileges; the chiefs; the commoners. There were rules which guided these people’s conducts with corresponding expectations. For example, if one were made a chief, he ceased to carry load on his head, in other words there will no longer be the burden of labour. The nobles were not expected to work as they were supposed to be taken care of by the commoners. Princes don’t work. The commoners were expected to engage in productive activities, cut trees and do the hard labour.*

The above quotations captured in apt terms the highly stratified pre-colonial Benin society which had several vestiges during the colonial era and still persist till date.

The key informant further elaborated on the social structure thus:

*The organized production system in place was a very compact arrangement, which must have provided for the day- to- day running of the family. Craft, roof construction,*

*weaving and architecture before the advent of the white men were in vogue. Look at this street (Sakponba road) one of the oldest in the world; the white men marveled at the way it was planned. Women were part of the “Iwebo” house although they were also schooled in things like animal husbandry, weaving, cooking and native midwifery. This was a major challenge to the Europeans even when they came.*

The “Iwebo” house was saddled with the responsibility of making and decorating the Oba’s apparels. These views expressed by the male respondent indicate that there are continuity in some aspects of the Benin culture even through the colonial era to what many refer to as post colonial era. However, there were remarkable modifications in the general social structure as well as the Benin family structure during the colonial contacts. One of the key informants (male) who is also well grounded in academic research on the Benin disclosed:

*The establishment of district heads served to usurp the powers of the chiefs and traditional rulers referred to as Enigies. They also succeeded in changing the age old loyalty system to the Odionwere (the oldest man) and they were put under the district heads.*

Since the family did not exist in isolation from the social structure, these changes in the social structure brought about by the contact had some impact on the family structure of the Benin. For example the octogenarian female key informant and another male key informant argued that divorce was a colonial heritage among the Benin. Hence, the Key Informant (male) observed:

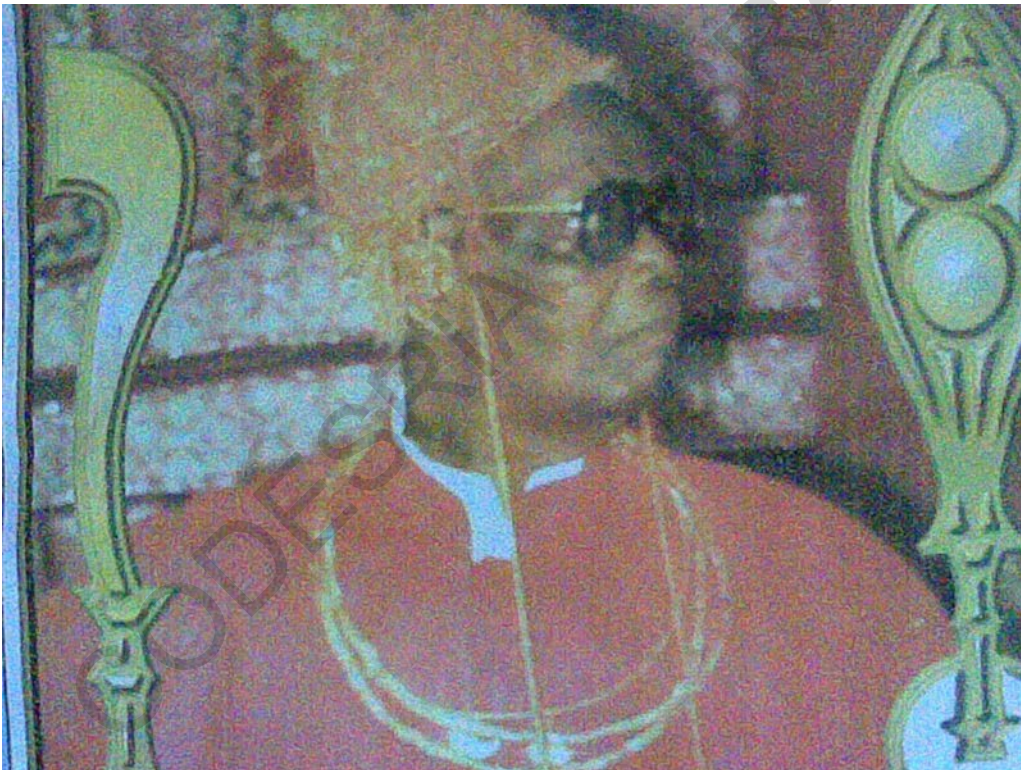
*Divorce in Benin was not common. It was only previously assessed by women of royal parentage. However, divorce is a consequence of colonial contact in Benin.*

Another important factor that cannot be underestimated is the issue of the early European contact with the Benin people which could also have impacted on the social structure in which the Benin family is submerged. This has to do with the Benin contact with the Portuguese as far back as the early 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries which made the Benin very strategic to the economic agenda of the Portuguese and the West African Sub-region. This simply placed the Benin at the forefront of economic prosperity and further expanded the empire. This view was captured by one of the key informants and a highly placed chief thus:

*Great Benin kingdom was one of the greatest empires with great sense of organization. The early European, that is the Portuguese whom the natives referred to as 'Kpotokin' till date were greatly amazed at the level of socio-political organization which distinguished the empire. If you have ever been to Ring Road, Benin city you would notice that it is an intersection of nine roads which lead to different parts of the country, to Warri, Asaba, Gele Gele, Abuja and even Lagos. Moreover, you would also notice the settlement patterns of the people, highly organized, the blacksmith, sculptors, weavers and even the those who work with iron have their own quarters. This simply amazed the early Europeans. As early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Benin had ambassadors in Spain. The long relationship which the Benin had with these Europeans was profound. Our cultural roots are very deep and this was a psychological boost for the Benin. The Benin man is very proud: he had this self sufficient posture. So are the girls.*

The observations made by this key informant on the structure of the Benin society before and during the European contact as well as the presumed effects on Benin Society have been highlighted by several scholars of Benin history but has not been related to the issues of changing family structure as it relates to the phenomena of trafficking and international prostitution. For instance, Igbafe (1979); Obiyan (1994); Uyi Eweka (2003) have highlighted the Portuguese relationship with the Benin and how this impacted on

the economy of Benin especially during the trade in slaves which further led to massive expansions of the Great Benin kingdom. It will also be instructive to affirm at this point that the structure of the Benin society as elucidated by the key informants have been corroborated by extant literature on the social organization of traditional Benin kingdom.



**Figure 6.12: His Royal Highness Omo'oba N'Edo, Ukhuakpolokpolo, Oba Erediauwa (II), the current Benin Monarch who is greatly revered by his subjects**

### **6.3.2.1 Changing Status of Males and Females within the Benin Social Organisation**

Another factor that needs to be considered in order to evaluate the changing Benin family structure is to examine the changing status of males and females in traditional Benin society. Having understood the social organization of the traditional Benin society and the place of the Monarch in the Benin state, the status of the males and females within the family is important in order to explicate the relationships which exist between the various members within the Benin society. Scholars like Sudarkassa (1986) and Nzeogwu (2004) had affirmed that colonialism helped to worsen the plight of many African women. Their thesis was that indigenous African women occupied relatively higher status in traditional African societies in pre-colonial times and that the status worsened during the colonial contact.

From the findings however, there seemed to be divergence from earlier observation by scholars that women enjoy a higher status in pre-colonial times as this did not describe the situation of women in traditional pre-colonial traditional Benin Society. Most women's statuses in traditional Benin could be described as poor before the contact and there seemed to be a bit of change with the pre-SAP era when women were given contracts in Benin by the then Military administrator, Bigadier S.O. Ogbemudia. From the study findings, the status of women in the families remained even through the period of colonization, except for the issue of divorce which became permissible. Despite the permissiveness on divorce as a result of colonialism, women were not in a hurry to leave their husbands houses due to the cultural stigma associated with separation or divorce. The women would rather remain in their families of procreation and have a thoroughly

dysfunctional family. In describing the trajectory in the status of women, a male key informant explained thus:

*Traditionally, a wife was economically self sufficient in that she provided for her children from the piece of land given to her by her husband to cultivate. Also women were exposed to different informal schools like poultry, animal husbandry, music or even traditional medicine. Some of them understood human physiology. This is because a woman was said to be very close to nature in Benin philosophy. Hence, in Benin, a married woman could not shake hands with another man. She could not stretch her legs out for another man to cross over, if a man were to stare at her lecherously, then she was expected to report the incidence to her husband; otherwise she would incur the wrath of the ancestors. Adultery incurred the wrath of the gods which could ultimately lead to the death of the husband by the gods. The women were put under traditional oaths of allegiance since this was the only means to ascertain fidelity of a woman for reproductive purposes.*

Previous status of Benin women was further described by a female key informant:

*When a woman came into a family, whatever the family forbade is what she forbade. When the woman was menstruating, she could not reach the apartment of the husband. She must not cook or even touch anything that belonged to her husband. She could not even greet the husband. She would need an intermediary to do so. In the palace, as at today, all these practices are still in operation. The man and his wife cannot use the same bucket for bathing.*

The other female key informant resonated in line with the earlier observations made by the previous key informants:

*A man then was the head of the home and with wife or wives and children supporting all the decisions of the man. Whatever the man decided was final and could not be questioned. This continued for a long time and even now,*



*modernization is changing things. A woman was seen as a property just like any other patriarchal set-up in Nigeria. She was seen as a property as soon as the bride price was paid. The wives were subject to the husband in all things and the husband's wish overpowered everything she did. The woman could not call her husband by name. She could not even stay in the same apartment with him during her period.*

The above views expressed by all the key informants are inadvertently suggestive of the statuses of both genders. The need to put women under some of these ritual restrictions is seen from the views expressed above in which the key informants revealed that the traditional conception of the Benin woman is that she is very close to nature. These conceptions are closely linked with the ideological base of the Benin society of which there are prevailing beliefs in Ancestral worship. As long as some of the vestiges of the belief system which saw women as pollutants to important protective medicine in the family are still hegemonic, the rate of change in status of women may be slower than in many other societies. On the contrary, it is noteworthy that the experience of women in the Benin society may not be completely universal as claimed by Ortner, (1974) and presented by Sudarkassa (1981), but may also be atypical of some other Nigerian society as has been observed by Curnow (1999).



**Fig 6.13: A bevy of Benin girls dressed in traditional Benin attire with expensive coral beads and white wrapper**

Findings on the family/household based interviews conducted also showed that majority of the respondents from each of the local government area studied argued that women did not have a say in traditional Benin family. A total of 32 (85%) household heads in Egor explained that women's opinion were hardly considered within traditional Benin family structure, while 6 of the household heads (15 %) argued against this view. Also, in Oredo, 30 household or family heads (75%) were of the opinion that traditional Benin family structure did not give opportunity to women to make any decision in the home, while 10 household heads (25%) insisted that women played minor roles and made contributions to the decision in which the family reached. In Uhumwode, 32 household heads (80%) observed that women had no role in decision making process

while 8 household heads (20%) argued against that observation. Below are some of the excerpts

*When decisions were made, women were not allowed in; it was for the man's family and the male elders.*

**(Household head from Egor (Male))**

In Egor, this was further corroborated by another male household head:

*Here, women opinion was not important, they are not seen when decisions are reached. They are just to implement.*

The women interviewed in the households were very mindful of their cultural status hence, one of these women opined,

*We were simply executors.*

**(Household head from Egor (female))**

*This has been on ground before we the women came. We don't decide on anything within the family. We don't have right on decision making.*

**(Member of a household in Oredo (Female))**

Again another woman, a 44 years old female member of the household interviewed reiterated more succinctly:

*When there is talk in the family a woman cannot talk, no the talk is for the males.*

**(Household Head from Uhumwode (Female))**

*Women cannot talk for the matter wey man dey (women cannot be part of an all-male discussion).*

*A woman cannot say anything when a man is present.*

**(Household Head from Uhumwode (Male))**



**Figure 6.14: A Benin man dressed in traditional attire surrounded by exquisitely dressed Benin women in a traditional event**

The last respondent spoke about the pre-eminence of tradition especially as it has been with women in the traditional Benin society. However, it is imperative to note that the statuses of women described above were not as homogenous since the Benin society was a highly stratified society. Hence one of the respondents, a 54years old female and member of a household interviewed in Oredo disagreed that all women did not make decisions in a family. Rather she remarked;

*Women could have a say in the family depending on her position, like if she is the mother of the first son or if she is very elderly in some cases. She could make decision but she did not take the final decisions.*

This opinion was substantiated by a few male respondents who added that the financial standing of a woman in traditional Benin society also gave women relatively higher leverage in both traditional and contemporary Benin society, to express their opinions and take certain decision within the family. Another variant from the information given by other respondent was the introduction of religious dimension to the reason which justified that women had to be passive at the home front when important decisions are to be made. Hence one of the male respondents and a household head (male) in Oredo disclosed:

*Depend on the community that is Ikoka (a particular town in Oredo) where women had a say. It is because of the curse by the Oba (King). There, women progressed more than men. But in other parts of Benin, women did not have a say or take decisions in homes.*

From these quotations above one can conclude that traditional Benin society was significantly patriarchal. The patriarchal structure in place was further accentuated by the prevailing traditional belief system which formed the core of the ideological basis upon which the family was structured. Hence, a place where women prospered and were actively involved in decision making, such cases were considered the consequence of a royal blight. The women interviewed also confirmed in the extracts above that women in traditional Benin families were not able to take important decisions. There were however exceptional cases where the respondents agreed that women had a say in the family even though their decisions were not final. From the data, it is clear that even the traditional Benin gave some preferences to women on the basis of their age and the position or,

status of such woman in the family. For instance, if she was the mother of the first son in the family as well or if she had financial strength which was considered exceptional, then she may have the privilege accorded only males when important decisions are to be taken. Equally important is the influence, the predominance and pre-eminence of the Benin Monarch. Only women who had a relationship with the palace did not fit into the category of women who could not have a say in the family. As was observed by one of the key male informants;

*The monarch is the superstructure. He is the centre point.  
To us, he is next to God. The Oba is supreme.*

However, one can also infer from the data that the status of women in traditional Benin society was therefore dependent on some factors, even though customarily, she was expected to be at the background, that is, a passive recipient of instructions from the male folks. These factors include relationship of such women with the palace ( e.g. a princess), whether the community enjoyed the favour of the Oba; and the economic power or influence a woman could wield in the family. But culturally, the rule of the game was that women were expected to defer in all things as they were men's property. This position is obviously corroborated by Sacks (1985) when she posited the thesis on the variability of women' statuses as well as Sudarkassa (1985) views that women in traditional African societies were given differential respect based on factors like age and religion. Also important is women's relationship with the palace as shown in the study findings. Findings revealed that women of royal parentage enjoy a higher status in relation to other women among the Benin. This is in line with earlier findings by Curnow (1999) and Adeshina (2006).

For a more robust discussion of changes in the family structure among the *Benin*, these would be examined under the following sub-themes.

### **6.3.2.2 Traditional Economic and Productive Roles of the Family**

Focusing on the economic and productive roles of the family, the traditional Benin family was examined with respect to the contributions made by individual member of the household; responses were sought from household heads as well as key informants on the traditional economic functions of members of the family. In Oredo, 32 household heads (80%) agreed that the traditional family was based on co-operation between father and wife or wives with the children rendering assistance. In Egor, more household heads, 34 (85%) of the respondents, agreed that it was based on co-operation while the other 15% explained that it was just the way things are today with nothing different. Majority of the heads of households in Unhumwode, 38 household heads (95%), agreed that it was also based on co-operation between the parents with children assisting. Also the opinions of the key informants did not differ significantly from the responses by the heads of household. This may be due to the fact that traditional Benin was more homogenous in terms of economic activities than what is in existence today. Here are some of the responses on the traditional economic roles of members within the family.

*The woman bore and reared the children. She had the obligation to cook, help in the farm and do all the household chores. You know the old gender roles.*

**Key Informant (Female)**

*Since farming was an onerous responsibility, the father had the farms and shared portions for his wives to take care of their children. The father never gave out money to their wives. The women or wives were given farm land to plant*

*crops on. Out of which they are expected to feed their children and the father. The men could help in the harvesting of the yams.*

**Key Informant (Male)**

*When the father called the elders in the family that he wanted to build a house, the first day of the foundation, the wife was expected to cook for the family with the assistance of the daughter.*

**Male household head in Oredo**

*There were contributions from the women who assisted their husbands in the upkeep of their farms. Fathers were into farming, wives and mothers were trading with the children supporting their parents. The wife and daughter kept the home while and the wife also tried to make money through other sources.*

**Female member in a household in Oredo**

*In the olden days, women were involved mainly in farming with their husband and children. The economic contribution was mutual. The man and the woman raised the family together.*

**Female member in a household in Uhumwode.**

The above statements confirm that traditional gender roles were pervasive in pre-colonial Benin and through out the colonial period until the post colonial era. Be that as it may, it is imperative to note that the contributions of women to the economic wellbeing of the home were crucial to the survival of that home. In many instances, as observed by majority of the respondents in the family based interviews, men were expected to provide farm land for their wives to farm on while women were expected to cater for the needs of the children from the proceeds realized from sales of the farm crops.



Certain factors gave this economic arrangement an impetus in traditional Benin society: these include among others, economic activities which were essentially agrarian, class stratification as well as gender based division of labour which also created the cultural gendered roles of women in a patriarchal setting. Also, the society was essentially polygynous with children rendering assistance to the parents based on traditional gender roles. For example, it was expected that the girl should assist the mother in household chores while the boys were expected to defer to the father alone. This economic arrangement enabled an effective socialization process.

#### **6.3.2.3 Other Functions of the Traditional Benin family**

Just as some of the functions of the family have been described as universal, there were efforts made to highlight key aspects of the Benin family functions or responsibilities towards its members. A variety of socialization functions of the family were documented. In Oredo, only 8 household heads reported that modern school systems was essentially the socializing agency, while 22 household heads disagreed with this assertion stating that the school was the main socialization agency but stating that the family played significant role. The family was defined as a network of people or relatives comprising of elders from the same genealogical line who reside in close proximity or in the same location. There was an emphasis on corporate responsibilities and the role of family members to socialize younger ones. A total of 10 families reported that age groups and the family institution performed socializing functions of the young ones in traditional Benin Society in Egor Local Government Area, while 19 families in Uhumwode agreed

that the age group also played important role in combination with the family in socializing its young members.

Here are some of the excerpts:

*In those days there were modern schools which we send our children to socialize them. We also took them to other family members' homes to learn from them.*

**Male household head in Oredo**

This view was corroborated by other respondents of both genders:

*In the past we took our children to visit their uncles and aunts so that they could learn to be responsible.*

**Female member of household in Oredo**

*Our children of nowadays are very different. In those days our children did not go to schools like the universities. We carry our children to different places to visit relatives so that they could learn what they did not know before. Sometimes we call them together and let them know what is forbidden in the family and community and what is acceptable.*

**Male household head in Oredo**

From the responses above, it is evident that there was a general sense of commitment members of Benin extended family had towards one another. Thus extended family played a vital role in the process of socialization of its members. The nuclear family could not exercise absolute authority over children in terms of meting out disciplinary action when these children erred. This corroborates the traditional ideology about child rearing among and socialization among the Benin and that is, the proverb that a child is not owned by his parents alone. It also underscores the role related kins are

expected to play in ensuring that children are compliant to socially approved ways of life. Furthermore, the responses from the male heads suggest a gendered socialization with associated gendered roles and functions. The eba-ebo or the age grade system is an all male affair with the women and children totally excluded from their activities.

The religious dimensions of socialization process were also buttressed by the household heads and the community roles towards enforcing compliance. Religion played a crucial role in traditional Benin families and communities. The fear of family or community deity was the beginning of social sanity and compliance among the Benin people. This is well illustrated in the excerpts below:

*Like for us, the mention of “Okwaehi” (the family deity and goddess) is the beginning of wisdom. The family deities were worshipped with awe and their fear was enough to check the behaviour of the young ones.*

#### **Female member household in Egor**

*At the visit of a family shrine, we young ones had to spend about two hours with the family priest, getting advice on our moral conduct. There was also the influence of the peer group which was the age set to which you belonged.*

#### **Male household head in Egor**

*I can remember it was only advice we were given at home, since we did not forget the shrine we stood before.*

The age grade institution was equally an important socialization agency in traditional Benin society. One of the household remarked succinctly:

#### **Male from household head in Uhumwode**

*The age grade was in place. Through age grade, there were certain duties expected to perform and there are also appropriate sanctions against those who violated the*

*customary expectations. There were also the moonlight stories that were told regularly.*

**Female Member of Uhumwode**

Moreover, the nature of socialization process among the Benin were affected by some other factors such as the gender, the personality of the children as well as the type of family, that is, permissive or non permissive families, good or bad families. Hence a 67 year old household head (male) maintained that;

*The difference in child socialization was determined by the personalities of the children. Parents studied their children to determine what to do. You don't treat every child the same way. Some are very heady and others are more obedient. Children may be many but their nature is different.*

There was however a significant determinant of the kind of socialization process that a child was exposed to was on the basis of gender of that child. A respondent disclosed this:

*Yes there was a difference between female children and male children. The female children were usually secluded from their age mates because they are special children because of the need to preserve their virginity. A blood stained white was kept for younger females in the family to show them how the older ones preserved themselves for their husbands in order for them to be of good behaviour. Any good family knows that female children should be handled with care and watched very closely so that they do not bring shame to the family.*

Other respondents argued that stated that the nature of the family one came from, determined the form of discipline or nature of socialization process that a child would be exposed to. The female member of a household in Oredo in her 50s explained:

*It depended on the kind of family you came from. There were some families that were known to be good families because of their high moral conduct whereas some could easily be described as bad families because they did not care about the moral conducts of their children. That is why when one's children indicate their intention to get married, a thorough investigation is carried out in order to ascertain whether the family is a good one or not.*

Among the Benin, there are values placed on the type of a family one is from. Families are perceived as either good one or bad. A good family was usually one which was known for their peace and noble carriage, nurturing its young ones to be socially conformed to the rules of the society. On the other hand, the bad family could simply be defined as one with a bad name and therefore are essentially known for their deviant acts. The findings about the status of the girl-children in a classical patriarchal society show that family pride or family honour is attached to the female chastity and virginity as in other societies where classical patriarchy is hegemonic. This finding is in line with Hirschson's (1984) concept of classical patriarchy.

#### **6.3.2.4 Family Values and Prestige in Traditional Benin Family**

The Benin prestige or value structure need to be examined in the light of the theoretical orientation as posited but Yanagasikko and Collier (2004). The place of family values cannot be underestimated. As observed by Uwuegbu (2004), values are what people work for. They informed people's choices and decisions hence their

importance in understanding the family structures of the Benin. Traditional Benin values were examined under smaller sub themes. These are on marriage practices and bride wealth payments; chastity and virginity; ritual restrictions and taboos.

Great value was placed on marriage and payment of bride wealth as was characteristic of many Nigerian societies. All the families interviewed observed the great premium that was placed on marriage which was only enacted based on the payment of the bride wealth which was ridiculously low when compared with the amount paid by the Igbo of the South Eastern Nigeria. The low bride wealth payment which was low had been observed by Bradbury (1956). However, respondents in the family based interviews and key informants disclosed that what was responsible for the low payment of bride wealth among the Benin was earlier based on the fact that an affinal kinship relationship would endure through a lifetime. Consequently, premium was placed rather on the presumed sustained allegiance which the bride's family would receive over a life time period. This loyalty from affinal kins was expressed in kind during important events. One of the household heads in Egor observed:

*The bride price was very important. Even though it was a token, it was shared by all members of the family. It is of great importance because it is the only way that the child becomes a wife, otherwise, she would be seen as a prostitute.*

This view was corroborated by one of the key informants

*Bride price was very little, but it was not the bride price that was too important to us, but the fact the in-laws were going to serve us till the end. The in-laws followed you to farm work. During festivals and burial ceremonies, they usually were of great help.*

**Male Key informant in Uhumwode**

Moreover, due to the highly stratified nature of the Benin society, the payment of bride price was not applicable to all and sundry as disclosed by one of the female key informants who argued that again, the payment of bride price was also not applicable to all as those who were blue blooded, that is, people from the royal family, were not under customary obligation to pay bride price. The informant (female) explained further:

*The family you are marrying from matters a lot. Royal family then and now was more prestigious to marry from. They do what ever they liked and took whatever they wanted. If it was a wife, you did not question them to pay bride price. They did not also marry from poor families. This practice has persisted even till now.*

**Female Member of Household in Oredo**

Some of the importance of bride wealth payment as elucidated by the respondents included:

- i) Helping to unite both families, that is extended families of the couples.
- ii) Serving as a token payment to establish a long lasting relationship between families
- iii) Serving as a regulatory mechanism since it made both families cautious that a relationship had been established, hence reducing the possibility of divorce. This must have reduced the rate of divorce among the Benin.
- iv) Conferring a new status on all those involved, the bride and her family as well as the bride- groom's family.
- v) Bringing honor to a bride's family and provided an opportunity of having an additional member

Like many Nigerian society which placed a great premium on preservation of female virginity until marriage, the Benin society was known to be very strict with

respect to this practice. However, it is important at this juncture to state that even though the value placed on chastity was about the same in many other traditional societies in Nigeria, the practice was still in place in Benin until after colonization. Over 95 percent of the household heads interviewed agreed that chastity was an important rule of marriage. This was probably why betrothal system of marriage was the prevailing form of marriage in Benin for a long time. This may not be unrelated to the status of the woman in the society who is seen as very close to nature and the ideological basis sustaining this position. For example, Curnows (1998) argues that the Benin women was generally perceived as an inversion of the ideal hence was usually associated with the ability to pollute or spoil charms. She further observes that the Benin belonged to a small group of studied communities (about 17%) where all the ritual rules and pollutant myths were practiced in such a magnitude. This is confirmed by the opinions of respondents in the interview while existing literature has also lent credence to this observation.

#### **6.4 TRADITIONAL FUNCTIONS OF SEXUALITY REGULATION**

To the Benin, female chastity before marriage, the act of establishing the fact that a bride was untouched before marriage brought great joy to the family when proven to be so. In such a case, the bride's mother was eulogized and she was seen as having done a good job of training her daughter well. This view was well captured by one of the household heads in Oredo (male). He opined:

*That time a girl or woman, who had not known any man before her marriage, will be respected and her family will be highly honoured. How do we know this? After marriage, in their home the man will spread white cloth down to sleep with his wife. If she was a virgin, blood will*



*enter into the cloth, and then the cloth will now be carried to the mother of the bride, who will now tie the cloth around her waist and dance around the village.*

This revelation was also affirmed by all the key informants interviewed in this study. Other areas worth considering are the Benin' value on chastity and their views family/community taboos in the family as well as the community. All the respondents were unanimous about the value placed on chastity especially with respect to the females of this extraction. The need for family chastity culminated in the enactment of certain family and community taboos. Some of the findings on chastity and taboos which were greatly protected and associated with the traditional Benin family and society are summarized in the subsequent sections.

#### **6.4.1 Chastity and Rules Associated With Traditional Taboos**

Several chastity rules and traditional taboos have been strictly observed by the Benin for a long time. The rules were gender specific as majority of them were targeted towards the women from this extraction. Some of these rules re highlighted as follows:

- i) Female virginity was greatly valued by the family and was considered as a mark of honour to the family of the girl.

*A girl after marriage must be able to bring honour to her family by her virginity.*

##### **Male household Head in Uhumwode**

- ii) Married women were also under certain family restrictions and were kept under taboos; hence, they were not expected to converse on any sexual matter \with another man.

- iii) A married woman was not expected to sleep with another man as she would incur the wrath of the gods which then could lead to the death of the child.
- iv) A married woman could not urinate in front of the house whether at night or during the day
- v) A married woman could not shake hands with any other man or even stretched forth her legs for another man other than the husband to cross over.
- vi) A married woman must not entertain or harbour evil thoughts against the husband in any way.
- vii) While she is menstruating, she was to avoid the husband like a plague so as not to pollute the husband's apartment. Below are some of the excerpts to buttress the above findings.

These findings are based on information obtained from all the respondents across locations and gender groups:

*A married woman must be faithful to her husband; once she was suspected (to be unfaithful) she must swear to the gods if she must remain in that husband's house. If it was a man, nothing was done since men were quite at liberty. If a man talked to a married woman about sex, she must immediately spit out and also confess to her husband what she was told otherwise her own children would be affected. That is, they will bear the consequence.*

**Male household head in Oredo**

*A man does not have problems at all. It is the woman that suffers a lot of constraints in the family and society. When the female is on her period, she was not allowed to do certain things in the home especially if the father or husband was a traditional man.*

**Female member of the household head in Egor**

*In those days, another man did not use his hands to cross another man's wife's neck. A married woman did not shake*

*any man any how. A married woman could not go to the front of a house and urinate whether during the day or night time. The clothes of a married woman are properly kept in the home.*

#### **Male head of household in Oredo**

*If a woman had an evil intention to kill her husband or harm any member of the family, the “ehinwinowa” will react negatively against the woman.*

#### **Male household head in Oredo**

Based on the Benin traditional value structure upon which the family structure was a superstructure, the form of patriarchy that existed in the Benin society can be described as classical patriarchy as espoused by Hirschson (1984) and corroborated by Pateman (1996), where they both argued that patriarchy had variants. Hirschson (1984) has observed that in classical patriarchy, older men controlled women and children but usually ensured that the honour of a family was significantly tied to the honour of the females in that society. This explains one of the reasons why several restrictions were usually targeted towards the women in order for that family to enjoy certain prestige within the society.

Furthermore, responses were sought on the value placed on both the male and the female children in the Benin family. This question became necessary considering the gendered nature of trafficking in Benin as documented by extant literature. Some of these works which have been done in this direction include WHARC (2001); Onyeonuru (2003); Bamgbose (2004); Skogeth (2006) to mention a few.

The findings of these data corroborate the previous assertion about the low status of the Benin girl child in relation to the male child. The male child, no matter the age, was greatly revered and seen as a potential heir. On the other hand, the female child was

seen as a “passer by,” half –current,” “another man’s property.” These are some of the derogatory terms used to herald the birth of a female child and they were often used to describe her. The male child was seen as one who would perpetuate the lineage and preserve the family wealth unlike the female child.

## **6.5 SOURCES OF CHANGE IN THE TRADITIONAL BENIN FAMILY**

This aspect of the work attempts to take into account some of the identified sources of change the traditional Benin family structure has undergone, as highlighted by respondents. These are the sources of change perceived to have effected remarkable changes in the family.

### **6.5.1 Portuguese and Early European Contact**

Without a doubt, Benin kingdom prior to the Portuguese contact as have been elucidated in the literature had a proud history of superb socio political organization. For instance there are clear evidences from archival sources that clothes weaving in Benin predated the pre-monarchial stage (Agbontaen, 1990). The early contact that the Benin had with the early Europeans in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century gave great impetus to the strength of the monarch and the influence it wielded over the region. At the time of contact the Benin Empire was highly organized under a strong influence of the Oba who was greatly revered by the subject as observed by Igbafe (1979) and Obiyan (1988).

The Oba of Benin enjoyed a favourable trade relationship with the Portuguese who eventually impacted greatly on the social life of the average Benin man. The

observable and significant impact as having been documented by historians is the acquisition of English language which was spoken to the subject but corrupted to become pidgin English. Also, the average Benin man still humorously or ignorantly refers to the Portuguese as “Kpotokin”. This term is still being used continuously to refer to any white man who definitely is not colour skinned. Hence one of the key informants observed in his remark on the influence of the Portuguese in Benin.

*The Portuguese too were amazed and genuinely impressed with socio-organizational and political structure in place when they came here (Benin Empire). They were very enthused by the Oba’s monopolistic privileges and hence there were uninterrupted trade with the kingdom of Benin for a long period of time.*

**Male key informant**

Another key informant (male) remarked thus:

*There are general impressions about the fact that the Portuguese coming into Benin may have also created some form of curiosity in the minds of the adventurous Benin man. The way you can know that this had some impact on the people’s mind can be seen through the arts (some art works which tried to depict the white man) and the dominant language that is pidgin that is still spoken widely among the Benin’s to date.*

While some of those responses do not directly relate to changes in the family structure, but as has been established from the onset in the study, the family did not function outside the society’s values. The family constitutes a nucleus upon which society is shaped and the larger society also influences the happenings in the family.

It can be deduced that the relationship the Portuguese had with the Benin’s was largely elitist in that the Portuguese dealt directly with the palace, and that was the very exalted place in the Benin Kingdom. Curnow (1998) observed that the average Benin

man has a desire to build relationship with the palace, which for them is the determinant of prestige, social significance or relevance in the Benin society. Hence, it would appear that the current pidgin English spoken by the Benin must have been the corrupted version of English spoken by indigenes without western education at the time. One of such effects could be the natural desire to also want to see how the other side of the world (the original home of these Portuguese).

Moreover ambassador were usually appointed and sent to Portugal those days. This created a of status or prestige structure within the society, since mere commoners could not be appointed but those who are have found favour. The desire to initiate and maintain social relevance with the palace is still very rife among the Benin who still want a change in status since a man's worth or social relevance in Benin could be measured by his relationship with the palace. Hence a Male Key Informants observed:

*The monarch is the super structure, the center point to us.  
The monarch is next to God, for the Oba is supreme.*

The palace therefore can be considered to be at the apex of Benin prestige structure. Curnow (1990) argues that the Oba had great prerogative to confer status, title and privileges regarding type of regalia, architectural decorations, etc. Hence, the higher the status or position a man enjoyed in the Benin Society, the greater the degree of relationship which that man would likely have with the Oba. This is buttressed by the Benin proverb- "the subject cannot mimic the monarch". Hence Curnow (1990) adds "the Oba was the pinnacle of achievement and the embodiment of male perfection." This fact was identified by one of the female key informants as a more potent measure of

ascertaining the status of women in contemporary Benin Society with the advent of trafficking and international prostitution. She states:

*No matter the degree of achievement even in today's world, the Benin woman cannot be made a chief and has never been made one. She can only be given beads by the Oba as an acknowledgment of her contribution to the society if she has done anything spectacular. Like Doris Dey (a popular business woman and hotelier in Benin City) she was recently given a royal bead by the Oba of Benin, but not a chieftaincy title like that of her male counterpart inspite of her wealth and influence.*

From the above, one can therefore understand the process of prestige construction in a society, where interaction with the Oba was esteemed, but further heightened after the Portuguese contact with the palace on trade matters. This must have created impressions in the mind of the people, and aroused great curiosity about the place (or origin of these people) and how they too could explore the Portuguese country and see what life was like and possibly become socially relevant within the Benin society then. Moreover, one of the female key informants disclosed that male migration had preceded female migration Benin's males were also involved in illegal migration at some point. The female key informant attributed the massive crave to go to Europe at the time was an exclusive male affair: She observes:

*The desire to travel abroad actually started with the men in Benin. Most of them did not go to school; you know the average Benin man is very proud so they did not pay much attention to Western education initially. They opted to travel overseas and many of them were involved in low paying job since they were not well educated. A significant number of them were into hard drugs and other bad businesses. Many of them were getting jailed over there and were therefore bringing stigma to their families back home. I think many of these families had to change their minds and felt that the female members who after all could*

*not bear the family name for a long time could be used moreover, the girl child is seen as one whose membership in a family is short lived. The position of women has not changed despite her involvement in trafficking which many of these women think is financially empowering. With all the money they have made, have they being acknowledge? They (trafficked women) are just being used by men again as it has always being the case.*

It is therefore evident that evident the existing Benin prestige structure is highly gendered. Benin women still cannot access to the coveted chieftaincy title, despite the change in their socio-economic statuses.

### **6.5.2 Colonialism.**

Many scholars have postulated that the colonial contact that the Benin had with the British further accentuated the conspiracy against the culture of the Benin. For instance, it was observed that before colonialism, the Benin did not have a direct word interpreted as prostitution in their own language, thereby suggesting that it was absent from the Benin society (Uyi-Eweka, 2006). He observes that changes in family values and structure which have led to the phenomenon of trafficking for the purpose of prostitution was a colonial legacy. The findings from key informants revealed some of the effects colonialism on the Benin family values:

*Marriage among the Benin was considered as very sacred.  
Divorce among the Benin is a colonial legacy*

**Female key informant**

*“Women could not seek for divorce except those of royal parentage, before the colonial era”*

**Male key informant**



Other changes which were also significant in the family values were aptly explained by one of the key informant:

*The British made chiefs and Enigies district rulers. They used them to enforce the collection of taxes. They (British) asserted in such a way that they reduced the cultural impact of these people over their subjects. The former loyalty and allegiance given to the Odionwere (the oldest man in the quarter/family) was greatly compromised. Also a man could now do away with the wife without much recourse to the in-laws and even ask for the repayment of the dowry. This practice is on the increase’.*

Another key informant (female) further espoused on the changes which were mediated by colonial intrusion

*Women were traditionally subject to their husbands until western education came. This led to the introduction of new concepts which started affecting the relationship at home (family). Women’s roles were also affected with Christianity. Some men who went to church began to discard the idea of polygyny and they stuck with one wife. That woman became more secured since she did not have to fear other wives. Some men also started accepting that female children are as valuable as male children.*

Also related to the colonization process was the introduction of the wage economy which also created a situation where traditionally homogeneous agrarian communities diversified. Then the men had to work outside their immediate environment. As it has been observed earlier by the key informants, those who are of the noble class do not work and are expected to be served by the commoners. Some men had to take to paid employment in offices. The men who had to work in the cities left their wives in the villages or the rural areas. This further limited the opportunities of the women to the agricultural setting for a long time and confined them to the domestic sphere thereby

eliminating their access to western education. The Benin men did not embrace western education for a long time. This view was captioned by one of the key informant (female).

*The Benin man did not accept the western form of education like his counterpart in Southern Nigeria for a long time; they were reluctant about the western education. And this has significant impact on the value system of the Benin today.*

This view was corroborated by another male key informant who described an average Benini man as proud. He added.

*The average Benini man is proud because he is very conscious of his rich heritage. Even when they are mere clerks in an office the way he carries himself will make you think that he is the boss. The man that came in to see me now (referring to the researcher who saw a flamboyantly dressed man in heavy lace material with him earlier on) he is only a driver in one of the ministries. That was why for along time they did not realize the value in Western education and today we are still not there yet especially at the National level where important decisions are being made .*

The views expressed by the key informants suggest that although the Benin society is essentially male oriented, younger male children were not exposed to western education, hence limiting considerably the females' access to western education. This is against the background that the women are culturally perceived as "transitory beings" that had no stake in the family matters. This notion impeded the timely emergence of women of substance who have made historic contributions to their communities like those found among the Yoruba and the Igbo. It also accounts for the low rate of females' education among the trafficked and potential trafficked victims as highlighted in earlier studies such as: WHARC, 2002; Onyeonoru, 2003; Skogeth, 2006. The lack of equal

access to education among the Benin was resonated by a female key informant who argued that lack of education made young women of this extraction vulnerable, thereby enabling the phenomena of women trafficking and international prostitution to thrive in the region. She says:

*The lack of education among these girls now makes them liable to the phenomena of trafficking. When you are not educated, you are an easy prey. Most of them are not equipped to cope with the demands of the current world. The best they are promised is sales girl, domestic help, or even salon business abroad. When they get there they discover it another ball game entirely.*

### **6.5.3 Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP)**

Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was also an epochal period in the history of Nigeria which some scholar have agreed had a deleterious effect on the family structures in Nigeria. The economic restructuring distorted existing structures within many homes as most bread winners lost their jobs in the heat of mass retrenchment that accompanied the liberalization process. However there was a remarkable event which preceded the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) era when the then military governor of the defunct Bendel State Brigadier S.O Ogbemudia (Edo state was carved out of Bendel State) arbitrarily awarded juicy contracts to women in the state without taking gender or marital status into consideration. One of the male key informants opined:

*With the colonial rule, women could be said to have had some assets, became independent and owned property. This situation improved considerably during Ogbemudia (Governor when women had access to bidding for contracts) for the first time a sizeable number of women seized this opportunity, and they began to acquire landed properties. Due to the inheritance system, women cannot inherit from their father's property. This trend became*

*superfluous and thus led to some changes in the female position. When the women owned their houses and earned their own money, they no longer deferred to their husbands and the trend continued.*

This era gave way to the SAP era which led to the event as chronicled by a key male informant.

*Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) made women work outside the home which they were not used to and placed serious economic burden on them. The men became jobless and they did not want to go to farm.*

Another female key informant disclosed:

*SAP brought hardship to the families. Naturally, the Benin man is a proud man. The abriba" (a male tailor, usually from Ibo origin who hawks his trade around in Benin town) was laughed at by the Benin man for doing dirty jobs. So you can see that there were some things like menial jobs. So the women again bore the brunt and so they had to work.*

The theory of political economy identified the challenges faced by developing nations being forcefully entrenched in an economic world system which has culminated in the deregulation of most of the third world economies. The structural adjustment programme that was put in place was to then restructure the Nigerian economy and place it on a better economic footing. But just as was predicted in the theory of the world system, capitalism only enabled the core areas to develop at a greater pace while the peripheral states or nations are systematically exploited economically (Wallestein, 1974).

The burden on women in times of economic downturn is usually enormous and which places her in double jeopardy, since culturally she is subjugated and economically she is disempowered without access to critical resources. Although there have been

arguments the political economy with specific reference to that Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was one of the critical factors that led to the emergence of trafficking and international prostitution among the Benin (Aghatise, 2002; Onyeonuoru, 2003), his proposition did not sufficiently account for the reason why the region has become synonymous with trafficking and international prostitution, since Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was a national policy and not region specific in its operations. This study therefore proposes that as significant as the political economy is, the intra house hold dynamics may not be captured adequately by the macro political economic theory. To do his successfully a review of the findings of factors that are mediating changes in the contemporary Benin family structure is imperative.

## **6.6 CHANGES IN BENIN FAMILY STRUCTURE**

The economic contribution of family members to the survival of the Benin family is very important to the survival of that family. In traditional Benin society, the man who is the patriarch performed economic function by providing for the wife or wives to farm on. The changes mediated by the colonial intrusion which led to a wage economy brought about changes in the contemporary family structure. Majority of the house hold heads agreed that before now, parents especially the fathers were responsible for the up keep of the family. Since most of the household heads interviewed were males, most of them argued that even though many of the families in traditional Benin were polygynous and essentially agrarian, the provision of farm land to every wife to cultivate still made father the ultimate provider or bread winner in the family. Also, majority of these household heads identified the “current economic condition “as a major factor which has

necessitated the involvement of children in meeting the needs of the family. Although in traditional Benin family structure, the children also performed some economic functions like weeding and planting in the farms, and assisting the father in the performance of their economic roles, the children were still perceived as security for old age.

In recent times, with the downturn in the Nigerian economy and the effects on the family structure, there arose an urgent need to depend children who are no longer just “old age security,” but are conceived as vital present economic requirements to cope with the family financial needs. Consequently, there is a heavy reliance by Benin household heads on transnational remittances, which they disclosed are usually substantial and have gone a long way in meeting the family’s needs. This underscores the relevance of globalization which emphasizes interconnectedness among countries in such a way that what is happening in far away Europe has direct effect on those in the rural parts of the world. Remittances from children abroad constitute a major means of survival for the Benin people.

It is a general trend for parents to brag about the number of their children abroad. The fact that they are abroad is status symbol for the average Benin indigene. The abroad craze is phenomenal among the Benin and it cuts across families regardless of social class as mothers envision traveling overseas as one of the ultimate accomplishment in life. Findings show that majority of the respondents in Egor and Oredo highlighted the income from children abroad as an important source of family contribution, while only relatively fewer households in Uhumwode made mention of contribution from children abroad as a minimum source of income. Here are some of the responses to the question of

economic contribution of members of the Benin family abroad in contemporary Benin family. A male household head in Oredo observed;

*They (Children) bring for the family to feed, they build houses. I am 102 years old. I cannot do anything to contribute to the needs of the family except for my children abroad. This beautiful house was bought by my first son and my first daughter abroad (overseas). They are the ones responsible for daily upkeep. I have three children in higher institutions: two (2) in UNIBEN, and one in Ekiadolor (a College of Education in Benin). These are the children who are responsible for all these. Nowadays, the way modern people do their things is really baffling me. Today if the woman has money, they cannot even support the family. They will say you are the father, so if you don't go out and work and bring money, otherwise the family will not eat. Some children don't even care about the welfare of the family.*

Another female member (54) of a household in Egor stated with a lot of excitement, when asked the contribution of her children abroad:

*Presently, we have daughters abroad who live in Italy. They are the people bringing money for us even this house was built by them. How can one build a house in today's Nigeria with the hardship in the country. I know people are talking but they are simply jealous of the feat that my girls have accomplished within a short time in Italy.*

These excerpts indicate that there is a heavy reliance on children abroad for major family contribution among the Benin people. Traditionally, children are viewed as security in the sunset of a man's life, that is, in old age. Hence the first reason adduced for parental dependence on children's contribution was based on old age (102 years old). What is however ironic is that the man in question still had children in school at the age of 102 years, thereby providing insight about the veracity of Cadwells wealth flows

theory. Simply put, in societies where children are viewed as economic security, fertility rate is usually high (Cadwell, 1980). Note that old age is perceived culturally among the Benin, as period where there is a total disengagement from all forms of productive labour, and a time to depend essentially on children as well the extended family for economic sustenance.

In the same vein, the second excerpt also affirms the view that contributions from children abroad constitute a significant portion of the family income. The challenge of acquiring landed property or building a house is easily surmounted with children abroad providing substantial amount of carrying out these projects. From the findings, in all the households interviewed, over half of the houses in each Oredo and Egor disclosed that they got substantial financial help from their children abroad. In Uhunmwode, only 13 households out of the 40 households agreed that they also got substantial help from their children abroad in form of remittances.

#### **6.6.1 Perception of the Girl -Child Economic Roles in the Benin Society**

Finding about the girl children economic roles in the family suggest a shift from the earlier paradigm (traditional conception) of viewing the girl children as merely transitory beings in the family to seeing them as more relevant, compassionate and sacrificial to their families of procreation. Majority of the respondents in the three local government areas agreed that female children are more compassionate and selfless and readily responsive to their families of procreation economic needs than the male children. One of the respondents a male house hold head in his sixties, prayed for his daughter in Europe over her contribution to the family by purchasing a house for him. The man



admitted having other children and older sons, but described the daughter as one who will not allow people “see” his poverty.

The story is the same for many other household heads as they admitted that the girl children are usually more caring and sacrificial than the boy child. A few excerpts would further buttress this point;

*Due to the crisis in our economy, everybody both young and old is expected to make contribution for the survival of the family. I thank God for my daughter, but for my daughter who took us out of the village and bought this house for us we would have died as tenants. My daughter is abroad and she does most of the things in this house .I have sons, but they are also being assisted by my daughter She sends cash to the family all the time since I do not do anything. You can see that am not very well so I cannot do much. My husband gets little pension from government but it is not enough. It is too small to sustain us.*

**Female members of the household head in Egor**

*This house was built by my daughter in Italy, this small car, she also bought it. If not for her, my husband is not responsible at all. What would I have done if not for my daughter (she begins to pray for her). I have other children they all depend on her now. She is planning to help the brothers as soon as they finish their university education.*

**Male Household head in Uhumwode (63)**

The economic roles of the girl children have are well acknowledged and affirmed in the study from the evidences provided so far.

### **6.6.1 CHANGES IN VALUES PERTAINING TO MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS**

The finding also reveals that there are changes in the manner Benin men relate to their wives especially when they have direct access to money from their children who are abroad or those women who have been able to establish viable businesses out of the money obtained from transnational remittances. Relationship between a man and his wife or wives is predicated on the roles played by each partner in facilitating the trafficking process of the female child. In cases where the trafficking exercise was a joint project of both parents, the relationship tended to be a harmonious one in anticipation of the proceeds from the trafficked victim, since the modality for sharing would have been agreed on. Where trafficking arrangements were done by the mother of the potential victim without the consent or the “blessing” of the father (this was usually the case in polygynous families) then the relationship was usually fraught with distrusts and suspicion. Many participants in most of the male FGD sessions held, opined that many Benin women had the proclivity of conniving with their female children, without the consent of their fathers’ in a bid to make money for themselves. Hence this was reported to be more pervasive than the mutual agreement between spouses as stated earlier.

There was a general consensus among the male participant that this category of women eventually refuse to submit to their husbands and become the *de facto* patriarch having attained some degree of financial empowerment. They concluded that the distrust in the relationship could ultimately lead to marital instability in extreme cases of intra-household conflict. The participants noted that this was the reason why many homes have lost their children to social problems like human trafficking since both parents are towing different value lanes.

*Many homes are divided today because of trafficking. Once the woman has children overseas, she becomes uncontrollable. Some fathers don't even know whether they have families any more, so the women take advantage of such negligence and decide to fend for themselves and the children. But in some responsible homes, every member still joins hands together, like before.*

**Male Participant in FGD Session with male in Uhumwode (53)**

*You don't know how many homes this abroad thing and trafficking has broken in Benin City today. Many homes have scattered because the woman now gets money in dollars so the husband cannot control her again.*

**FGD Adult male participant in Oredo (exposed to vignette 1)**

Moreover, the abroad phenomenon is very pervasive among the majority of the household interviewed. Based on the interviews held with key informants, there was divergence in opinions in responses, with respect to the utility of sex trafficking among the Benin along gender lines. The males generally disclosed that women had become rebellious to male authority and were no longer desirous to live simple lives since the advent of traveling overseas. They regretted that many women had become simply insatiable since the abroad frenzy began. Expectedly, the majority of female respondents in the household or family based interviews, argued that fathers were now more negligent of responsibilities of their economic roles in the family. Some of these female respondents opined that there were some negative outcomes of sex trafficking as the contributions of children who are overseas is the growing, leading to increased transnational remittances, but greater number of apathetic fathers who have become economically passive about their economic responsibilities, expecting to get dollars that would be sent from relatives and children trafficked abroad. Generally, there was no

consensus by key-informants that sex trafficking had negative effects on the Benin Family Structure. However, one 53 years old female members of a household in Egor agreed that cross border sexual transaction had negatively impacted the traditional Benin family structure. She remarked;

*Yes there is a big difference [between the old and new family structures. Now, there is no co-operation, again. The father will be doing his own thing, looking for how to get food, the wife is doing her own and the children are on one side. In many homes today, fathers are waiting for their wives to provide since it is believed they are the ones who get the foreign currency, while the wives are waiting on their young daughters ( who are in many cases minors) to send the money from the proceed realized by selling their bodies. What a shame, but that is what is happening.*

**Female member of household in Egor**

To do justice to the changes in the Benin family structure in recent times as result of the phenomena of trafficking and international prostitution, a more comprehensive discussion would be done in the next session.

## **6.7 EFFECTS OF WOMEN TRAFFICKING AND INTERNATIONAL PROSTITUTION ON BENIN WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILY STRUCTURES**

Study findings show that the phenomenon of trafficking is surrounded with a lot of controversy especially with respect to its positive impacts on Benin women and their families. Why some of the respondents have argued that trafficking women have changed the status of Benin women positively and have boosted the economic viability of the Benin family, which they argued had been crippled by poverty, others have opined that its effects have been delirious to the family structure.

A number of parents had boasted about their daughter's exploits in Italy and the benevolence of their daughter to the family during the family /household interviews. When these parents were asked if they knew what their daughters were doing in Europe, majority of the household heads who are parents insisted that their daughters were sales girls, day helps and another one said that a hairdressers making a lot of money there. She enthused;

*Since my daughter was approached by traffickers before, I said no, but to go abroad to do hard work, I said yes. When they told me of the numerous opportunities that abounded in that land and the many that will be realized within a very short while, I sold my cassava farm and told our deity "eba-ebo" to guide her, not all things I can tell you. She has been able to buy a generator, three motor bikes, boxes of clothes and she is building her second house by now. She has sent clothes to relatives in the village. She is planning to take her sister Eki there to learn tailoring.*

There was another female household head interviewed who reported that she knew that her daughter was prostituting in Europe but added that there was nothing wrong with the decision as it was a form of business which she described as very lucrative. Furthermore, majority of the participants from more that half of the sessions (adult males, adult females and youths) revealed that many parents usually pretended ignorance about the involvement of their female children in cross border sexual transaction. This was very close to the similar to the opinions expressed by some of the household interviewed were many of them reported that their female children were overseas are involved in legitimate business. A female key informant observed that parents refusal to disclose the involvement of their children in sex trafficking was largely attributed to the massive campaign being mounted against traffickers by the government

in the state. She argued that before now it was not stigmatizing for these women as they openly boasted about the remittances they receive from the female children. She observed that some of these mothers went as far as visiting praying houses and Pentecostal churches, asking that God should prosper the business of their trafficked daughters. Findings from FGDs suggested that due to the emphasis by many Pentecostal churches on “abundance and pervasive “prosperity sermons”, many of these *Italo* girls (those who have been successful in sex work overseas) even organize thanksgiving services with the active support of their parent and other relatives to thank God in these Pentecostal churches for granting them safety and such huge success in their business. This is highly suggestive of how a crucial socializing agency as the church in this region, have also compromised their values, in order to gain popular acceptance and high patronage from these women, who are known to be very generous to churches and spiritual houses in order to secure more of God’s favour in their subsequent escapades.

Findings showed that at the inception of trafficking, that there was indeed a high level of deceit associated with it at the beginning, that is when trafficking for sexual exploitation was a *nouveau* phenomenon, but with the advent of massive campaigns, the awareness level has relatively increased. Also evident that from the responses in the FGD sessions held, key informants and the household interviews conducted, there was a unanimous view point that trafficking in women had both good and bad sides. Here is an illustration from the responses by a FGD participant in her early 50;

*I used to help young girls to Europe before but I stopped. I was only helping girls from poor homes since their mothers would come to me for assistance. All those that I helped succeeded and are doing well now. None of them died in fact they are still coming to thank me today. I did not send*

*my own children to do such thing (prostitute) since I can take care of them. All these clothes I wear, the jewelries and "hollandies" (branded colorful and imported expensive materials) that I wear are purchased by these (trafficked) girls whom I helped and they come to say thank you to me all the time. During Christmas I also receive a lot o gifts from these girls. Many of their mothers also thank me, since their mothers have benefited a lot from them. Some have built houses, trained their young ones in private schools and even into the universities, other have opened shops for their mothers so they are all successful. But I have stopped doing all those now.*

Also there was a true life story one of a female FGD participants told, of an instance when she connived with her friend to travel abroad to engage in trans-border sexual transactions without the latter's husband's knowledge. The FGD participants, a 47 years old teacher in Egor Local Government revealed how a trafficker helped her friend to Europe whom she described as greatly impoverished and had no financial help from her husband. The female FGD participant disclosed that her friend confided in her about her intention to migrate to Italy for prostitution but did not inform her husband about her plans. When interrogated by her friend's husband about his wife's where about, she claimed ignorance. She further revealed that her friend eventually settled down fast, as she worked very hard to pay the madams in Italy. Her friend later contacted the husband since she had made enough money to get her family out of poverty. The FGD participant concluded that her friend had built a house and bought cars for her husband now all within a space of four years. She added that her friend now comes home regularly during Christmas period and that she was still happily married to her husband. Upon further enquiry on the question about the place of sexual taboo in Benin custom, which forbade a Benin woman from having any form of sexual affair or extramarital affair, much less sex-

trafficking, the FGD participant laughed with the other participants, she further disclosed that a goat was sufficient to appease the gods for such abomination. In the words of the FGD participant remarked,

*Whenever my friend comes; she will kill a goat for sacrifice now and resume her duty as a wife now, since she has done the required cleansing rites. The husband co-operates with her and what else can any one say since she is the financier of the home and even helps some members of the extended family.*

Hence among the Benin, when women have greater access to critical resources like economic resources, land and credit facilities, there is a concomitant improvement in her visibility in the family and society since she has the financial wherewithal. This is an apparent shift from traditional values system which placed women who are blue blooded or older women in the society at a higher pedestal on the prestige structure than any other woman. As a matter of fact it was considered an abomination or a taboo for any respected Benin woman to marry a white man. This value system has been so affected with the advent of trafficking and international prostitution that even the churches and other religious institutions have had to compromise their position as those who set normative standards in the community in order to benefit from the largesse obtainable from so-called “successful” trafficked victims. This is evident in the story above, as the traditional or customary sanctions meted against those who are violators of the sexual regulation within the family is no longer commensurate with the offence, hence these sanctions are longer deterrents from violating sexual taboos.

Further more, another female participant in Oredo FGD held with the women who were exposed to vignette story A, the story of a trafficked victim that ended on a tragic



note, described the effect trafficking had on the family structure and the family as “fundamental”. As a Deaconess in one of the big Pentecostals churches in the heart of Benin City, she disclosed her personal encounter with another Deaconess in the church who was troubling her 15-year-old teenage daughter, by threatening to stop paying her fees if she refused to lure their land lord's son who just returned from Holland, into sexual affair with the ultimate goal of obtaining hard currency from the young man. The Deaconess in question was not only a church worker in the church which suggests a level of commitment as a church member, but was a teacher in one of the government primary schools which is also suggestive of a reasonable degree of education.

The advent of trafficking among the Benin has also brought about major alterations from an essentially co-operative kin unit- relationship between the husband and his wife or wives; between siblings to an inherently competitive relationship. Hence, families are now more contentious over the economic resource receive from the “sacrificial lamb” -the female child doing the international prostitution, thereby challenging the former order of a customarily subservient and traditionally bowed down woman where the fathers or patriarchs are expected to be in control This was adequately captured by a male key informant on the effects of trafficking on the Benin family structure in this manner:

*The Benin woman has some control over her family now. At 40 she already has her own house. Before now, the husband needed to be aware if she had to build a house, hence the husband could be involved in the foundation ceremony called ‘olu’. Nowadays some of these things have changed. Apart from the influence of modernization, the pervasiveness of trafficking in this part of the country has also put women in the place of the family breadwinner and so she is dictating the tune of what happens in many*

*families today. A Benin wife does not inherit property in the event of the death of her husband, by custom, so she has to fend for herself. So many of these women involved in trafficking are no longer afraid whether they have male children or the death of their husbands, because many of them have more property than even the men now.*

**A male key informant**

On the changes it has brought to the gender relations with respect to the male and female children, another male Key informant opined:

*The phenomenon of trafficking is an economic design by countries in the West to have people from poorer countries and use them for their selfish purpose. Trafficking and international prostitution, have impacted negatively on the Benin family structure. It has destroyed the virginity of the female children which represented one of the core values of the Benin for a very long time thereby making the girl child a money making venture. Secondly, it has broken down the structure of marriage in many homes. When a woman finds out that her daughter is the economic mainstay, she will raise her shoulder against her husband. Many men can no longer control their wives at home, few of them have decided to co-operate with the wives in order to also benefit from the fortune realized from trafficking. Many of these women may not even be sexually faithful to their husbands because they lack financial control.*

**Male key informant**

From the above, it is clear that the phenomenon of trafficking is challenging on the age long power structure which the Benin man had wielded over the women for a long time. Many consider transnational remittances as the significant factor which has led to marital insubordination of the female folks to their husbands.

The view expressed by the informant was evidently corroborated from findings from the FGD session held with the women, who were exposed to vignette B, the story of the trafficked victim that ended on a tragic note in Oredo. The FGD participant, a middle

aged woman, a hair dresser with the highest educational attainment being a primary six observed that some married women, went to Europe for prostitution in agreement with their husbands. She recalled an account of a woman who happened to be a neighbor, who refused to allow her daughters to be trafficked for the purpose of international prostitution, but insisted that she would rather go herself. She eventually made contacts with a syndicate group and traveled out.

The FGD participant added:

*My neighbour trained her six children through this means (international prostitution). Four (4) are now graduates and the last two are in good private schools here in Benin City. Whenever she comes home, then she kills a goat. They now say that there is no taboo on the male organ of a white man. The husband does not have another wife but is still married to her and she is the only wife. The husband will not marry some body else otherwise, he will no longer be a beneficiary. She bought him a beautiful car, so he has to co-operate.*

Also greatly affected is the gendered relationship among siblings, an aftermath of the trafficking and international prostitution imbroglio. From the FGD sessions held with adult men in Oredo and Uhumwode, and Youths in Oredo who were all exposed to the vignette A, the story of a trafficked victim that ended on a tragic note, majority of the participants expressed similar opinions in all the categories arguing that young girls who have been previously trafficked and have “made it “ in the process, no longer deferred or showed cultural respect to their older male sibling as was the case before sex trafficking became the order of the day. Here is an excerpt of the FGD held in Uhumwode:

*The truth is that when these girls don't succeed, they are ridiculed but when they do, they are actually worshipped. I mean worshipped since they are treated as demi-gods. They are totally in charge and in control of that family.*

*They issue orders about what project should be carried out in their families and what amount should be expended on these projects. They decide what the immediate family should do with the money that they send, otherwise they will threaten that they will not send any money. So everyone has to do their biddings. They send money to their brothers both older and younger ones for their education, they help the family conduct burial ceremonies and even contribute to the wedding ceremonies of their siblings. So that is why they are worshipped when they succeed.*

The Youth FGD in Oredo also buttressed the manner these young women are deified within their families:

*If you see where these “Italo” girls are talking to their senior bothers, you will marvel at the show of disrespect and their audacity. No body can really challenge or control, not even their parents, since they are the ones bringing the dollars and their siblings have to comply to whatever they say. They don’t have the mouth to talk when she has taken any decision in the family. Most times the parents have to also comply because she is the one to bringing the money for wedding or burial, she is the one to build houses.*

On the overall effects of trafficking on Benin women and their family structure, there were dissenting opinions from key informants on the nature of effects these phenomena had on women of Benin extraction along the gender lines. While the male key informants conceded to the ambivalent effects of trafficking, the female key informants differed in opinion arguing that women trafficking for the purpose of international prostitution could only have detrimental effects reinforcing patriarchy and increasing the scourge of HIV/AIDS and STIs among women. For instance, one of the male Key Informants opined in support of some of the positive effects of sex trafficking on the Benin family structure, especially with respect to the economic survival of an

average household in contemporary Benin. Hence, like the legendary Nicollo Machiavelli the Prince, that the end justified the means. He remarked:

*If you were to consider the ways bees make honey, then no one would eat it. Hence it is not the action that should be overemphasized but the result of the act. The Japanese did something like this many years ago. Prostitution is the oldest profession all over the world and was even recorded in bible days. Some of this money (money obtained in the process of trans-border sexual transaction) is ploughed back into the local economy, bringing about development to the family and the community as a whole. You can see that this is inevitable effect of the global economy, which puts pressure on the underdeveloped ones who must survive. Moreover, it has greatly reduced incidence of rape of young women by men. Rape as a criminal offence is very rare in Benin City as at today.*

In a very strong defense about the prevalence of sex trafficking among the Benin, The Key Informant further debunked the claim by arguing:

*Go to Ugbague,( a location in the heart of Benin City notorious for local prostitution) majority of those involved in prostitution are not Benin girls but those from the South Eastern part of Nigeria, other parts of Edo and even Delta girls they are all there. You can verify this claim. So to limit prostitution to the Edo or Benin people is simply myopic.*

He concluded:

*If you were to consider the ways bees make honey, then no one would eat it. Hence it is not the action but the result of the act. The Japanese did something like this. Some of this money (money obtained in the process of trans-border sexual transaction) is ploughed back into the local economy, bringing about development to the family and the community as a whole.) There is obviously a propaganda about the Benin' involvement in sex trafficking. The Hausa women have been doing this for a long time, most of them under the guise of undertaking their religious trips to the Middle East but not much is being said about them. At least*

*we can see the evidence in the development it has brought about in the city.*

On the contrary, the female key informants unanimously disagreed with the views held by the male key informant above, maintaining that there was no such thing as “successful trafficked victim” or sex trafficking resulting in social and infrastructural development and that all trafficking are tragic occurrences against womanhood.

One of the female Key Informant argued:

*Yes, some of these women who may have had one thing or other to do with trafficking may have become visible, it is simply because they have become sources of revenue generation for the men. Usually the poorly educated-women are the worse hit in this situation and many of them see sex trafficking as one that results in empowerment. Do you know that we engage the services of police men in our campaign against trafficking in this City? When we go the markets, like Oliha Market, you would see these market women resisting campaigns against sex-trafficking and you will hear them say vulgar things in support of trafficking. In fact many of them would usually yell back at us responding that it is the proceeds from sex trafficking that they were using to trade and are therefore they threaten to stall any anti-f sex trafficking campaign. It is that bad.*

When asked if there were no positive sides at all to the phenomena of trafficking and international prostitution against the backdrop that it has brought about considerable improvement in the livelihood of those household who many consider as vulnerable, she stated:

*Trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation has reinforced patriarchy. In fact men are still the ultimate beneficiaries. Check it out, trafficking and prostitution have made our men lazier and many of these men have abandoned their responsibilities to their families. The Benin culture has been very unfriendly to women. She has always been used and she is still being used. How come*

*when the woman comes back from Italy (preferred destination for international prostitution among the Benin) cleansing rites are done for her, within a culture that not too long ago frowned at the mere idea of having any affair with a white man? It is all about patriarchy.*

Study findings reveal that there were divergent viewpoints on the basis of gender on the effects of trafficking among the Benin family from the interviews with Key –Informants. However a summary of findings from both Key Informants Interviews and Focus Group Discussions on the effects of trafficking on the family structure are highlighted below:

- a) A number of women especially the uneducated women conceive trafficking as an empowering process and one that brings prestige to one. This can further be buttressed by the life histories conducted where majority of those who were deported had parents with very low educational status and consequently poor socio-economic background.
- b) A reasonable number of women have achieved success and social recognition, social relevance and prestige within their families and the larger society through international prostitution serving as an impetus for others to get involved. Most of the stories that were told in the process of gathering data were usually success stories of those whose decision to travel outside the shores of this nation to prostitute were greatly rewarded. In cases where they ended tragically, victims were condemned as well as perpetrators. However, success stories were generally more recounted and therefore generally more pervasive. For instance, there are accounts of married women highlighted above who became fortunate despite the deception involved in the first case. Many of these recruiters engage

the services of women as covering to access young women who are usually related to them or close associates.

- c) In some cases when there was a joint agreement between couples, international prostitution did not jeopardize marriages. On the contrary, when process of trafficking young female offspring in a family did not get the consent of the patriarch and the mother is directly involved within a polygynous family without, it usually resulted in family strife and feud between partners and competition and rivalries between co-wives and siblings. This is a very common occurrence in Metropolitan Benin City.
- d) Women trafficking for the purpose of international prostitution have created divisions among the Benin women and have eroded the possibility of women taking a common action against trafficking and prostitution. Some of the women especially those in the lower socio-economic class perceive sex trafficking as economically empowering and thereby providing a needed platform to be socially relevant in the society, while most of the women in the higher socio-economic stratum of the society see it as a disempowerment for the women.
- e). Another important finding is the changes in attitude to the younger women who are involved in international prostitution among the Benin and are described as successful as result of the financial returns they remit to their immediate families of orientation. These young women are usually held in high esteem within their



families of orientation and they in return are utterly disdainful of any parental authority. Older male siblings whom they are culturally expected to respect and defer to usually revere them. Their words are not contested since it is the case of “she who paid the piper dictates the tune”

- f) Also power structure at the family level is going through a trajectory in that despite the preponderance of the incidence of trafficking. The extent to which men wielded control depended on the family structure. For instance, wives in polygynous marriages are becoming more liberated from family patriarchal control than wives in monogamous homes. Consequently, the phenomena of trafficking and international prostitution have continued to enhance the men’s statuses in the Benin family structure and in the society at large.

## **6.8 Cultural Factor and Phenomena of Trafficking and International Prostitution among the Benin**

This section presents life histories of trafficked victims, discussions pertaining to their families of orientation structure, relationships, socio-cultural and environmental predisposing factors culminating into decision to travel outside the country under false pretense. A total of seven (cases) are discussed in this section as these case studies are used to support the arguments that predominant socio cultural factors peculiar to the Benin society have also helped in facilitating women trafficking and international prostitution. Selection of these 7 (seven) cases analyzed was made based on random selection from the entire 15 life histories conducted since circumstances of the

previously trafficked victims appeared similar. Due to ethical considerations, pseudonyms were adopted for the interviewees.

### **CASE ONE**

Osato Ugiagbe was born into a polygynous family with the father having four wives and Judith's mother was the 2<sup>nd</sup> wife. Osato's father was a local carpenter in their village, Ehor in Uhumwode, before they eventually moved to Benin City. They lived in a three bedroom apartment in a densely populated neighbourhood at Sakponba, which Osato retrospectively described as a ghetto. Fate struck quite early when Judith lost her mother at the tender age of six, leaving Osato and her siblings in the midst of three competitive step-mothers. As the eldest child of her late mother, Osato learnt to be independent of adult control at a very early stage since she had to fend for herself. Osato's father had observed this level of independence as exhibited by Judith at a very early age, but due to the fact that he had other wives and did not want to be accused of favouritism, he decided to ask that Osato live with her maternal aunt, who came to visit from Italy, since the aunt was very desirous of providing the necessary assistance. Under the guise that she owned a shop in Italy and needed help (a sales girl) to help her with the running of the business, Osato was told to go and help her Aunt with her shop in Italy. Mr Ugiagbe became full of great hopes in anticipation that their lives would soon take a new turn. He was aware that no matter how meager, the daughter's earning would be, it would go a long way in alleviating the poverty in his family. He sold his house, the only property he had received from his late father, so as to be able to pay for the traveling documents which Osato was made to purchase.

Osato said:

*My immediate plan was to save enough money as soon as I start working in order to pay back the money with which my father paid for my trip. I also thought that I will also send more money to my father so that I can start a shop of my own in Nigeria .It has always been my dream to own a boutique.*

When asked about the level of education, Osato stated.

*Imagine the kind of house in which I grew in,three wives with so many brothers and sisters, with no food and protection of any kind. It was terrible. I went to primary school, but could not complete my J.SS (Junior Secondary School).*

What would have ended in a good story turned sour. When she eventually got to Turino in Italy, she was forced into prostitution she admitted

*It was a bad market. My father lost everything since I was eventually deported after some few months. What pained me is that my Aunty deceived me. I have learnt never to trust anybody and to be contented with whatever you have in life.*

On the utility of sex trafficking, she further revealed

*At least, I could afford new wears.*

When asked what plans she had, she said:

*Given an opportunity, I would want to go to school, and then travel out. Life is actually better there.*

To this end, Osato advised that the government should provide quality access to education and also admonished the churches to preach proper moral conducts to children in order to defer them from trafficking.

## **CASE TWO**

Omoyemwen Imafidon was born to Mr. and Mrs. Imafidon, twenty seven years ago. Although they hail from Ovia North Local Government Area, they have spent a greater part of their lives in Oredo Local Government Area, that is, Benin City. Omoyemwen's growing up was not anything memorable. For her, it was a constant experience of pain and disappointment in which there were verbal and physical combats between her father and mother who happened to be the senior wife. This could have been more tolerable for young Omoyemwen had it not been that this action was persistent with the father siding up with the junior wife against her own mother. She recollected.

*I was born into a family where peace was totally absent. It was a family where a father joins his junior wife to fight the senior wife all the time. I was there until I was twelve. It was great pain for me. My mother had to send me away from the house to stay with an Aunt of mine and unfortunately for my mum, I was her only child, while the other wife had two boys and three girls.*

Although Omoyemwen never wanted to leave her mother, she decided to go since her mother did not want any evil to befall her (as an only child) in the father's house. Staying with her aunty was like the proverbial phrase from frying pan to fire. She went through series of maltreatment and abuse in her Aunty's house which she described as very callous. Unfortunately, Omoyemwen did not want to compound her mother's problem by disclosing to her the pain she was subjected to in her Aunt's house. In her words:

*I could not just tell my mother since she too was suffering in her husband's house because of the other wife. Infact going to school was very tough for me. Even though my aunty contributed to my training, mother also did her best.*

*When I saw the level of pain and suffering my mother was exposed to and since I could not also complete my education, I decided to travel abroad.*

Moreover, Omoyemwen went to church as a good Pentecostal, she was of the conviction that God could even make an otherwise wrong decision right, since He had all the power. Based on this she informed her mother's of her decision to travel abroad for prostitution to alleviate their suffering but she recalled:

*My mother cried, she said because I was her only child, she said if I went she would die because, she would not be able to bear my absence. I made my contact still, nobody helped me. I met an Italo woman who carried me to Italy "Jejeje"(without stress). My mother even tried to discourage me, but I decided to salvage her from abject poverty.*

On whom she intended to assist if she succeeded, Omonyemwen snapped:  
*My mother of course, she has been greatly tormented by her husband. Yeye (useless) man and he calls himself my father. He and his junior wife, that my wicked Aunty are like Satan's cousins.*

Omonyemwen recollected that her trip was unsuccessful since she was eventually deported and for her the tragic part of the whole event was that upon her return, her mother had died. She wept bitterly. She spoke pensively. "My dream was to make her happy, settle down, get married and have grandchildren for her. If I had known I would not have traveled, maybe that was why my mother died" (she mused) blaming herself for not listening to her mother and also very angry with the situation which led her to make such a decision to go and prostitute in Europe she said:

*I would have been married now and have children. In this life, it is not even good to have a bad father. If my father had not been troubling my mum I would not have gone to Italy at all. Look at now, no mother, no abroad, no children and no marriage.*

She cried. Now Omoyemwen has a local hair dressing salon. Given an opportunity, Omoyemwe said:

*I would go back if I can again.*

### **CASE THREE**

Oghowwen Edoaye, 26 years old, beautiful fair skinned lady was born in Oredo. Her family background was nothing to write home about as she said it was very unpleasant growing up in her family. She disclosed:

*My father married three wives and he had more children than he could cater for. We were so “plenty” that one day my father came and drove some wives away. My father also drove my mother away and we had to follow our mamma. So that was when our suffering worsened. It was hell on earth for my mother and all of us. At that time I was already in JSS III. My mother had to rent a house out of her meager earning she got from sympathizer and rented a room. Every market day, she would sell ice block. The funniest part was that we were three children, so you can imagine how life was for us.*

Like many young girls of her age, Oghomwen had dreams inspite of her ugly predicament being born into a thoroughly dysfunctional family who had a father sent her and her siblings away with her poor mother. What troubled her tender heart most was the condition of her mother whom she felt was unbearable and, therefore, needed to be helped. She felt completely helpless but decided to depend on God. As a young Christian she consoled herself that God could do anything and send help. It was out of sheer curiosity from her friends that she got linked up to woman whom she later discovered to be a trafficker. She disclosed her intention to her mother, who initially did not like the

idea at first. But after a little persuasion from Oghomwen, she bulged. Oghomwem recollected how the mother rendered help:

*My mother tried very much. She sold her trinkets and her Gold. She sold most things she had and borrowed money from Osusu (Thrift collection) and that was how I eventually made my trip abroad.*

She praised her mum for the sacrifice. Hence she disclosed that her mother would have been her greatest benefactor, then her siblings. When asked about her father, she snapped angrily

*I don't have any plan concerning any idiot (referring to her father) apart from my mum and my younger one.*

She remarked. Oghomwen was completely embittered about her father's role in the family who she described as irresponsible and would definitely not allow him to reap where he had not sown. She said,

*My mother had done her best to help us in life. She was the only one who took the entire plan to struggle for us to grow. In fact my prayer now is that God should give me another opportunity to go back to Europe, so that I will recover all that my mother has lost.*

This was against the back drop that she had been deported along side other Nigerian girls in the street of Spain after being intercepted by the police. She, however, is willing to give traveling abroad to Europe another trial. For her, it was the best way to recover what her mother had lost in a bid to help her. For Oghomwen that opportunity she believes will soon present itself again.

#### **CASE FOUR**

Josephine Isado was just 10 years old when she lost her mother to the cruel hands of death. Casting back her mind, she recalled that the event of her mother's demise turned

everything upside down in her life. Her father Mr. Isado, a typist in one of the government ministries in Egor local government, decided to remarry especially since he could not cope with the three children. Josephine was the eldest of them and her two siblings were boys, Josephine observed that her father's love shifted the moment the second wife came to the house. Her father became very critical of every little action she took coupled with the fact that her new step mother did not even help the situation for she seemed to have even thrived in the fact that Josephine had lost her place in the father's heart. Josephine remarked:

*It was not easy for me growing up in that kind of family. My father pretended that he had good intentions towards me but I knew that he had changed totally, as soon as he married his new wife. I became a stranger to them. A whole day my father would not ask me if I have eaten. I had to live on people (my friends). I had a very good friend Jennifer, who traveled to Italy.*

Josephine felt upset when she recalled the tragic disappointment and betrayal of trust which she experienced in the hands of her father. So she decided to seek help outside her family and fortunately, or so it seems, Jennifer, her very good friend, rendered the much desired assistance:

*Jennifer my friend knew my story and felt very bad for me. So she decided to introduce me to her mother who was "Sponsorer". She was the person who helped me and paid all the money I needed to travel"*

Josephine had to drop out of school in JSS III because of this novae opportunity. She was a Christian who attended Sunday services or a church regularly and heard messages about living an upright life. She wanted a situation where she could prove to her father and his new wife that she could survive without them, and that they would even be at her mercy.



Having been convinced by her friend and the mother that the business promised to be very lucrative, she decided to venture into it. She had also been introduced to younger girls in their neighbourhood who had become very rich by engaging in transactional sex overseas . She re-called:

*My friend's mother gave me many examples of young girls whom she had helped to obtain documents to travel to Europe and how they are now thanking her with series of gifts as they were all very successful. A few of them I knew, and so I believed her. She told me that as a beautiful girl that I was going to be hot cake, so paying back the money which she was going to use to help me would not be a problem. She even told me that I might be fortunate to get hooked with an expatriate abroad if I played my cards well and then become very rich. She added that my father and his wife would come back crawling on their knees when I become very rich. She concluded that many people even big women who are business women sleep with contractors to get big contracts in Lagos, Abuja and PortHarcourt, it (prostitution)was not a big deal. She said even in schools young girls do it with lecturers to get good grade, so I should use what I have (my beauty and physical endowments) to get what I wanted.*

At this point, Josephine did not care again, because her desire to get even with her father and his new wife had overtaken her sense of reasoning. Describing her experience in Europe as a sex worker as horrible she had to wear very skimpy clothes even in terrible winter seasons. She disclosed that contrary to what she had been told, large percentage of the money she got from prostituting was given to the madam who gave her only a few *lira* to get by. She outsmarted her madam a number of times and this soon got her into trouble. She observed that the attitude of these evil madams who she consider as the major problem to the business” She disclosed that it was a row that she had with the madam that resulted in her being set up, by this syndicate that she was an

illegal immigrant and then she was reported to the police. This, Jennifer revealed, led to her deportation. Jennifer was able to assist her sibling with school fees money all through the period she was in Italy. She even bought a piece of land that she had just begun to develop through her maternal uncle, just before her deportation. Given another opportunity, Jennifer insisted that she would go back to begin what she had begun, since she considers herself wiser now and could no longer be taken advantage of again, a problem she believed led to her deportation.

### **CASE FIVE**

Paulina Imafidon had a blue handkerchief in her hands as she wiped up the tears that flowed freely from her eyes, as she recollected the story which tore her heart into shreds. Mrs. Paulina Imafidon, who is in her late twenties, had what other young women would have wished for, a lovely husband and three children (1boy and 2girls). Although she was born into the polygynous family of Pa and Mrs. Aghedo, she knew that challenges and all kinds of competition are associated with polygynous homes, but hers was different, even though she did not have the opportunity of having a secondary education as a result of the limited resources in her family of orientation, they lived peacefully. Fate gave her a good chance when she married a Polytechnic OND holder. Up till this time, in her words:

*Everything was going on well and growing up with my step brothers and sisters and step mother was good. We were all very close. The people in my neighborhood were also very good, caring and supportive. My parents really tried to make sure that I grew up well, and get married responsibly.*

She disclosed that she did not have any inclination towards any religion; she was neither a Christian nor a pagan, since “*I did not have my mind on these things*”. Paulina’s husband was responsible for her up-keep until the time she decided to travel outside to Europe for prostitution. As she narrated the story, she wept uncontrollably.

*It is a long story. Anytime I think about it, I feel like killing myself (There was a long pause for some five minutes with tears dropping from her eyes). My parents did not know about my traveling. They are innocent. It was my Aunt, my father’s elder sister, that called me in my husband’s house and she gave me bad advice that led me astray today.*

Paulina and her husband were not rich. Her Aunt was totally dissatisfied with her husband’s status, hence, she decided to take Paulina to Italy to change or improve the economic condition of her family. Having counseled Paulina about the prospects of living in Europe and all the money she would make from prostitution, she decided to abandon her three children and her husband and moved to her Aunt’s house. The husband came to the Aunt’s house on several occasions to plead with Paulina to come back home, but all his pleas fell on deaf ears having made up her mind to take her own destiny in her hands. Five months after, she traveled to Italy. Life was hard there as the condition under which she was made to work was totally harsh and inhumane. She spent exactly two (2) years in Italy and could not get anything having been deceived by the ‘Madams’ there. She was eventually deported. She disclosed:

*After 2 years, I was deported without a building, a car or something really valuable to my name. Before my deportation, my husband had married a new wife to take care of him and the children I left behind. This husband that I left now owns a beautiful house of his own and a car. I had to go and beg so that I could come back, but he drove me away and did not even allow me to see my own children. He told me never to enter his compound again. To*

*make the matter worse, my Aunt who deceived me and made me go astray, is the one laughing at me today. Since then no man has come for me again.*

When asked what led her to making such a decision to abandon her family, she revealed, “because of my parents,’ they really suffered to carry out my responsibility before I got married. My dream in life was to have children, settle down and become a land lord’s wife, but all of these have become a mirage”. Even the family Paulina wanted to help has abandoned her. For Paulina, her traveling to Italy was a total disaster, no good thing to remember and a complete tragedy.

### **CASE SIX**

Charity, a tall fair skinned lady was has spent the major part of her life on Oredo L.G in Benin City. Charity, 30 years old, disclosed that she was born into a polygynous family with only five children (3 boys and 2 girls) from her mother’s side. She however refused to disclose the total number of her father’s children on the ground that it sounded ridiculous. She is the third child, but the first girl. She grew up at Ogbelaka, Sakponba Road and remembered her late mum made significant impact in her life. Upon the death of her mother, life took a different turn for the worse; hence she managed to complete her secondary education. It was at this point she decided to travel abroad. Even though she is a Christian, she did not consider the negative impact of going to prostitute in Europe as she was more concerned about improving the economic condition of her siblings.

Charity interacted with her friends whom she said were already conversant with the act of illegal human trafficking for the purpose of international prostitution. Her motivating factor was to salvage her siblings out of abject poverty. She argued that this was the quickest and most reliable means of rescuing one’s family from a poverty

stricken state. Although she had dreams to be an educated woman, they were stalled by her decision to travel to Europe. When she got to Europe, she was eventually disappointed by the harsh situation in which she carried out her “business” even though she earned hard currency. After three years, she looked back with mixed feelings:

*My traveling out enabled me to train my immediate younger brother, through his studies in polytechnic. . I had bad experiences that I will never forget. I went through many insults and pain right there overseas. They the sponsors took me and made me swear oaths which I did. The sponsors made me pay twice of the money with which they helped me. So when I got familiar with European currency, I found out that the money was times two. I could not say anything. Anytime I go to look for work, if I could not come back with enough money, I was beaten mercilessly. It was not easy at all.*

Charity however had a word for government agencies, that there was a need to assist trafficked victims sufficiently, so that trafficked victims are not lured to go back to into cross border sexual transaction.

### **CASE SEVEN**

Edith Imasuen looked pensively into thin air as she recounted her ordeal, in the hands of human traffickers. A second child in a family of five children, Edith, 18 years old had grown to be an attractive young lady and could pass for a girl in her late twenties because of her built. As the eldest daughter of a father who was a Lecturer and her mother, a Pastor of a growing new generation Pentecostal church, a great deal of pressure was on her to be a role model for her younger female siblings in he family.

Edith in her own opinion considered the expectations, on her as too high and the restriction by her parents as too many. She admitted that though she was deceived into women trafficking by her peers, her parents did not have any inkling bout her plans.

When asked what informed her decision to get involved in international prostitution, she opined that she was just adventurous and she wanted to earn her friends respect based on what she could achieve by herself. She stated:

*I thought would be able to take care of myself and make it big abroad, and get some respect I deserve from my parents who were always treating me like a child. I love to live independently and have my own things. My friend would have no choice but cut for me (to recognize my superiority) and then I can have a voice among them”.*

Edith’s decision to travel to Europe through illegal means was devastating to her family especially her parents when they discovered. She added:

*My mum was badly affected about the news because of her religious disposition. My mother thought that they (the parents) were meeting all my needs.*

Edith confirmed that she had a good family support and that she was not really on financially need, but believed that children should be given some space to discover themselves, instead of treating them like robots. Edith however commended the efforts by NAPTIP who she admitted came to her rescue after her deportation. She was helped and rehabilitated by this agency. When asked if she would get involved in sex work again, she declined, shaking her head vehemently, “never,” she replied. “I don’t have to do that again”. I am putting all those things behind me now and have decided to start a new life altogether. She concluded.

## **6.8. A DISCUSSION OF THE LIFE HISTORIES**

From the narratives on seven cases of previously trafficked persons presented earlier, the mean age of the previously trafficked persons is 25.1, (maximum age, being 30 years, while the minimum age is 18 years). It is important to note, that all the cases had been deported over two years or more, before these interviews were conducted, implying that all these persons were at least two years at the time of active involvement in transactional sex. All the victims are Christians with majority of them in new generation Pentecostal Churches. Expectedly, over 70% (5 out of the 7 cases presented) are from polygynous families where fathers have as many as four wives. Majority of these families are fraught with rivalry and a lot of unhealthy competition among wives and siblings, with very limited economic resources resulting from poor educational attainment, but very large number of children. Previous studies have affirmed the obvious discrimination against the girl child, especially when families are poor (Moughadam, 2004). Consequently, five out of the seven of the cases interviewed did not complete secondary schools, because of lack of funds. The remaining two cases had only primary education.

Six (6) of the seven cases have never married, while one is a divorced. Upon return from Europe, three (3) of these seven cases remained unemployed, with the remaining while the four (4) employed are in low income paying jobs such as, petty trading, sales girl, hair-dressing, and apprenticeship to a fashion designer.

Study findings as presented in Table 6.8.2 show that family disorganization resulting from polygynous practices is one of the leading causes of vulnerability of sex-trafficked victims in the region. Five of the victims disclosed that their families were in

total state of anarchy, and many of the children had to fend for themselves, with the obvious fact that their fathers could not meet the economic needs of the family. While it may be pointed out that many Africans are typically polygynous, the structure of the Benin inheritance system which is based on the system of *uhro*, in which case, every eldest male child from each wife in the family becomes a potential inheritor of family estate; “*igiogbe*” (which usually consists of the family house, portion of farm land or rubber plantation as the case may be). This system of inheritance, privileges males, discriminates against the girl-child and generates unrestrained competition and rivalry among biological kins, thereby threatening the co-operative kin network which was synonymous with many traditional Benin families. This degree of competitiveness and rivalry is further accentuated by cash crop economy subsequent to agricultural commercialization in the region and the attendant political economy which gives supremacy to the male, while women in the region were further subjugated within the new cash crop economy.

Findings from the life histories revealed a subtle rebellion by women against patriarchy. For example, majority of the female victims disclosed they ventured into transactional sex-trade “to help their mothers who are maltreated by their fathers”, or to “help their siblings”. Only one of the seven cases stated that her father was going to be a direct beneficiary of proceeds realized from international prostitution. This is evident in the way the girl child is viewed and culturally described among the Benin. Earlier findings from the FGDs conducted described the female child as “half current” or “transitory beings”. The general poor status of the girl child found in the study to be a



normative order among the Benin is in line with previous findings by Aghatise (2004) and Onyeonoru, (2003).

This study established that majority of the trafficked cases were on an economic rescue mission to protect the interest of their mothers, while in some instances, a few wives would not mind to purchase freedom from terrible patriarchal tyranny at the cost of their daughter's violated sexuality. This is very significant as sex-trafficking is not only conceived as a means terminating of family poverty, but an avenue of getting a reprisal against patriarchy.

Men of Benin extraction express their penchant for patriarchy by their overt embrace of polygynous practices, without due consideration given to the likely consequence. The wives of such men are brought under a heavy authority of a male figure with many children but lacking the economic wherewithal, whereby each child becomes a family bread winner and central unit of care of the children. This arrangement usually results in family disorganization. In such cases (such as the cases of Oghowen and Josephine) fathers are often resented by their daughters. The apparent negligence of fatherly responsibilities and the awe around maleness among the Benin have made the women (especially those who are uneducated) more susceptible to the pressure of being trafficked by relatives. Thus, patriarchy as a way of life is now threatened by the local economic downturns.

The findings from life histories present the traditional Benin family structure as one that places value on kinship connections, hence household heads in the family based interviews conducted, disclosed that relatives or kins are culturally expected to also assist in socializing the young members of the family. It is therefore a common occurrence for

the poor families to send their children to relatives who are considered more economically buoyant. Also in the face of adversity, such as death of a spouse or divorce in the family, relatives are also expected to offer some form of support to the children of the affected family. The Benin proverb which says that, “a child is not owned by one person but jointly owned”, clearly explains the expected role of relatives in child nurturance and socialization.

The extended family network was greatly pervasive creating a sense of responsibilities on the relatives in the nurturing of children while the younger members of the family were expected to defer to the authority of the older ones. Hence, a child could have many social mothers and fathers and was expected to relate to these people in that social capacity. It is therefore not unusual for the extended family members to facilitate trafficking of young female members, a social obligation to see its members out of poverty. The stories of previously trafficked cases, especially the story of Paulina and Osato (cases 1 and 2 respectively) are obvious instances which affirm strong bond amongst the Benin, while case 5 illustrates extended family influence on decisions of younger women, where the culture of deference is greatly celebrated. Table 6.4 presents factors precipitating trafficking in most families which include polygyny, family disorganization, household poverty, child fostering experiences and male –children preference

## 6.8.2 Summary of Cases and their Family Structures

**Table 6.4: Summary of Life History Victims Presented in the Study**

Categories of Description	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A) Precipitating Factors in the family that encouraged Trafficking	+	+	+	-	+	+	-
i) Polygyny							
ii) Family Dis-organisation	+	+	+	+	-	+	-
iii) Household Poverty	+	+	+	-	+	+	-
iv) Child Fostering Experience	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
v) Male Child Preference	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
B) Human Agencies Through Which Trafficking was facilitated							
i) Father	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
ii) Mother	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
iii) Relatives	+	-	-	-	+	-	-
iv) Family friends	-	-	-	+	-	+	-
v) Strangers	-	+	-	-	-	-	+
C) Description of trafficking experience by the victims							
i) Bad Experience	+	+	-	-	+	-	+
ii) Partially Successful	-	-	+	+	-	+	-
D) Effect of Victims Decision on their family Structures							
i) Had a partially successful economic impact on the family	-	-	+	+	-	+	-
iii) Brought greater chaos and family disorganization	+	+	-	-	+	-	-
E) Decision of Trafficked Victims after Deportation							
i) Will never venture such acts again	-	-	-	-	+	-	+
ii) Will go back to sex work if given an opportunity	-	+	+	+	-	-	-
iii) Depends on the situation	+	-	-	-	-	+	-
Intended Direct Beneficiaries of Monies realized from sex transactions							
i) Father	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
ii) Mother	-	+	+	-	-	-	-
iii) Younger Siblings	-	-	+	+	-	+	-
iv) Extended family	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
v) Self	-	-	-	-	-	-	+

### Key

+ Where trafficked victim acknowledged the existence of the factor in question.

- Where trafficked victim did not acknowledge the existence of the factors in question.

## **6.9. Test of Basic Propositions to the Study**

Three propositions guided the basic assumptions made in this study. This section explored the propositions, confirming or rejecting them using concrete evidences, using data from qualitative sources.

### **6.9.1 Proposition One: That there are changes in the Benin family structure occasioned by the phenomena of women trafficking and international prostitution among the Benin**

To verify this proposition, data from the following sources were used as evidences: Key Informant Interviews, the Focus Group Discussions (using two vignette stories), Life Histories and Observation Techniques. Important Issues raised include –

- a) Perceived reasons of mothers' involvement in trafficking of their daughters in the Benin family.
- b) Perceived fathers' roles in homes (where trafficking and international prostitution have occurred).
- c) Perceived roles and status of victims of trafficking for the purpose of international prostitution. These are represented in the Z-Y index table (Table 6.5) for easy comprehension.

**Table 6.5: Reasons why Mothers support their daughters involvement in Sex Trafficking**

Responses of Categories	Oredo						Egor						Uumwode					
	Ma	Mb	Fa	Fb	Ya	Yb	Ma	Mb	Fa	Fb	Ya	Yb	Ma	Mb	Fa	Fb	Ya	Yb
1)Wickedness	+	-	+	-	++	-	++	-	+	-	+	-	++	+	++	-	++	++
2)Desire for liberty(freedom)	++	+	++	++	-	-	+	-	++	+	-	-	++	-	++	-	-	-
3)Desire to acquire property	++	++	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	++	+	++	+	-	++	-	+	++
4)Greed	-	-	+	-	-	-	++	-	++	-	-	-	++	-	+	-	++	-
5)Competition and rivalry in the family	-	-	+	+	+	+	++	+	++	+	-	-	-	++	++	-	++	-
6)Women's belief that children are a means to an end	+	++	-	++	+	-	-	++	-	+	++	+	-	++	++	++	++	+
7)Loss of cultural values	++	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	++	-	-	-
8)Ignorance of hazards of prostitution	=	=	+-	=	=	+-	=	=	++	++	+-	+-	=	=	+-	+-	=	=
9) Poverty	-	++	-	+	++	++	+	++	++	++	++	++	+	+	++	++	++	++
Societal Pressure	-	++	-	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	+	++	++	++

**KEY**

Ma – Male FGD group that was exposed to vignette A: The story of a trafficked victim that ended on tragic note.

Fa -Female FGD group that was exposed to vignette A: the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a happy note

Ya-Youth FGD group that was exposed to vignette A, the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a tragic note.

Mb-Male FGD group that was exposed to vignette B: The story of a trafficked victim that ended on tragic note.

Fb-Female FGD group that was exposed to vignette A: the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a happy note.

Yb -Youth FGD group that was exposed to vignette B, the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a happy note.

++ Where opinions were strongly expressed by four or more participants in the FGD)

+ Where opinions were mildly expressed by participants three or less participants in the FGD

- Where opinion was not expressed by any of the participants

**Table 6.6: Perceived Status and Role of Fathers in Trafficking and International Prostitution in the Study Areas**

Responses of Categories	Oredo						Egor						Uumwode					
	Ma	Mb	Fa	Fb	Ya	Yb	Ma	Mb	Fa	Fb	Ya	Yb	Ma	Mb	Fa	Fb	Ya	Yb
1) Fathers are generally lazy and do not want to work	+	-	-	-	+	-	++	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2)Fathers encourage it when they are ultimate beneficiaries	++	+	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
3)They are threatened and can no longer control women	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	++	+	-	-	-	++	-	-	-
4)Fathers have lost control over the family due to economic hardship	-	-	++	+	-	-	++	-	++	-	-	-	++	-	+	-	+	-
5) Polygyny and too many children have affected fathers control over the family	+	+	+	-	-	+	++	+	++	+	-	-	-	++	++	-	++	-
6)Women are no longer controllable	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	++	-	+	++	+	-	+	++	+	-	-

**Key:**

Ma – Male FGD group that was exposed to vignette A: The story of a trafficked victim that ended on tragic note.

Fa -Female FGD group that was exposed to vignette A: the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a happy note

Ya-Youth FGD group that was exposed to vignette A, the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a tragic note.

Mb-Male FGD group that was exposed to vignette B: The story of a trafficked victim that ended on tragic note.

Fb-Female FGD group that was exposed to vignette A: the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a happy note.

Yb -Youth FGD group that was exposed to vignette B, the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a happy note.

++ Where opinions were strongly expressed by four or more participants in the FGD)

+ Where opinions were mildly expressed by participants three or less participants in the FGD

- Where opinion was not expressed by any of the participants in the FGD session.

**Table 6.7: Perceived Roles and Status of the Trafficked female Victim in the Family**

Responses of Categories	Oredo						Egor						Uumwode					
	Ma	Mb	Fa	Fb	Ya	Yb	Ma	Mb	Fa	Fb	Ya	Yb	Ma	Mb	Fa	Fb	Ya	Yb
The victim did not have a choice due to family pressure	+	-	+	-	+	-	++	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	+
2) Victim was a good girl and wanted to salvage her family. (Sacrificial Lamb)	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	+
3) She was a victim of circumstances	-	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	++	+	-	-	-	++	-	+	-
4) She had no fear of God	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	-
5) She was fortunate and her destiny was good	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+
6) She was greedy.	+	-	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	-	++	+	+	-
7) She is usually worshipped like demi-gods in the family when the succeed	-	-	-	+	+	++	-	+	-	++	-	+	-	+	+	+	-	++

**Key:**

Ma – Male FGD group that was exposed to vignette A: The story of a trafficked victim that ended on tragic note.

Fa -Female FGD group that was exposed to vignette A: the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a happy note

Ya-Youth FGD group that was exposed to vignette A, the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a tragic note.

Mb-Male FGD group that was exposed to vignette B: The story of a trafficked victim that ended on tragic note.

Fb-Female FGD group that was exposed to vignette A: the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a happy note.

Yb -Youth FGD group that was exposed to vignette B, the story of a trafficked victim that ended up on a happy note.

++ Where opinions were strongly expressed by four or more participants in the FGD)

+ Where opinions were mildly expressed by participants three or less participants in the FGD

- Where opinion was not expressed by any of the participants in the FGD session.

Table 6.5 shows participants' reaction to mothers' roles and involvements in trafficking of their female children are directly related to outcome of trafficking and the gender of the participants. So when trafficking ended "successfully", participants observed that the mothers were quietly or subtly commended but when it ended on a tragic note, she was often derided and described as "wicked" "heartless" or "bad". However when trafficking ended on a successful note like the case of the story in vignette B, she was hardly derided before her face. Even if people resented what she was doing, many people would never ridicule her directly. F.G.D participants sought to explain the reasons why mothers may have played active roles in offering their daughters to be sold in the international sex market. Factors like poverty, desire to acquire property which are not accessible to the women folks and desire to be liberated from dominant patriarchal control of men. On the other hand, all the male participants in all the local governments were of the opinion that the women's desire for freedom is what has necessitated connivance between them and their daughters for the purpose of trafficking. This observation was made by these male participants only when trafficking outcomes were tragic as the case of the story in vignette A.

It is important to clarify that the freedom or liberty that is referred to by the male adult participants in the FGDs conducted is the one freedom associated with a master servant or a teacher –apprentice relationship which infers a power relation. The word "freedom" used by the males adults in the FGDs are therefore uncomplimentary and an indication of their reservation about the changes in the status of women.

In Oredo, the desire for liberty by women was expressed with greater strength in the two categories of FGDs conducted among them, than was the case in Uhumwonde. Here are



some of the factors identified by FGD participants as to the present role of mothers' involvements in trafficking of their female children among the Benin people of Edo State. These factors highlighted by the participants can be categorized into three main broad themes- socio-cultural factors, psychological factors and economic factors.

**A) Psychological Factors:**

Liberty is seen here as a freedom from culture's oppressive influences over the women. Evidences from literature have established that women are generally conceived as inversion of the ideal and that patriarchy was essentially hegemonic in both colonial and post colonial Benin. Below is an excerpt from an FGD participant (female) in Oredo where there was a very strong opinion in favour of women's liberty

*Liberty is what she wanted. She wanted to be able to own property and do what she wants. Let her eat the property now (She stated this with sarcasm). This is because of our crave for property.(Referring to the Benin). No matter what, there is a reward. Prostitution always ends on a bad note one day.*

This is confirmed by the female key informants' views stated below:

*The issue is that women think that proceeds from trafficking and international prostitution bring liberty. It is not true. When the girls look at their mothers and their lives they don't want to be that relegated. The issue is that these women want to be visible and have a voice. They see the culture as it relates to them (women) as oppressive and hence they want to be seen and not heard*

It will be instructive to mention here that even there is a convergence of opinion with respect to liberty being sought by women. While the female participants in the FGD were of the opinion that seeking liberty at the expense of their children was a great price

to pay for liberty, the males however derided the women for taking such extreme position, viewing it as a direct challenge on their authority. Hence some of these remarks:

*Since this event of trafficking to Italy women's eyes have opened. They are simply uncontrollable and this has affected the home. When dollar comes, it affects the home. The wife conspires with the daughter against their fathers.*

(Male FGD in Oredo in response to vignette A).

This position was also reaffirmed in all the FGD conducted among men using vignette A. Another issue classified as a psychological factor as identified by the female FGD participants exposed to the tragic story (vignette A) is 'greed'. Greed was identified by the FGD participants in Oredo and Uhumwonde LGs as the main reason why mothers would allow their children to be involved in trafficking for the purpose of international prostitution. Also, in Uhumwode, the youths who were exposed to vignette A, observed that there were other jobs that young girls could do outside prostitution if the victims of trafficking and their parents were not greedy. One of the participants stated:

*Eki's mother and her daughter are greedy. Eki's mother could have asked her daughter to do sales girl at least. At least if you walk around this town, you will definitely see many places where there are signs of "Sales Girl Wanted" I think that woman was greedy and just wanted to make it the quickest way.*

In the FGD held with the youths in Uhumwode, a female secondary school students also affirmed the earlier views expressed by the previous FGD participant. She opined:

*I will not listen to my mother. That was a bad advice for her to go and prostitute. She should have gone around for other jobs to do. There is no way you walk around this entire community that you will not see a sign board requesting or the services of a sales girl. It is better to do such things because God hates prostitution, it is a big sin".*

Another psychological factor is the perceived ignorance of the women who encouraged their daughters' involvement in international prostitution. A number of the FGD participants especially those who responded in defense of Eki's mother (the trafficked victim that ended on a happy note) stated that these women may have been oblivious of the degree of inhuman denigration which trafficked victims are sometimes subjected to. This view was more pervasively discussed. These respondents were of the opinion that there were a lot of deceptions associated with trafficking. Also they reiterated that traffickers often prefer to work through relatives of unsuspecting victims with promises of large remittances. This often served as baits to the parents and a good insensitive to motivate their female children to comply.

Moreover, based on the findings from the FGDs and family based interviews, there are changes in the family structure in relation to husband and wife/wives relationship. Most men who practice polygyny, when their daughters have been trafficked with the support of the mothers, there is a general feeling of suspicion and unhealthy rivalry between these men and the other wives. Sometimes the level of rivalry might be too much that the children who become very unsafe and eventually seek ways to fend for themselves. This was expressed by the previously trafficked victims as some of the problems within the family which precipitated their decision to succumb to international prostitution or get involved in illegal trans-border movement.

Also, findings have actually shown that these women who have children abroad are economically empowered and quite a number of them are able to own landed property which ordinarily could not be accessed by them. Therefore, this has further threatened the relationship with their spouses. This we can see from the FGD when a man disclosed that

that dollar that is “hard currency” has come to put the hitherto peaceful Benin family asunder.

Men from this extraction especially those of low socio-economic status generally perceived by the women folks as less concerned with their fatherly role and responsibilities since a number of them have been alleged to depend primarily on the proceeds which are realized from international prostitution. For instance, from the findings, a number of men have had to support the decision by their own wives to travel to Europe to earn “hard currency” without jeopardizing the marital relationship. In such a case, the husband is a major beneficiary. This is a departure from the primordial era when the husband was expected to provide a farm land for the woman to cultivate. They were also expected to protect their offspring from negative external influence which would be detrimental to the family name.

Another change in the family structure occasioned by these phenomena is the apparent dependency on a minor (usually in their teens) or a female child whom many of them described as the “sacrificial lamb” by all members of the family for economic survival. The terminology used to describe the role of the female child in the contemporary Benin family, is suggestive of role ascribed to Jesus Christ in the Christian faith, his decision to lay his life down for the salvation of mankind. This is well buttressed by the illustration made by the female key informant, of how large extended polygynous families now depend on the sexual servitude of a sixteen year old girl to meet the daily needs of the family member, conduct burial and wedding ceremonies for the family.

From observation carried out in this study, Benin weddings are usually elaborate and expensive with massive display of wealth. Also it was usually an opportunity to show the other perceived competitors (who may be co-wives) or other extended relatives what stuff they are made of. Hence there are usually many imported clothes, exotic laces, designers' shoes from first class designers in Europe and custom made outfits. High patronage was given to those who had the “*acatarian*” touch that is, those who have are abroad. Many of these young women are highly revered when they spend their money for such family events, since it enabled intergenerational mobility. This is an obvious departure from what was in place where co-operation by all members of the family was the norm in the traditional pre-colonial Benin family structure. The female members were expected to work closely with their mothers and assist in domestic chores. Even married women were not allowed to travel outside their homes except there was a disagreement between her and the husband (Ebohon, 1990).

**6.9.2 PROPOSITION 2: THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE STATUS AND ROLES OF WIVES AND DAUGHTERS IN CONTEMPORARY BENIN FAMILY SINCE THE ADVENT OF TRAFFICKING AND INTERNATIONAL PROSTITUTION.**

The effects of trafficking on many women within the region are enormous. From the findings, the women can now own houses and buy landed property which was not the case before now. Most of the female participants in the FGDs and the female key informants in the course of the study affirmed this position and that many women consider the acts of trafficking and international prostitution as having appreciable degree of economic empowerment for women in the region. This was largely attributed to the

huge financial benefits accruable from trans-border sexual transaction. Since economic empowerment also would naturally culminate to a social empowerment, more of the women are becoming very visible and can make decisions in the family. For instance, a male and a female key informant both acceded to the fact that proceed from trafficking had been ploughed back into the economy and looked more of a kind of reparation move. The female key informant also agreed that these women who may themselves be illiterates have used the money to train their children and relatives in very good schools in Benin City thereby leading to what one could refer to as an upward intergenerational movement. There is no doubt that some of those highlighted above are the success stories of those who had succeeded.

From the life histories conducted, one could also infer a sense of disappointment from a lot of them and in some cases; they had stated that given an opportunity they would go back to the same place where they were deported. This may not be unconnected with the same perceived esteem that these successful trafficked victims are held as observed by a participant in FGD, when he disclosed that these girls are treated as tin god, the hen that laid the golden eggs.

Superficially, therefore, these women enjoy a degree of liberty only because some of the booties or proceeds would naturally come to them. For example, despite the prevalence of these phenomena, these women are still married even though a number of them have traveled overseas to prostitute. There seems to be a contradiction of some kind; the same culture that abhorred promiscuity in its slightest form now provides and compromises some of its customs that governed the sexuality of women in order to provide ways by which they can continue to be of economic benefit to them. Simply put,

the women can stay on in their marriages when there is an agreement between them, but when the woman chooses to usurp the economic proceeds, and then there is an overt condemnation of these women. In actual fact, she may have been economically empowered and socially recognized within the family, but these are just done to further heighten the patriarchal control of men over the sexuality of women for economic purpose. For instance in spite of the money realized from trafficking and the apparent display of wealth, no woman can be made a chief within the Benin culture today. Hence a female key informant was more succinct about the above observation when she remarked:

*Trafficking and international prostitution have reinforced patriarchy in such a way that men are still the beneficiaries. It has made men lazy and most of them have abandoned their responsibilities to their families. A woman who has traveled out to Italy to prostitute could come back home and perform cleansing rites as long as the money comes in. The culture has been very unfriendly to women*

**a) Changes in Excessive Cultural Taboos Restriction on Benin Women**

Findings from the life histories and the interviews with the Key Informants and the family heads are very clear that there were several cultural restrictions against women. Hence one key informant observed that the reason that the phenomena of trafficking and international prostitution were very high in the study area could also be attributed to the fact that the Benin culture was over protective. He further disclosed that due to the apparent “liberty” which the women have experienced since the advent of trafficking and trans-borders sexual transaction, there are observable changes in the sexual behaviour of the youths especially with regard to men inspite of the western values

that have tended to encourage a lecherous lifestyle. He argued that sexual promiscuity was greatly curtailed by polygynous practice which accounted for very low incidence of rape in the region. Since the culture provides adequate provision for a man to have as many wives as he desired, then Benin men have socially approved channels of meeting their sexual needs through a culturally prescribed outlets like polygyny, instead of committing the crime of rape with the female gender. He however agrees that with the massive campaign against trafficking and international prostitution, there are changes in the sexual behaviour of the females and their male counterparts. He argued that since Benin City had become a major target to several campaigns against sex trafficking which was also accompanied with the associated emphasis on the danger of promiscuity and its attendant consequences of the dreaded HIV and other STIs, it has had a ripple effect on the sexual behaviour of young women in the region. He also opined that the vulnerability of the area in time past to trafficking and international prostitution has also served as a deterrent for others who witnessed the tragic consequence of sex trafficking. He observed that beyond the case of trafficking, there was now a huge decline in abortion in the region and the girls are also becoming aware of the hazards of promiscuity. He added that with the advent of HIV and the series of campaign being mounted by government agencies, young people are on their guards now having been exposed to series of campaign the danger of promiscuity. There are obvious reversals to the old values.

**b) Change in Status of Women in the Family**

Another female key informant observed that the Benin culture was highly oppressive to the women. Hence, women saw trafficking as a means to become liberated from an



oppressive culture and a need to take their own destiny in their hands. The issue has to do with being visible and having a voice. The key informant further elaborated:

*They [woman] saw the culture as very oppressive and hence they wanted to be seen or heard without weighing the consequence of trafficking and prostitution on the girl child. The culture has been very unfriendly to women.*

In the FGD conducted with the male groups especially the groups that were exposed to vignette A in the three local government areas argued that some Benin women want to be “big madams” and no longer want to be subordinate to their husbands. One of the participants opined: “when a man gives a woman N500 to make a pot of soup before (before the trafficking and international prostitution became endemic) she would be appreciative. Now, a woman no longer wants to take that amount since she has started getting dollar from the children. How can she appreciate the little that the man is struggling to provide?”

From the findings not all women have access and more control over the resources directly. Except in cases where these are polygynous and when the mother is a single mother, and then she can have direct control over the resources. This was corroborated by the key informant who argued that the women’s access to resources did not equate control of the resources. The FGDs (male) held in Oredo, Egor and Uhumwode all agreed that the problem of sharing the resources or booties accruable from trafficking had wrecked havoc in many families. As have been identified in earlier findings the traditional Benin culture viewed women as those that should be tamed and the way to this was to put her under several restrictions as illustrated earlier on. On the contrary, the access to hard earned currency has created a culturally deviant woman, who considers

herself as the principal architect of her own destiny, “using what she has to get what she wants.”

### **6.9.3 Classical Male Dominance in Benin Family has played a major role in Establishing Benin as a Region Synonymous with Trafficking for the Purpose of Prostitution**

The earlier part of the work emphasized classical male dominance as pervasive in the region. The well established monarchy has consolidated male dominance and given strength to a rather visible masculine presence in Benin culture. From the life histories conducted, a number of the trafficked victims were on a rescue mission to salvage the mother from an economic situation occasioned by obnoxious traditions. For instance, the poor status of the girl child can be ascribed to the perception of the Benin towards women education, when it was imagined that girls who had the privilege of going to school would become promiscuous and therefore mitigate the possibility of remaining a virgin at marriage. Most of those who became trafficked and were deported are usually uneducated with only a few who have completed their senior secondary education. This no doubt helped to accentuate the females’ vulnerability to being trafficked for the purpose of international prostitution. Other factors that have given credence to the patriarchal institution in traditional Benin include: prevalence of polygyny, male child preference and the transmogrification of traditional belief system by the institution of patriarchy to justify the persistent control and sexploitation of female sexuality. Some of these are discussed below:

#### **a) Prevalence of Polygyny**

The polygynous practice among the Benin in spite of the influence of westernization and Christianity in the region is greatly paradoxical. For instance, with the

strong presence of foreign contact in the region which dates back to about two centuries ago, one cannot but be amazed at the high prevalence of polygyn among the Benin This corroborates earlier findings by Onyeonoru, (2001); UNICRI, (2003); Aghatise, (2005) and Skogeth, (2007) about the prevalence of polygyny and the concomitant breakdown in family cohesion as was supported by study data. Findings showed that in all the three local government areas in which household interviews were conducted more than 50 percent of these households in each local government were polygynous. Oredo though urbane ranked as the highest number with 28 households out of the total 40 being polygynous households accounting for seventy percent of total households out of the total number of forty households that were targeted. The highest number of wives again was found in Oredo as the mean number of wives was put at two with a maximum of seven wives.

The implication is that such marriage practice is also closely associated with having many children. Many of the female children who were once protected before the advent of the economic downturn in the Nations had to be engaged as a viable means of livelihood. This was aggravated because most of these young females were not sent to schools because in the times of scarcity economic resources, the girl child is usually the one who suffers neglect and then is withdrawn from school so that the male child would attend school. The findings revealed that that 77.4% agreed that their homes were totally dysfunctional due to incessant crises between parents and step parents, unhealthy competitions and rivalries among siblings coupled with the attendant poverty. Previous studies have highlighted. This study confirms the earlier findings by Onyeonoru, (2003),

Aghatise, (2005) that vulnerability of potential victims of sex trafficking is accentuated by family disorganization

**b) Male-Child Preference**

Among the Benin, the study revealed that there is greater preference for the male child based on two basic reasons: inheritance system in Benin which recognized or reckons with descent only through the male line and the concept of *urho* “door”. The door is used to depict the kind of polygynous relationship in existence in Benin. For example, if a man has three wives, every male child born by each woman refers to a door, that is, “*Uhro*” through which family inheritance must be shared. From the life history conducted on Omoyemwen (see case two) it was as a result of the first wife’s inability to have a male child that must have threatened the first wife’s position in that family. Previous findings have shown that there are certain privileges or level of influence the mother of a first son wielded in the family. This built up negative mindset in the heart of the young girl Omoyemwen who thought the only way she could avenge the mother was to go abroad to prostitute. Findings from the family based interviews about male-child preference also corroborate earlier position held by Egharevba (1949); Bradbury, (1957) and Igbafe (1979). Out of the 40 households interviewed in (Oredo, 28 household, 29 in Egor and 30 in Uhumwode ) all claimed that they would not accept a situation if the wife of their son had all males. Only a few household which in such cases were females member of household interviewed and a few household heads claimed to be born-again Christians agreed that they would accept an all female children if it so happened. This suggest that religion of the women play a strong role in providing security for women in a family where there is a lot of emphasis on having male children

Moreover, despite the presumed fortunes which the female children have been synonymous with in Benin, there is still strong preference for male children in the region. This cannot be unconnected to the pervasive practice of ancestral worship where the eldest male son occupies a strategic role in performing the family roles such as burial and ancestral worship. Also the custom of primogeniture as emphasized by Igbafe (1979) among the Benin is still the order of the day in contemporary Benin families. For instance a male respondent the household interviewed in Oredo opined;

*If a woman is producing only female children, take another wife to get a male child.*

On the contrary, a female member of a household interviewed in Oredo argued thus:

*It is God that gives children and no matter the type or the sex of the child. These days family could go extra mile to do anything to change the sex through herbal means, but I believe that God knows the best for you.*

Whereas, another female member of a household was ambivalent in her views

*A child is a child, whether boy or girl*

In what one could consider a departure from the normative order among the Benin, one of the key informants observed a change in the perception of the society towards the girl child. She explained;

*The mother of girls now have more voice and have been accorded more respect, when they are more than one wife the competition becomes very tough.*

Again, while the above assertion seems to contradict the generality of men's opinions, however, majority of those who were interviewed still considered the issue of having male children as a *sine quanon* for marital co-existence. Most of the household

heads (males) are still of the opinion that male children's place of cultural importance cannot be eroded, no matter the level of social change that the Benin society is currently witnessing. Many of the men rejected a situation where their son would have all females' children without a male child, stating that it was totally unacceptable. Many of the men considered the option of marrying another wife for their sons while others argue that the woman would be sent away and others felt that they would go and do something about the situation; this suggests engaging the means of the Supernatural intervention to have a male child. The findings of this study reveal that the last option was engaged if peradventure the man loves his wife and the woman has been very well behaved especially to the members of the extended family. In such a case, solution would be sought for her. A few women respondents who were interviewed during the interview with household heads appeared to be very philosophical about the situation-that is if their own daughter had all female children what would be the response of such parents? They concluded that children should be appreciated irrespective of their sex as they are gifts from God.

**c) Transmogrification of the Traditional Belief System**

The Benin people are typically known to have had tolerance for both the traditional belief system and Christianity. The data obtained from key informants and the household interviews conducted suggest that traditional beliefs were still pervasive even though many claimed to be Christians. Ancestral worship served as a key institution of regulating social behavior. It is also important that ancestor worship is the underlying factor that helps perpetuate the rule of primogeniture among the Benin. Hence, the males

are usually the custodians of the family shrines community shrines and other traditional worship centres. With the advent of trafficking and international sex trade, the traditional belief system that was used to enhance social order and support compliance with existing norms have been transmogrified to become the tools for taunting and threatening trafficked victims who have been conscripted by syndicates or traffickers. Extant literature suggests strong involvement of traditional religious activities like engaging oaths of secrecy before a family shrine (UNICRI/UNDOC, 2003; Skogeth, 2007). What was previously used to protect the integrity of women's sexuality within the family and the society at large has become the same agency mediating and perpetuating the trafficking of females for the purpose of trans-border sexual transaction. Consequently, the fear of breaching the contract between the traffickers and victims further heightened the depth of secrecy surrounding the phenomena since many victims are afraid of the consequence of violating the agreement. The difficulty of obtaining accurate data on traffickers is explained by the degree of secrecy in which the whole process of recruitment and subsequent trafficking are enmeshed.

Another intriguing finding from the FGDs conducted on the women in Oredo and Egor, is that married women who were involved in the act of international prostitution and upon their arrival from overseas, killed goats and offered the requisite sacrifice for violating the sanctity of the family shrine and offending the ancestors. It was further disclosed by the FGD participant conducted in Unhumwode that traditionally, the ancestors themselves could easily be placated when there was a unanimous agreement among the living family members to pardon any offence which include adultery of this

kind. Hence, male participant in FGD conducted at Uhumwode (the group was exposed to vignette A) then he explained

*When there is an agreement over a thing among the family members then the ancestor cannot but accede to what that agreement is. That is why when there is no consensus reached over a matter here with regard to any issue, the person seeking the ancestral intervention must be ready to plead and those who are close to him are expected to do the same until a consensus is reached. That is why when these women come and buy gifts for family members, then they are made to kill a mere goat for sacrifice to the ancestors to forgive her and then she could resume her normal matrimonial duties to her husband.*

Finally, the role of older kinsmen in the extended family suggest a level of value compromise as they often times accede to the sacrificial rites of cleansing offered by erring wife of a kinsman. The above quote show that many of the trafficked victims who are classified as successful eventually entice those who are supposed to be traditional custodian of religious values of the community with “hard currency”, These group of patriarchs thereafter condone sexual infidelity as a result of the gifts they have received from such women. This finding fully supports the works of radical feminist who have argued that the institution of patriarchy is thoroughly manipulative as it uses other social institutions to perpetuate its control and oppressive violence on women (Ritzer, 2000).

It therefore holds at patriarchal control of men over women in the Benin society is being currently compromised as many males are direct beneficiaries of the unimaginable sexual violence meted against women from this extraction. Poor socio-economic statuses owing largely to lack of education and total disempowerment among these women who are potential victims of sex trafficking, explain why sex trafficking is conceived as a process that culminates in empowerment, when in actual fact the contrary holds true. The



reality is that this situation continues to affirm the views of radical feminists discourse but located within the globalization paradigm, that sex trafficking is a clear indicator of “feminization of survival” (Sassens, 2004) within a changing family structure, responding to the hostile drum-beat of globalization in a highly gendered space. While it appeared that these women are becoming rather visible and socially empowered, the question is at what social cost? Does true empowerment and social visibility of women translate into denigration of womanhood through the merchandise of her sexuality, commoditizing female bodies at a great health risk? This is hyper patriarchy manifested to its fullest capacity as patriarchy portrays women as sexual objects designed to meet males’ unbridled sexual desire. Hence the proposition that Benin women are currently entangled in a higher form of patriarch as a result of their involvement in international sex trafficking is affirmed by the findings of this study.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

### 7.1 SUMMARY

The study examines the changing family structure of the Benin and on the changes occasioned by the phenomena of trafficking and international prostitution in three Local Government Areas in Edo State of Nigeria: Oredo, Egor and Uhumwonde. Oredo and Egor are urban while Uhumwonde being relatively rural area. Benin City is the capital of Oredo local government area and has been dubbed as the sex capital of Nigeria (Orubuloye; 1999; Onyeonoru, 2003). The study set out to achieve the following specific objectives to examine the changes in Benin family structure, identify and analyze the effects of trafficking and international prostitution on the Benin women and their family structures and finally, assess the contribution of cultural factors in precipitating trans-border sexual transaction

A total of 120 family/household based interviews were conducted with forty households selected in each of the three local government areas, Oredo, Egor and Uhumwonde, which constitute the study area. The households heads selected based on two criteria; socio-economic characteristic and the ethnic origin. A total of 18 FGDs using vignette stories (a good story of trafficking that ended on a happy note and a story of trafficking that ended on a bad or tragic note) were conducted. In each local government, adult male, adult female and youths were selected. Each of these categories was exposed to the “good” and “bad” vignette story, hence, a total of six FGD’s were held in each local government area. Also, 5 Key Informants who are well versed in

Benin culture, 3 males and 2 females were purposively selected and in-depth interviews were held with them. These methods were greatly supported by the observational method, which the Social Anthropologist relies on in order to be able to present an emic perspective as accurately as possible. In Egor, 75.5% of the households or families interviewed had more than eight people living in a particular household, Uhumwonde, 67.5% in terms of household composition, while the least number is in Oredo, with only 65.5% of the entire number of households having more than eight members living there as at the time of the interview. In terms of sex composition, Egor (10.0%) had the least number of households where the number of females exceeded a total of eight residing, closely followed by Oredo (17.5%).

In terms of household heads, in Oredo, 34 households, that is (85.0%) of the distribution are male headed households with only 6 (15%) female headed households. A total of 74 households representing 64.1% of the entire households in the study area are still polygynous. This goes to highlight the pervasiveness of polygyny among the Benin. The number of wives ranged from 2-7 wives. Incidence of polygyny is relatively higher in Oredo local government area despite its metropolitan status. Furthermore, marital status of household heads revealed that divorced or separated is relatively low in that only 9.2% of the total number of household interviewed are divorced or separated. This further buttresses the value placed by the Benin on marriage institution. However, more cases of separation and divorce were recorded in Egor (12.5%) and the Oredo (10.0%) the urbane areas. On the basis of religious beliefs of household heads, again, majority total household interviewed (76.1%) are Christians while a relatively significant number are traditional religion belief practitioner (21.7%). The studies reveal that only 2 (1.6%)

households are Muslims. Despite early contact with the Portuguese and subsequent contacts with the Europeans, the Benin still give credence to the efficacy of traditional religious belief system. This has been largely influenced by the overwhelming presence of the Oba of Benin, the major custodian of Benin heritage.

In all the fifteen life histories conducted on previously trafficked victims, the mean age of the previously trafficked was 22.6 years, while the minimum age was 15 and maximum age was 36. About 40% of them (6) did not have a means of livelihood before they were trafficked, while 53% (8) of them had only primary school education. All of them were Christians, one out of these 15 trafficked victims was previously married with 11(73.3%) of them out of the 15 were from polygynous homes.

A consideration of the changes in Benin traditional family structure showed that ancestral worship was still pervasive with 76 ( 63.3% ) out of the 120 households claiming that it is still an integral aspect of life in Benin. Reasons identified for such practices included the preservative/protective functions the ancestors are believed to play in the affairs of the living kinsmen. Majority of household heads (who were largely males) agreed that ancestral worship served to regulate the sexual activities of family members especially the female members; and ensured compliance to community mores, family traditions and customs. On the contrary a fewer number of family heads argued that Christianity, western civilization high cost of sacrifices to these ancestors were the reasons why others did not adhere to traditional belief which included and idol worship and ancestral beliefs.

The Benin family is subsumed under an “enduring” social structure where a strongly projected Monarch that had direct influence on the social life of the subjects

even within contemporary times. Despite the trajectory, the early European contact to the era of slave trade, the colonial rule/contact, through the post colonial to contemporary times, the Benin Monarch has continued to wield considerable influence over the Benin. For instance, marriage is still very sacrosanct to the Benin with very few reported incidences of divorce and separation even with the incidence of trafficking and international prostitution in the study area. In most cases, the women who have “made it,” or the “thick madams,” still preferred to stay under a man in order to avoid social stigma of one who could not stay under a man. Hence, the study findings showed that there is a low incidence of divorce or separation among this people. Most of the women could stay separately if they observed they were not too compatible with their spouses, but there usually was a male figure whether remote or known, whom they usually identified as their husband.

Also the relationship with the Portuguese in the early fifteenth century which further culminated in the appointment of an Ambassador from Benin to Portugal served as a psychological boost as well as created a feeling of superiority among the Benin. This is coupled with the fact that the Benin had an enviable history of conquest economic prosperity with highly structured and socially organized polity even prior to the early European contact. Moreover, the interaction with the Portuguese was essentially elitist since there was a royal prerogative in trade matters as the Monarch and some of his trusted allies dealt directly with the Portuguese. This created an impression that a relationship with the European was simply elitist and could be a status symbol as well as enhance intergenerational class mobility. Hence, one of the key informants corroborated when she disclosed that illegal migration to far away Europe was first engaged in by

males in Benin. Findings revealed that significant number of them were involved in illegal businesses and were prosecuted in the process, hence many of the affected family saw it as a social stigma. That led to a shift in paradigm; the female child was eventually recruited since she is culturally seen as a transitory being. The earlier recruitment of female children from this extraction was greatly rewarding as a significant number of them were “successful” in sex work and remitted a large number of the money to their families. Earlier studies have confirmed that the Western Union operated by the First bank PLC had its busiest office in Benin City, as a result of many illegal migrants, including trafficked victims who send monies to their parents in form of remittances.

Findings showed that there is a general affirmation that the Benin men are usually very “arrogant” or “proud” and “showy “ or “loud “ hence the opposite characteristics were expected from the women. The same attributes were expected of those who were married. Consequently, the traditional married Benin woman and the young female unmarried girls were expected to be the opposite of the boisterous and arrogant Benin man. This corroborates Whitehead’s (2006) assertion that relations between husbands and wives are marked by the behavioural components of inferiority and superiority, deference, and so on. The traditional family based household was thus a hierarchical structure marked by the dependency of the wife and children on the husband whose specific role in the household is marked by the bureaucratic definition of him as its head. However there is an apparent change in this traditional structure as result of trafficking and international prostitution. Women are no longer culturally subservient especially when they are direct beneficiary of transnational remittances realized from sex-trafficking. Also, there are increase incidences of family disorganization resulting

from resource control in many Benin families especially those which were hitherto referred to as poor households. Life history conducted revealed that monies sent to families realized from prostitution more frequently created strife and unhealthy competition between parents and strife among family members.

In terms of changes in status of the Benin women, occasioned by the phenomena of trafficking, the study findings showed that women, especially those who are not educated, viewed trafficking as a form of empowerment, through which liberty can be obtained from the strong and oppressive culture. For them, the advantages or benefits of sex trafficking supersede the risks, which they perceive is worthwhile, considering the huge profits inherent in cross-border sexual transaction. Furthermore the study showed that anti-trafficking campaigns were usually carried out in conjunction with the law enforcement agents in order to forestall any possible protest from the market women and general Benin public. It was on record that quite a number of uneducated women of this extraction were not particularly unhappy with the former first lady who started an NGO which was named *Idia Renaissance*. She was ridiculed and seen as a tool by government to stall their opportunity to be socially relevant and join the elites or the high and mighty among the Benin.

Also, findings suggest that trafficking had changed the structure and the relationships that existed among siblings. Majority of the men in both the family based interviews and the male participants of the FGDs conducted as well as the key informants agreed that Benin women generally became authoritative and independent of their husbands once they began to get the proceeds of trafficking. Observations from the field as well as stories told in the course of the interviews revealed that such women, who

have made enough money via trafficking and international prostitution, do not usually leave their husbands houses, but rather they stay on and take charge of whatever decisions that needed to be made in the family. In this case, such a man becomes a rubber stamp. This further underscores the value being placed by Benin indigenes on the marriage institution in this region as identified extant literature. Although incidences of divorce or separation is relatively low as a result of the social stigma associated with divorce and separation, many families are totally dysfunctional thereby reinforcing the degree of vulnerability of the young female members of the family to sexual exploitation.

Furthermore, most of the male participants consider the present status of such previously trafficked women and their direct benefactors which usually include their mothers as conspiracy against them, thereby creating incessant tension and strife in the home.

Moreover, the centrality of the palace in the affairs of the Benin even in contemporary times is clearly evidenced from the desire by an average Benin man to relate to the palace. The Monarch is typically esteemed by all his subjects and is seen as a perfection of supremacy. Traditionally, the Oba has a harem and there is a customary approval for polygynous marriage practices. Since majority of men measured their influence and social dominance in relation to their closeness to the palace (Curnow, 1998) then it would only logically encourage the practice and prevalence of polygyny. Benin men are proud to describe themselves in relation to the palace as “*ovioba*,” clearly substantiating the centrality of a people’s identity. On the other hand, the women as wives seen as the recipients of patriarchal control which the men wielded in this society. The roles and statuses were different as observed by Sacks (1978) and Susarkasa (1984).



Hence Benin women continued to occupy different statuses in the family “as wife, as a sister as an in-law all these had clearly defined statuses and expectations”. As a wife, she forbade all that the extended family of procreation forbade and so she was bound by the laws and customs of the husband’s family. As a sister, she was expected to be supportive to her natal family and as an in-law; she was expected to show respect and total loyalty to her husband’s family.

The study findings showed that there are changes in Benin women status as they now enjoy better access to critical resources like landed property. Although earlier scholars had observed that Benin women could own a house, but the opportunity was highly restrictive as majority of them had to depend on the magnanimity of their husbands to build a house for them, a gesture that was quite rare. Consequently very few women were able to achieve this except a few who belong to the ruling class, have become government contractors or politicians. Hence trafficking and international prostitution created avenues for many Benin women who are educationally and economically disadvantaged to be able to acquire landed property, build houses, own viable business outfits like their counterparts in the privileged socio-comic class.

Findings revealed a decline in the respect accorded age as it was reckoned with in traditional Benin society. A young girl who has enough Euros can earn respect of the extended family as long as she purchases it with the earned money from sexual servitude. Again, there seemed to be an awareness of the negative effects of trafficking and international prostitution. Yet this awareness may not forestall the incidence, owing largely to changes in the values which enable the close family relatives and society to give credibility to ill gotten wealth when they are direct beneficiaries. There was a

consensus among most of the FGD participants that many married women who were involved in trans-border sexual transaction still returned to their husbands who in many instances are accomplices.

Also these are clear changes in chastity rule sexuality practices with regard to young female children. There is less emphasis on sexual chastity in contemporary Benin families with the pressure of many them to acquire wealth and belong to the social class of those who have relatives abroad. A recent Benin proverb that tends to exacerbate the phenomenon of cross border sexual transaction is the saying “that the male organ of a white man cannot desecrate the woman’s sexuality” runs contrary to traditional precepts about the white men in Benin. Hitherto, marriage to white man was forbidden in traditional Benin families. This has further strengthened these practices and weakened the girl-child’s resistance to traffickers.

On the contributions or roles of cultural factors in exacerbating these phenomena, the findings also revealed that the preference for the male child over the female child or the girl child has not changed significantly despite the economic contribution of the female children to the economic purse of the family. Majority of the household heads interviewed still preferred male-children even though they agreed that God was the giver of children. Many of them stated that if their wives or their son’s wives had all female children, they would not hesitate to marry another wife, so as to have a male. Paradoxically, majority of these household heads interviewed agreed that girl -child was generally more caring and sacrificial than her male counterpart. They however argued that they would prefer having male-children to female children because male children are the avenues through which the family inheritance (igiogbe) can be passed on. Only the

women who were interviewed as members of the household and few male respondents who claimed to be “born again”, disagreed, arguing that all children, regardless of the sex are gifts from God Almighty.

Socialization function was clearly handled by various groups in traditional Benin society; the extended family: institutionalized age groups, and the schools in the advent of western education. There was a heavy reliance on traditional religion in ensuring compliance of children to the family rules and societal norms and values. Extended agnatic kins, especially older kins of the father, played significant roles in the socialization of the younger members of the family. However, the findings show that the over bearing reliance on extended relatives in terms of socialization function and the concomitant cultural expectation that younger ones have to show a great deal of deference and respect to older relatives have further increased the vulnerability of children especially females to traffickers. Consequently, within a culture where compliance and deference to the relatives especially by young female members of the family is hegemonic, it becomes extremely challenging to curtail cross-border sexual transaction. Consequently, the young females who are expected to learn deference as a manifestation of femininity becomes highly vulnerable to older members of the family and even more to the males. Traffickers have exploited this situation which has become a booby trap for many of their female victims.

Similarly, findings also suggest that there is an overt departure from the traditional Benin structure with respect to meeting the economic needs of members. Prior to this time, the issue of co-operation was paramount, with highly stratified gender roles and expectations. However, there is a shift from cooperation to a heavy reliance on the

females to meet the family economic need especially when the family is a polygynous one. In some cases, a big family would have to engage “a sacrificial lamb to meet the needs of the family”. Finding also revealed that large amount of remittances or proceeds are accruable from international prostitution, hence making it very attractive. There are tangible outcomes of trafficking which have led to the erection of massive recreation centres, gigantic residential houses, and sophisticated boutiques and crave for expensive and latest models of imported cars.

Life histories conducted also indicated that many of those who were trafficked are not educated at all in some cases, while many did not complete their secondary school education. This had a direct import on the kinds of jobs they could do and how much they could earn. Most of the victims who are from polygynous families, were thoroughly unhappy about the state of things in their homes, hence their “messianic” mission to salvage their families or mothers from the scourge of “poverty” What most of them called “poverty” were actually culturally induced phenomena than economic design, which had accentuated their vulnerability to traffickers.

Study findings revealed that the most of the men became uncooperative to their wife’s involvement in international prostitution when they did not have access or lacked control to the money (remittances obtained). Many of the respondents stated that some men were unfavourably disposed to the phenomena of trafficking and international prostitution, only because they perceived them as a conspiracy between the women and their daughters which could undermine their traditional patriarchal control or dominance within the family. Yet, some men have mutual understanding with their spouses who in such case has the approval of the man to get involved in trans-border sexual transaction,

as long as they are major beneficiaries. In such a case legitimate business outlets are established but the trafficking becomes a clandestine activity through which the approved business outlet is sustained.

Cultural factors like polygyny, male child preference, pervasive traditional belief/ancestral or idol worship, excessive cultural taboos and sexual restriction on women, classical patriarchy and heavy reliance on the extended kins network have further placed the Benin family in a precarious but vulnerable position to the problem posed by trafficking and international prostitution in Nigeria. Also significant is that previously trafficked had dysfunctional families, low educational qualification and were engaged in menial jobs. Most of those who argued that trafficking and prostitution could be an empowering process had little or no educational qualification with a few exceptions.

Moreover, study findings reveal that not all the cases of trafficking are Benin as it is widely claimed, but a significant number of those girls from other parts of Edo State like the Ishan and Afemai people. The Igbo is also becoming part of this form of prostitution. One of the key informant observed that a visit to Ugbague (a popular district associated with local prostitution Benin City) is primarily occupied by the Igbo, the Yorubas and those from other ethnic groups in Nigeria. There is hardly a Benin girl in that district involved in local prostitution. Benin City has achieved the inglorious status of a major recruitment centre to traffickers which makes it easy to get connected with established syndicate groups (UNICRI, 2003). The informants unanimously agreed that prostitution had become an issue among the Benin because the culture was totally in

abhorrence of its practices and therefore had to command such degree of attention as it was being currently given.

In terms of relevance of theories adopted to explain this study, the political economy theory has been able to provide adequate insight to the political and economic environment of the Benin with a view to appreciating the milieu in which sex-trafficking occurs. It emphasized that beyond the structural adjustment in the Nigerian economy that may have given a thrust to the phenomenon of sex-trafficking in the region, other factors such as globalization and the subsequent feminization of poverty are important elements within the world system political economy of which Benin is an integral aspect. Although Sassens, (2004) who espoused that the concept of feminization of survival was indicative of the specific reaction of some category of women to the adverse political economy, the political economy could not adequately explain the prevalence of the phenomena of sex trafficking among the Benin. But study findings confirmed that the Benin society has extensive network in European countries as the abroad frenzy had being on for a long time, hence they were able to draw on the network that they had built for subsequent illegal migration activities. Findings also corroborated earlier findings that cross border sexual transaction among the Benin also commenced in observable scale during the Structural Adjustment Programme of the Nigerian Government.

The demerit of the political economy in explaining the region specific pervasiveness of sex-trafficking among the Benin, is the strength of the Anomie theory by Robert King Mertons and the Radical Feminist theory. Anomie theory has constructively highlighted the proclivity of the Benin in devising a means to an approved end or a socially endorsed way of living. The involvement in sex-trafficking by the

youths of the Benin is indeed expressive of the value for wealth and the culture specific-elements which constitute wealth in the study area. This underscore the relevance of the gender kinship model adopted in this study that evaluated the prestige structure of the Benin society and provided a model for analyzing gender relations within a kin net work (Collier and Yanagasikko, 2004).

Radical Feminist theory explained the dominance of patriarchy as an important factor in explicating the apparent commoditization of the sexuality of the females of this extraction for the ultimate aim of economic gains. The theory in itself was instrumental in understanding the rationale behind women's conscription into the sex-market for the ultimate benefits of the men who are direct recipient of the sexual services of these women. The theory was however deficient in explicating the compromise in patriarchy at the family level and the transition of patriarchy into the global arena. It therefore means that unless there is an effective combination of the political economic theory and the radical feminist theory, the incidence of sex trafficking among the Benin may be difficult to understand.

The importance of Cadwell's wealth flows theory is based on its prediction that structure of a family was dependent on perceived benefits obtainable from children. In other words, fertility decision and the family structure are directly related. The above thesis is in line with the findings about the changes in the Benin family structure where large family size was encouraged due to the inherent belief that children are old age security. Also, many female children statuses within their families of orientation are determined by their financial contribution to such families.

## 7.2 CONCLUSIONS

Despite efforts by the Nigerian government and the Edo State government in particular to combat the phenomena of trafficking and international prostitution, there are indications that the phenomena still persist, but incidences are under-reported. This is largely due to the perception that it is quick money making venture that also guarantees a social change in status. Also, opinion leaders in the Benin society appear ambivalent about the position to take in relation to trafficking. This obviously sends conflicting signals with respect to the utility trafficking and international prostitution is to the economic advancement of the families involved and the society at large. When there is a perceived economic development but a declining human development, and since humans are the major actors in any developmental initiatives, then there is the question is what form of empowerment can trafficking actually give to women? Also, most of the people are well aware of the negative health outcomes of trafficking and international on women's health with the recent campaign against HIV/AIDs. However, there is a trend of thought that there is no business that is risk-proof, and positive trafficking outcomes far outweighed the negative outcome of ill health. This is a major attitudinal and behavioural problem that needs to be surmounted by the campaign against international trafficking for sexual transaction. The so called poor, that is, those who are obviously educationally and economically disadvantaged, see a lot of insincerity in government's initiatives and campaign against trafficking and international prostitution in the study area, as a calculative attempt to forestall their own emergence into the "rich" class. This is clearly evidenced by most of the victims of trafficking resolve to go back to Europe at



the slightest opportunity. The less educated are ignorant and have limited opportunities for survival. Their life chances are very narrow.

Moreover, Nigeria is a signatory to many international conventions which include Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), African Protocol on People's Rights and the Rights of the Women (APPRW), National Gender Policy, (2006). This is coupled with the fact that many NGO's local and national NGOs which have beamed their search light on eradicating trafficking and international prostitution in the region. For instance, the establishment of NAPTIP (National Agency for Prohibiting Trafficking in Persons) Edo/Delta Zone was specifically located in Benin City to stem the unwholesome tide of the incidence of trans-border sexual transactions. Also, there have been targeted efforts by the Nigerian Government to discourage sex trafficking, by promoting the attainment of the Millennium Development goal of 2015, wherein the targets include achieving gender equality and empowering women in terms of access to education, preferably by 2005 and to all levels not later than 2015. Also one of the M.D.G's goals is to combat HIV/AIDs, a pandemic that has debilitating effects on women's health in sub-Saharan Africa. With the sustained involvement of women in sex trafficking, the attainment of this MDG may be seriously threatened.

Another disturbing observation is the close association of polygyny with the problem of sex-trafficking as a result of family disorganisations. The family is a crucial socializing agency whose social functions cannot be undermined. The Benin family has to be targeted for a restorative work, so as to re-position it again.

Also, it is evident that most of the women within the region who are not educated have sought for a short term empowerment, by undermining their sexual rights and thereby threatening or compromising their fundamental rights to bodily integrity. The unhealthy connivance with the institutionalized patriarchal structure of the Benin society makes has further precipitated the control of women sexuality and her bodily integrity violated. Majority of women perceive trafficking and prostitution from a positive side, always imagining that it could be their neighbor that may be the unfortunate the victim. There is an obvious hegemonic male dominance which has continued to exploit the present crops of uneducated women who are in the lower rung of the economic class of the society, and this has brought about a liberty protest in a feminine response to unhealthy patriarchal practices which have continued to be perpetrated by traditional belief system.

Furthermore, there is an obvious apparent change in “successful” victims of trafficking which has led to a paradigm shift that all work including prostitution is risk-prone. It is not the how but the end that matters. In most cases, the women have to be subjected to the global syndicates to determine how much they can realize and when they can be freed at a great cost of the human dignity.

### **7.3 POLICY IMPLICATION**

Nigeria is one of the few countries which have passed a national law against trafficking in persons, which was enacted by the National Assembly. Also the convention of Rights of Child was also ratified by Nigeria and implemented by the Childs Right Act of 2003, an act which comprehensively deals with issues of child trafficking.

At the state levels, Edo State has criminalized prostitution, and the criminal code also has a provision for including third party to crime, for prosecution. Despite all these efforts, the issue of trafficking has largely remained intractable. The growing involvement of young girls who constitute the next generation of today Nigeria, and the, reckless abandonment of socio-cultural values which placed dignity on womanhood, to a state where women are now totally objectified and commoditized for monetary benefit is greatly disturbing. The effects of trafficking and international prostitution structure are fundamental and a threat to the social and moral fabric that have held the family institution together. The family constitutes the nucleus of any society, any adverse effects experienced in the family, will definitely be magnified at the state and national level.

The age long confidence in child fostering in traditional Nigeria society has also undergone major change. The primordial sentiment that a child is not just the property of his own parents, but justified by extended family involvement the socialization of children need to have undergo critical scrutiny. This is because a significant number of those who were involved in trafficking were at one point or the other under the care of a relative, who was supposed to nurture the children. The inherent rivalry and unhealthy competition which is typical of many families of procreation of these children further heightens their vulnerabilities to abusive relationships especially when they are under fostering. Any respite provided by strangers or another relatives who are traffickers can easily lure such children into sex trafficking. There is therefore a need to critically appraise the experience of these children and protect their rights.

The scourge of HIV/AIDS is exacerbated in the process of sex-trafficking. Most of these women trafficked have multiple sex-partners and in most instances, several studies have also showed that these trafficked victims are not protected, by using condoms. This definitely would have debilitating effects on the health of women in their reproductive and active age. The implication is that there is a possible challenge in attainment of the Millennium Development Goal on health if the menace of trafficking is not checked. Sexual health of these women is greatly undermined in the process of trafficking. Several cultural factors identified in his study have made the study area highly susceptible to trafficking incidences. The shift and overwhelming changes in the current Benin family values in respect to honesty, dignity, hard work and empathy have been greatly challenged by a mad rush for wealth at whatever cost. The engagement of young women and even women in general for the furtherance of these exploitative sexual activities undermine the sexual health of these women.

The issue of education is critical since most of those vulnerable to trafficking have little or no educational qualification despite the adoption of the Universal Basic Education policy. No parent has been arrested for failure to send their children to school based on their inability to provide quality education for their children. The need to examine the UBE policy on education and the degree of effectiveness, as well as the legal instruments in place regards to its implementation is therefore imperative.

Furthermore, many of those previously trafficked victims disclosed that they would return back to Europe for the same sex work if they have the opportunity. The implication is that beyond the issues of sex-trafficking among the Benin, there are major

critical push factors which calls for attention which have established the region as a sending centre in Nigeria.

The role of religious institutions is pivotal to the growth of that society. In a situation where the religious institutions have been hijacked by series of traffickers, so as to protect and preserve them from any ill-luck which can befall them, their role of administering secret oaths on potential trafficked victims, thereby aiding and abetting sex trafficking has called to question the sanctity of many churches and religious houses in recent times.

Finally and very significant is the scourge of poverty which has had a debilitating effect on women in the lower socio-economic stratum of the Benin society. Poverty is not just a situation where there is no income, but it has the ability of rendering its victims totally powerless and in some cases desperate. Poverty is a correlate of crime. It pushes people into situations where they are ready to do anything to survive. The increased rates of unemployment among Nigerian youths from this region have culminated in the prevalence of social vices such as robbery, pipeline vandalism, and incessant fight over critical resources in the Niger Delta region. No doubt, sex trafficking is a highly gendered criminal activity, but again it is an indication that the poverty alleviation programmes initiated by government at different times have not yet properly addressed the needs of those they are intended to meet. A re-assessment of these poverty programmes would be greatly instrumental in reducing the scourge of sex trafficking in the study area.

## **7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following are the recommendations which have logically emerged from the study findings. These are summarized under the following headings:

### **Individual /Family Level:**

- a) Parents should endeavor to monitor their children's activities especially when they are being fostered by relatives. A good understanding of the activities of potential relative fosterer will enable parents make good judgment to know if their children would be will adequately taken care of by potential fosterers.
- b) Parents and guardians must see themselves as major stakeholders in the fight against women trafficking. The cost of trafficking at the end of the day is too much for any responsible parent to support their female children to bear.
- c) There should be concerted efforts by parents to have the number children they can cater for. Children's rights must be respected and all forms of discriminatory practice against the girl-child must be discouraged.

### **Community Level.**

- (a) A collaboration with the palace in an effort geared towards re-socializing the youths, and parents with the support of the active involvement of the Benin monarch would go a long way in ameliorating the problem of sex trafficking in the area.
- (b) There should be an aggressive community organized campaign targeted at parents especially mothers who play key roles in encouraging the daughters about the

health consequences and negative evidence of trafficking and prostitution. Community leader and opinion leaders must be actively recruited.

### **State Level**

- (a) The legal instruments in Edo State and Nigeria need to be strengthened to properly enforce the inclusion third parties in the prosecution of traffic related offences. Beyond directs sponsors and traditional priests, third party prosecutions should also include parents or relatives who are found to have been party to such crimes. The term ‘sacrificial lamb’ usually adopted by the Benin in descriBening the female trafficked victim is synonymous with the Lord Jesus Christ, believed to have died for the sins of the world as a sacrificial lamb. This means that any legal instrument must take into cognizance the social background of these victims and their direct beneficiaries.
- (b) All kinds of obnoxious practices which tend to beam unnecessary search light on women should be eradicated, with women having equal rights and access to critical resources. Women’s bodily integrity must be respected, so should their sexual rights as they are integral aspects of their fundamental rights.
- (c) When victims of trafficking are caught effort should be made to also intercept the parents so as to investigate the contribution of these parents to the present decision of trafficked victims to prostitute. This is because the involvement of the girl child in sex-trafficking actually represents a tip of the ice-berg, where in the major push factors within the family has not been seriously addressed. Efforts must therefore be made to track down the direct beneficiaries and immediate family members with the aim of reorienting them of the possible dangers inherent in such practice.

- d) Genuine effort must be made by the Edo State government to implement the basic provisions of the Universal Basic Education. Also education can be made freely available even to secondary levels for female children to enable them have access to education. This is the best form of empowerment that any government can give to her citizens.
- e) Adequate care should be made to the rehabilitation of trafficked victims so as to be properly rehabilitated.
- f) A special course should be introduced at both basic and secondary levels in the in Edo state where gender/sexuality education can be taught. This would help eradicate some obnoxious myths about women and encourage mutual respect of both genders in the society.

### **National Government**

- (a) Majority of those who are being rehabilitated in NAPTIP and other who are on their own claimed that when given an opportunity they would still prefer to travel abroad since life there was better and held better promises. There is a dire need to strengthen the nature of support given to trafficked victims, and a lot of psychological counseling to give them a sense of stability and direction especially with respect to their sexual rights and sexual health. This could be done by also providing these victims some forms of adult education or vocational training with adequate insight about their basic sexual rights and health of crimes.



- (b) There is an urgent need to implement the conventions provisions on trafficker and victims of trafficking on order to mitigate the upsurge. Legal instruments have to be strengthened in both the state and national levels.
- (c) Efforts should be made by government to provide free HIV counseling for newly deported victims and to provide free dosage of antiretroviral drugs if need be to those already infected with the HIV.
- d). The Federal Government of Nigeria should ensure a friendly and humane political economy as existing social security programmes are totally inadequate, thereby compelling citizens to take to engage in illegal acts for survival.

**Civil Society, Organisations /NGO and Religious Groups**

- (a) The prevailing cultural attitudes and norms towards gender discrimination have to be challenged by specifically targeting sensitive and prevalent myths about sexuality of the young women through radio, television and the local and civil organization.
- (b) Effort should be made to provide adequate and specifically targeted sexuality education and make education available to girls of this extraction in order to rebuild the already damaged psyche about the “get rich” syndrome and the abroad crave that has eaten deep into this region.

**7.5 AREAS OF FURTHER RESEARCH**

Further researches are needed to provide a comparative analysis of young women who have never being approached by recruiters of sex-traffickers to investigate their resilience to sex –trafficking in the region. Findings from such research will

enable researchers and policy makers to strengthen the campaign against women trafficking in the region. Furthermore, researches that will address gender differentials in transnational remittances among the Benin will help to understand the gendered migratory flow in the region. Researches that will also address how to integrate rehabilitated trafficked victims into the campaign against sex trafficking would also help to provide alternative efforts at stemming the problem of trafficking.

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# APPENDIXES

## APPENDIX A

### FAMILY -BASED INTERVIEW RECORD

Households (HH) members	Relationship to HH	Sex	Age	Marital Status	No of Children living in the	Education	Income	Religion	Person Responsible for Daily	Do they eat from the same	Occupation

TYPE OF FAMILY.....

NO OF WIVES.....

TYPE OF HOUSEHOLD HEAD.....

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA.....

HOUSE IDENTIFICATION.....

## APPENDIX B

### -Family Based Interview Guide

**Instructions:** Interview guide to be administered on the ‘eldest’ male or ‘eldest’ female who may be spouse of the male household head or the household head. The will be done in alternate basis. The information has to be recognized as “the household head” by other members of the family. Then open a household record for each family interviewed.

### Section A: Traditional Benin Family Structure and Functions

- 1 Describe a typical family tree in this community
- 2 Who are the ancestors of this family? Are they still worshiped or remembered in any way? (Please state the ways in which the family connects with their roots).
- 3 What are the economic functions of each member of the family in order to ensure the survival of this family? (Father, Mother, Male children, Female Children and Relatives or the extended kins who resided with you).
- 4 What was the role of the wife/wives in taking decisions in this family before now?
- 5 Where there significant contributions from the wives and daughters in this home? (State the form of contribution and when these contributions were made.)
- 6 Did this family have external sources of income in those days? If yes, state the sources.
- 7 How did this family ensure that its young were socialized to become responsible members of the community?
- 8 In those days, what were differences between in the ways that the female child was socialized from the female child? (please specify).
- 9 What are some of this family’s values in respect to



- Traditional values attached to marriage
  - Traditional values attached to male of female children
  - Traditional values attached to chastity
  - Traditional values attached to bride price, or what the family tends to gain by giving a girl child in marriage.
  - The economic roles of the husband
  - The economic roles of the wife/mother
  - The economic roles of grown male children
  - The economic roles of grown female children
  - Taboos in marriage
  - Prostitution.
- 10 What were this family's ways of applauding members who have done well?
- 11 What were the family's ways of sanctioning family members who violated the family's values?
- 12 Were there differences in the expectation of in terms of moral conducts between female and male members of this family?
- 13 Did this family in those days have traditions guiding sexuality or sexual relations?
- 14 Who was traditionally responsible for sexuality education of the female members?
- 15 Who was traditionally responsible for the sexuality education of the male members?

## **SECTION B: CHANGES IN THE BENIN FAMILY**

### **1 Economic Function of the Family Members**

- a. What are the current roles of each member in order to ensure that the family survives economically (probe by asking who is making contributions and the nature of contributions individuals members are making to ensure the survival of the family).
- b. Are the contributions from members of the family members dependent or based on certain expectations like being male o female, age, educational qualification o wealth of the individual (please probe).
- c. What is usually the nature of assistance or contribution made? (Please cite some examples where applicable).
- d. What about the contributions of the spouse(s) to the household head being interviewed?
- e. Are there presently external sources of help from other family members who are not currently residing in the family? If so, identify them and if not ask why?

## **2 Socialization of Young Members of the Family**

- (a) How is this family ensuring that its young ones are socialized as responsible members of the family?
- (b) What are the differences in the manner in which the female and male children are being socialized today (against the backdrop that trafficking, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections are on the increase.
- (c) What are some of this facility's values as of now? (Specify)

- (d) Who is responsible for teaching the young in the facility about morals or good conducts?
- (e) How does this family applaud or reward its members (please state some of them)
- (f) What are the penalties or sanctions meted out on members? Of the family who violate the family tradition? (Please give examples of such).
- (g) Are there differences nowadays in the expectations of certain moral conduct between the male and female members of this family? (Please cite some instances).

**3 Sexual Regulation Function of the Members of the Family**

- (a) Does this family currently have certain rules/traditions guiding sexuality or sexual relations of the young members of this family? (Please specify such)
- (b) Who is responsible for sexuality education of the female members of the family? How and when is it done?
- (c) Who is responsible for the sexuality education of the male members of the family? How is carried and when is it usually done?
- (d) What is this present family value on virginity or chastity, among its young members? What are the measures taking by this family ensure a compliance to such practice of chastity among (1) female member? (2) Male member?

**4 Reproductive functions:**

- (a) What will this family do in the event that one of her members cannot procreate (i) Female members? (ii) Female Affined? (iii) Male member? (iv) Male affines?
- (b) What will be the position of this family if a male member of this married and has only female children?

**5 Protection and Security of Family Members**

- (a) How is this family ensuring the safety and security of the members of this family such incidences
  - (i) Bad company
  - (ii) Drugs
  - (iii) Trafficking and international prostitution
  - (iv) Illegal migration
- (b) How has this family protected her female members from been seduced into international prostitution by trafficking
- (c) Will this family support he female member to be trafficked to Europe?.

**Section C: Benin Attitudes to Female Members' Involvement in International Prostitution.**

- 1) Does this family have relatives abroad?
 

If so, what kind of contributions do they make to this family? (Please identify them)
- 2) Are the expectations from family members whoa re abroad the same of both sexes in terms of their contributions to the family?

- 3) What roles did this family play in supporting these family members in their decision to travel outside Nigerian shores? (Note that the decision could be financial, spiritual, emotional or psychological support)
- 4) What are the forms of contributions which the males relative have made?
- (i) -----
- (ii) -----
- (iii)-----
- 5). Female relatives' contributions
- (i)-----
- (ii)-----
- (iii)-----
6. Overall all there difference in the nature or contribution which the female differences, if not why are there no differences?)
- 7). Would you rather send a female daughter to Europe than a male child? (Give reasons for your answer)
- 8). Within limited resources, who will this family send to school, the boy or the girl child (give reasons for you answer?)
- 9). Is it true for this family that daughters are generally more caring and sacrificing than the sons?
- 10). What are the expectations of the 'Wives in this family?
- 11). Considering the huge financial benefits obtained from women who are trafficked to Europe and other western countries, will this family support he female members to be trafficked? If yes, how? If no, give reasons

- 12). Why in your opinion are some Benin families supporting this phenomenon? Give reasons.

**Section D: Factors Encouraging Women Trafficking in the Benin Family**

1. Has any female member of this family been approached for trafficking in this family?
2. Do both male and female members have equal access to critical resources like (a) land (b) education (c) inheritance
3. What role can the Benin family play in order to mitigate the phenomenon of trafficking and international prostitution?
4. What roles can the community play (specify these roles)
5. What about the traditional authority, what role can they play (specify)
6. Finally, what is government not doing well that should be improved upon in stopping taking of female members of the Benin society?

## APPENDIX C

### VIGNETTE/FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

#### VIGNETTE A

Esohe Obayuwana was born into a family of fifteen children, with her mother being the third wife of commercial bus manager popular referred to as “agbero” among the Benin. Every child that was born to Mr. Obajuawana was left to be catered for by his or her own mother. Unfortunately, Esohe’s mother was just a petty beauty cosmetologist who made women’s hair at the popular *New Benin market*. Esohe’s mother would have been able to cope with five children she had for Mr. Obajuawana had Esohe’s elder brother not been involved in a police case that has taken a major toll of on all he had earned resources. Esohe being the eldest daughter had to be sent out of school for her inability to pay for the senior Secondary School Certificate. With other younger siblings who needed help and the medical aid of the youngest child who happened to be a sickle cell anemia patient, Esohe opted for the choice which a number of young girls of her age make. This was after her mother had bemoaned her fate continually.

Esohe’s mother reminded her of the endless suffering of a cousin of hers whose life had taken a new turn, since the daughter had made it Europe through the help of some illegal gangs. She observed that her cousins’ story had changed completely with the help of the daughter, who had bought a property about three months ago with over 3 million naira and had sent the latest brand of a Toyota to her mother. This action, Esohes mother said attracted the envy and praise of all. Esohe’s mother argued that her cousin now belonged to the league of “who is who” in Benin City. What a sporadic transformation, what a way to live, she concluded.

Mrs. Obayuwana related this event to her daughter who also was determined to change her own lot in life. Esohe had always dreamt of becoming big time business woman, like many of the big *madams* she saw around who owned big boutiques and drove in the latest cars in town. Esohe decided to approach one of those syndicates through her mother's contacts. She was helped with traveling documents and made to pass through all the necessary protocols' of swearing before a shrine and taking oath of total allegiance to the syndicate group. Esohe's mother had stood by her all through these events being encouraged by the imminent change that was going to happen in their family in no distant time. At least she thought, she would be able to complete favourably with the eldest wife whose sons were in Germany. She would also be able to be part of some prestigious social clubs in Benin.

Esohe, made it to Italy and she found herself in the midst of a terrible mess she had never thought possible. She was exposed to all forms of inhuman forms of sexual denigration that she loathed her womanhood. She cried every night and wished she would die. Her *Madam* was a cold hearted lady who did not care what and where she went to meet her billing for the day. Luck ran out of Esohe when one cold night, she was intercepted by a violent mob. She was oblivious of the fact that a raid was going to be carried out on Nigerian girls. She was one of those who picked up by the police.

Esohe was later interrogated by the Italian police and was eventually detained for several days. Afterward, she was bundled into an airplane without any of her belongings, sick, tired and depressed she found herself at the Murtala Muhammed Airport, Lagos. She was one of the ladies paraded on NTA News line as one of the 29 deportees who had



been denting the image of Nigeria abroad. Esohe was very sick and needed urgent attention which came a little too late. She was admitted to the central hospital in Benin when the authorities learnt that her case was indeed an emergency. Esohe could no longer stand the shame and disgrace of what she had been through. May be due to the emotional torture and the psychological trauma coupled with a lot of complication arising from her indiscriminate sexual acts, she eventually gave up the ghost two weeks after her admission in the hospital.

Esohe died. She died unsung, unloved and defiled because she was searching for a golden fleece in far away Europe.

### **Questions**

- (1) What do you think of the roles of the following people: (a) Esohe's mother (b) Mr Obayuwana (c) Mrs Obayuwana's cousin (d) Esohe (e) Mrs Obayuwana's cousin's daughter?
- (2) What do you think of Esohe's mother's decision to encourage the daughter into international prostitution?
- (3) Why do you think that Mrs Obayuwana would prefer to send her daughter to Europe to prostitute instead of choosing other options for survival?
- (4) What should Esohe have done in that kind of situation? (Please give reasons of your response)
- (5) Is the story above a familiar one to you? If not what are the possible story lines?
- (6) What are some of the customary expectations of a Benin woman (daughter) to the economic survival of the family?

- (7) What are some of the customary expectations of a wife to the economic survival of the family? (A blood related kins and (b) marriage related kins)
- (8) In your own opinion, can you say that the phenomenon of trafficking for the purpose of sexual transaction is declining, on the increase or even underreported?
- (9) What kind of respect or disrespect is shown to those who have made it through trafficking and international prostitution?.
- (10) Who in your opinion are the major beneficiaries from the “booties” of successfully trafficked women who have made it through trans-border sexual transaction?

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## VIGNETTE B

Eki IgBeninosa was born into a family of fifteen children. Her mother is the second wife of retired security officer in one of the State Ministries. Eki's mother Mrs IgBeninosa, was a local food vendor. She needed the assistance of Eki most of the time to attend to her teeming customers. Even though Eki was her second daughter, she had shown leadership qualities right from time as she had decided not be a victim like her elder sister who was put in the family was and had to be married out at an early age. Every day, Mrs IgBeninosa would curse her eldest daughter for being so insensitive to her plight and making herself vulnerable to an ordinary church rat of a husband. Eki felt very sorry for her mother who had been terribly disappointed at the fate that had befallen her. Eki's mother had boasted to her friends that her eldest daughter was very beautiful and she was going to be the one God was going to use change her story. Now that hope was gone or so it is seemed to her. On Eki's side, she sympathized with her mother's predicament since she had to fend for the other four younger siblings all by herself.

Eki felt that she needed to come to the aid of her mother and help salvage her immediate family. She thought of the eldest wife whose children; all boys were in far away Holland. She recalled how the first wife had taunted her mother endlessly that it was her evil that closed the door of prosperity against her. The only person that had been a source of respite to them was Eki's Aunt, Mrs IgBeninosa, younger sister. She had traveled to Italy some seven years ago. Only three years ago, she was able to pay for a property in a highbrow area in Benin city, paid for Eki's fees and even sent some amount of money to her sister, Eki's mother to enlarge her business. Two years ago, she offered to assist her niece by providing the necessary link of her to come to Torino, a city in Italy

and “do business.” Although she confided in her sister, Eki’s mother, that she was now a *Madame* after being a prostitute in Torino, in Italy, she convinced her elder sister that Eki was her only solution to poverty. Eki was glad at the offer by her Aunt and her show of kind gesture. She was more overwhelmed with fact that she would be living the shores of Nigeria and the opportunity to become one of the “*akatarians or been to*” among her friends. More so, her mother was going to join the league of women who brag about their children abroad.

Eki eventually left of Italy and soon found out that she had to dance to a different drumbeat. Her aunt told her that it was an excellent opportunity to rescue her family from the shackles of poverty and show the other wives and their children that they were not jinxed after all. Even though Eki was completely averse to going out to sell her body to strange men, she thought more about home. She remembered her mother who was depending on her, to change their lot. Eki thought about her stepbrothers who had paid deaf ears to their plea for support when they needed help. Finally she remembered her friends who would want to jump at the opportunity of being “*a been to*” at whatever cost. Eki made up her mind to take the bull by the horn and heeded her Aunt’s counsel.

She worked so hard that within eight months, she was able to settle her Aunt all the money she invested in her. Eki became the toast of Italian men. Within a period of six months she was able to be single handedly open a shopping complex for her mother at Benin City. She made sure that all her younger siblings were sent to good schools. To say the least, she changed the life of the family totally.

Eki wedded two months ago to a Spanish who came to do business in Italy and became one of her clients. He fell in love with Eki and decided to marry her on the

condition she stopped selling her body for money. Eki's husband is very wealthy and owned series of conglomerates in the United States. Eki had to relocate with her husband to Florida in the US where they are currently living. For Eki's mother, God had compensated her for the grief over her eldest daughter.

### **Questions**

- (1) What do you think about the following person? (a) Eki (b) Eki's mother (c) Eki's Aunt (d) Eki's father
- (2) Why will Eki's mother allow the daughter to be involved in international prostitution even when she was aware?
- (3) Why would Eki's mother or Aunt not seek other options for survival other than international prostitution? (Please give your reasons).
- (4) Can we say that Eki acted well for heeding the counsel of her Aunt and the mother? Please give reasons for your option.
- (5) Can one safely say that it is not all trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation that ends on a bad note? (Discuss)
- (6) What in your opinion are some of the advantages of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation to the family economic survival among the Benin?
- (7) What are some of the disadvantages of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation on the economic survival of the family?
- (8) Can you say that the phenomena of trafficking and international prostitution among the Benin is
  - Acceptable?
  - Declining

- Underreported?
- Abated?

(9) In your opinion what are usually the major beneficiary of the “booties” of international prostitution.

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## APPENDIX D

### KEY -INFORMANT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

#### Section A:

Name-----

Sex: -----

Age:-----

Marital Status: -----

Local Government of Origin: -----

Educational qualification: -----

Occupation: -----

Religion:-----

Status in the Benin Society:-----

#### Section B: Traditional in the Benin Family Structure

- (1) What was the pre-colonial Benin family structure like? Discuss this in terms of
  - Roles and status of husband in the family
  - Roles and status of wives in the family
  - Sexual purity and female virginity
  - Ritual restrictions and taboos with respect to women
  -
- (2) Describe the structure of the pre-colonial Benin family and the forms of obligation which the family members had to her members
- (3) What were the significant impacts on the following on the Benin family structure?.
  - Colonialism
  - Structural adjustment policy
  - Women trafficking for the purpose of international prostitution.
  -
- (4) What were factors have medicated these changes?
- (5) What has changed about the status of the women in contemporary Benin family

- (6) What was the pre-Colonial Benin family structure like? Discuss this in terms of
- Roles and status of husband in the family
  - Roles and status of wives in the family
  - Sexual purity and female virginity
  - Ritual restrictions and taboos with respect to women.
  -
- (7) Describe the structure of the Pre-colonial Benin family the forms of obligation, which the family members had to be members
- (8) What were the significant impacts on the following on the Benin?
- Colonialism
  - Structural adjustment policy
  - Women trafficking for the purpose of international prostitution.
- (9) What were the cultural obligations of women to their own corporate lineage? Have these cultural obligations changed? What factors have mediated changes?

### **SECTION C: CHANGE IN BENIN FAMILY STRUCTURE**

- (1) What is the Benin contemporary family structure like? Discuss this in terms of
- Roles and status of husband in the family
  - Roles and status of wives in the family
  - Sexual purity and female virginity
  - Ritual restrictions and taboos with respect to women
- (2) Describe the structure of the pre-colonial Benin family and the forms of obligation which the family members had to her members
- (3) What are the cultural obligations of women to their own corporate lineage in today Benin society? Have these cultural obligations changed? What factors have mediated these changes?
- (4) What is the status of the women in contemporary Benin family? Discuss this in term of
- Roles and status of husband in the family
  - Roles and status of wives in the family
  - Sexual purity and female virginity
  - Ritual restrictions and taboos with respect to women
- (5) What has changed about the status of the women in contemporary Benin family?



## **SECTION D: BENIN FAMILY'S ATTITUDE TO ITS FEMALE MEMBERS**

- (1) With the prevalence of trafficking for the purpose of international prostitution, how has affected:
  - Status of women in the Benin family
  - The sexuality education and socialization of the girl child.
- (2) What are some of the customary expectations of the Benin woman (daughter) towards the economic survival of the family?
- (3) What are the present day expectations of members of the Benin family towards female children?
- (4) What are the present day expectations of members of the Benin family towards the male children?
- (5) Can one safely say that in the present day Benin, social expectations from the male and female children are the same? If yes, why? If not, what are the differences?
- (6) Why is the term "half-current" used to describe the birth of a female child?

## **SECTION C: BENIN FAMILY AND WOMEN TRAFFICKING OF THE PURPOSE OF INTERNATIONAL PROSTITUTION**

- (1) As one of the custodians of Benin heritage, why would the Benin women who have been historically regarded as "conservative" due to several ritual restrictions culturally imposed on them become major actresses in trans border sexual transactions?
- (2) In your opinion what has led to this drastic reversal of values?
- (3) According to the Benin tradition, how has the phenomenon of trafficking for the purpose of sexual transaction been conceived or perceived?
- (4) Are there known cultural restrictions imposed on the act of trafficking and international prostitution? If not, why?
- (5) Is it correct to say that successfully trafficked women in Benin enjoy better status in terms of social recognition and prestige than those who have not in the Benin family?
- (6) Can one propose that successfully trafficked women involved in international prostitution have made it possible for women to become more visible or even relevant within the family structure

- (7) In your opinion, what are the differences in the traditional Benin family and the current Benin family that have contributed in making the female members of the family vulnerable to trafficking?
- (8) Currently, is there any known Benin cultural practice that has mitigated or even exacerbated the phenomenon of trafficking for the purpose of international prostitution?

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## APPENDIX E

### LIFE HISTORY

Name-----

Sex: -----

Age:-----

Marital Status: -----

Local Government of Origin: -----

Educational qualification: -----

Occupation: -----

Religion:-----

Status in the Benin Society:-----

- What type of family where you born into?
- What type of family did you grow up in?
- How was growing up like? What neighborhood and who were those that made significant impacts in you life?
- What was your educational experience like?
- What were your religious inclinations and why?
- Who was responsible for your upkeep until your trip outside Nigeria's shore?
- What was the role that your parents. Relatives played in your bid to travel outside the shores of Nigeria illegally?
- Specifically state the role your parents or relatives played in encouraging or even discouraging you/
- What were some of your plans immediate family and relatives?
- Were some members of your family preview to such intentions?

- Had all worked as planned without deportation, who would have been the greatest beneficiary of your benevolence? State the reason why?
- What were our dreams or ambition before your involvement with the phenomenon of trafficking?
- What is your family's position in response to your current situation
- What are some of the lessons that you have learnt through your experience now: The good experience and the bad one (Please probe).
- What do you think should be the roles of the family, the government and religious institutions in rehabilitating deported women who were formally trafficked?

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