

## NIGERIA POLICE FORCE AND CHALLENGES OF CHILD TRAFFICKING IN EBONYI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

**Omeje, Ngozi P. (Ph.D) & Ogbu Mark O.**

Department of Public Administration,  
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

### **Abstract**

*Child trafficking is a complex global issue that affects millions of people worldwide yearly and as such requires an comprehensive and urgent response from the law enforcement agents to combat it's continual spread. This huge responsibility seems to be failing for Nigeria Police Force Ebonyi State Command. This study was therefore carried out with the objectives to find out the challenges faced by the Ebonyi state police command in curbing child trafficking specifically in Ebonyi Local Government Area; to identify the major causes of child trafficking in Ebonyi LGA and to determine the effects of trafficking among children in the study area. The study was anchored on social contract theory propounded by Hobbes (1651). It adopts a survey design method, explored both the primary and secondary sources of data and employed the chi-square statistical tool for data analyses. The findings from the analyzed questionnaire distributed to 399 sample size revealed among others that the Ebonyi State Police Command was constrained by inadequate resources and poor co-operation from the citizens of the area to help curb it. The situation also results to high rate of school dropouts as well as juvenile delinquents, misfits and abused children from the area. It was recommended among others that government should provide enough motivation to men of Nigeria Police Force to be committed and dedicated to their duty. Also the public in the study area should co-operate with the police by providing with first hand information to help curb this ugly menace of child trafficking.*

**Keywords:** Child, Child Trafficking, Police and Policing.

### **Introduction**

Child trafficking in a worldwide scenario is really turning problematic. Over the years, it has metamorphosed into frightening growth rate, having reached its peak and without showing signs of reduction in parts of Africa, precisely many states of Nigeria including Ebonyi where a particular Local Government was choosed as study Area.

As a result of ills that currently hampers the development of the country, child trafficking has become widespread and now occupied a preeminent position among the ills that pervade the Nigeria society (Gallagher, 2016). While, it may appear that the problem seem endemic in Ebonyi State, there are indications that 9no parts of the country is immune from this social malaise that has raxaged many communities. There are an estimate of 70 million by 2018. The International Labour Organization (ILO) recently estimated that over 12 million Nigerian children especially in Edo State are engaged in child trafficking or labour. The survey also estimated that over 9,000 Nigerian are engaged in prostitution in italy which constitutes in the Italian sex market (Kekeh, 2017).

International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 182 (1999) on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL) classifies trafficking among “forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery” and thereby a WFCL to be eliminated as a matter of urgency, irrespective of the country's level of development.

On the problem statement, in Ebonyi Local Government Area Child trafficking has done more harm

than good to many parents over their children.

The Law Enforcement Agencies have the responsibilities to protect citizens and enforce their fundamental human rights. Their response to trafficking persons in Nigeria appears slow. These efforts extend across national boundaries because Nigeria is a signatory to various International Agreements which prohibit further trafficking.

These agencies are made up of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP), Nigeria Police, Nigeria Immigration Service, Ministry of Justice and the Courts and Nigeria Civil Defence Corps.

As a result of this, Children may be forced into many dangerous or illegal situations, including slavery, domestic labour, exploitation or prostitution. Here, the traffickers often take advantage of these individuals vulnerabilities and unmet needs. What is glaringly obvious is that these children, are those whose family structure has been broken down due to illness, death, communal war and poverty. It is complicated, and painstaking process and all these destructive business is driven by profit. Meanwhile, tracking those being exploited proves an even greater problem for children born into poverty or those without families may not be traceable. Many do not have birth certificates since they do not have family to notice if they are missing, this makes them enter the hellish world of trafficking and maltreatment.

**The study specific objectives aims to:**

- 1 Find out the challenges faced by the Ebonyi State police command in curbing child trafficking in Ebonyi LGA.
- 2 To identify workable strategies by the police in curbing child trafficking in Ebonyi LGA.
- 3 To determine the effects of child trafficking among children in Ebonyi LGA.

Furthermore to guide the study these null hypotheses were formulated to be tested for validation or rejection.

H<sub>01</sub>:The Nigerian Police Force Ebonyi State Command does not face any challenges in curbing child trafficking in Ebonyi LGA.

H<sub>02</sub>:There are no workable challenges to be adopted by the NPF Ebonyi State command in curbing child trafficking in Ebonyi LGA.

H<sub>03</sub>:The effect of trafficking among children in Ebonyi LGA is not negative to their development

**Theoretical Framework**

The study is anchored on the social contract theory propounded by Hobbes (1651). It suggests in order to secure self protection and self preservation and avoid misery and pain, man entered into contract with the state. As a result of this contract the mightiest authority (the state) is to protect and preserve their lives and property. The subjects were to surrender all their rights and rest all liberties in the sovereign for perception of peace, life and prosperity of the subjects. Therefore, when the people experience a state of insecurity, it means that the state has failed in keeping its own parts of the contract.

On the relevance of this theory to the study, the Nigeria police force is a security agent of the state tasked with the responsibility of securing the citizens of the country especially the victims of child trafficking. The government should support the security agents in surmounting all challenges faced in the course of tackling this ugly menace in Ebonyi LGA.

## Conceptual Clarification

### I. Child Trafficking

The United Nations (UN) defines trafficking in persons as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, labelling on receipt of persons by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion of abduction of fraud of deceptions of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments achieve the consent of a person, having control over another being for the purpose of exploitation.

Child trafficking is the illegal commerce and trade of people. It is essentially the facet of slavery which relies on direct purchase in contrast to the natural increase from enslaving the children of slaves.

Gallaher, (2016) defined Child trafficking as the “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt” of a child for the purpose of exploitation.

According to Salah (2017), the definition of child trafficking differs slightly from that of adults, which requires an extra stage for trafficking to be present — that of the Means of the threat or USC of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person”(Salah, 2017).

### ii. Meaning of Child

The word “Child” has been defined specifically in both the local and international instruments dealing with the rights and welfare of the child. In Nigeria, there are different types of definition given to a child depending on which law and for what purpose. A child is statutorily defined as a person under the age of 14 years.

A child under International Instrument is every human being below the age of 18 years. The problem with age-based definitions is that they are always arbitrary and indeed risk the possibility of being rendered obsolete by modern perceptions, and findings on children in a very recent study has shown where traffickers lie about the age of trafficked victims to beat security agencies. Other definitions include:

- (a) A child under seven years is not criminally responsible for an act or omission; however, there is a reputable presumption that under twelve years cannot commit a crime.
- (b) **Juvenile Justice:** The Children and Young person's Law differentiates between the child and young person. It is below 14 years for the former, while the latter is not to exceed 17 years.
- (c) **Voting Rights:** The age is fixed at 18 years.
- (d) **Marriageable age:** This depends on the type of marriage being contracted e.g. under the Matrimonial Cause Act 1970; 10 As at common law is 16 years; under the Customary and Islamic law, it varies from place to place.
- (e) Right to acquire land: the minimum age is 18 years.

And age of maturity means the age at which a person attains the age of eighteen. For all intents and purposes therefore, a child as envisaged in this article is simply refers to a person who is below the age of 18 years.

### **iii. Definition of Police**

Anderson (2013) defines police as a civil force entrusted with the task of monitoring public order and law enforcement for the prevention and punishment of their breaches. Adedipe (2005) defined police as an organ of government that is charged with public safety. They are responsible for the civil society security. Police Act Cap 359 and section 4 laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1960 define police clearly in terms of prevention and detection of crime, preservation of law and order, protection of lives and property, and enforcement of law and order. To crown it all, the Constitution of Nigeria (1999:83), defined the term police as an agent of the state which is embedded under criminal justice system whose official function is to maintain law and order and enforcement of same (- Police Force shall be the only police force and subject to the provision of the section, no other police force shall be established for the Federation or any part thereof. Section 215 (3) and (4) of 1999 Constitution and the Police Act empowered police to carry out the following functions.

The police shall be employed for the prevention and detection of crime, apprehension of offenders, the preservation of law and order, the protection of life and property, and due enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are directly charged and perform such military duties within or without Nigeria as maybe required of them by, or under the authority of this or any other Act.

The Nigeria Police Force also have statutory powers to investigate crimes, apprehend offenders, interrogate suspects, prosecute suspect, grant bail to suspects pending completion of investigation or prior to court arraignment, to serve summons, to regulate or disperse unlawful processions and assemblies. The police are also empowered to search and seize property suspected to be stolen or associated with crime, and to take and record for purposes of identification, the measurement, photographs and fingerprint impressions of all persons in custody. The police perform these functions through proactive and reactive policing. It is the police that mediate between law and other institutions of social control in the society. They also construct crime data in a given society. Police as regard this work is defined as public agents concerned with the enforcement of law, maintenance of peace and order and prosecution of breaches of the laws.

### **iv. Policing**

The term policing have come to mean an approach to crime fighting through community service and problem-solving. The idea of policing requires a holistic approach to community service, taking into account the problems that plague a community and working with the people within that community to solve them.

Policing requires cooperation from stakeholders- residents, business owner, and leaders - participate in the process of reducing crime and improving quality of life. While it may seem at the time this newly envisioned idea of policing as a societal function as opposed to being reserved for law enforcement departments alone is only beginning to gain traction, in fact, it hearkens to the [earliest days of the modern police force](#)

### **Methodology**

Being a quantitative research, the survey design was adopted. The sample size is 399 derived through the use of Taro yameni formula from a finite population of Ebonyi Local Government Area being 126,837 based on the 2006 population census. Purposive sampling technique was utilized in sample distribution to the 11 communities that makes Ebonyi local Government Area comprising: Nkaleke Echara, Nkaleke Echara Unuhu, Nkaleke Echara Ndiebor, Nkaleke Echara Ndiegu, Oguzoronweya, Agelegu Ishieke, Onuenyim Ishieke, Mbeke Ishieke, Ndiebor Ishieke, Ndiegu Ishieke, Egwu ndilegu Ishieke.

Structured questionnaire was the major instrument of data collection. Five point likert scale of strongly Agree (SA), Agree(A), Strongly disagree (SD), Disagree (D) and undecided (UD) was used in response pattern.

Data collected were carefully analyzed using simple percentage analysis and chi-square statistical tool to test the hypotheses.

In decision Rule,  $H_0$  is accepted if the calculated value of  $x$  is greater than the critical value of  $x$  while  $H_0$  is rejected for the validation of alternate  $H_A$  if the critical value of  $x$  is greater than the calculated value of  $x$ .

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Total distributed questionnaire was 399. Only 200 was returned and used for the data analysis while 199 was not returned and it was counted void.

**Table 1: Data presentation Based on Research Objective 1: Finding out the challenges faced by the Ebonyi State police command in curbing child trafficking in Ebonyi Local Government Area**

S/No	Research item	Point, frequency and percentages				
		SA (5)	A (4)	D (3)	SD (2)	UD (1)
1	The significant major challenge the police is facing is poor cooperation by the public especially at reporting such incidence of child trafficking.	98 (49%)	25 (12.5%)	42 (21%)	35 (17.5%)	-
2	Shortage of personnel on the part of the police	19 (9.5%)	91 (45.5%)	10(5%)	80 (40%)	-
3	Poor motivation by the federal government to the police to do the job	35 (17.5%)	95(47.5%)	-	70(35%)	-
4	Corruption on the part of the police	70 (35%)	45(22.5%)	30 (15%)	55(27.5)	-
5	Inadequate facilities, Equipments and machines for police to function well	15 (7.5)	120 (60%)	30 (15%)	35 (17.5%)	-

**Field Work, 2021**

As could be seen from the position of the respondents on the table 1 on challenges faced by the Ebonyi State police command in curbing child trafficking in Ebonyi Local Government Area in research items 1234 and 5 respectively majority agreed the following that police in the study area are facing poor co-operation from members of the public in fishing out the culprits; shortage of personnel to help execute the challenging task or duty; poor motivation on the part of Federal Government which increases the police personnels compromising in acts of corruption and inadequate equipment and machines to assist police in giving quick response when their attention are needed.

**Table 2: Data presentation Based on Research Objective 2: To identify workable strategies by the police in curbing child trafficking in Ebonyi LGA.**

S/No	Research item	Point, frequency and percentages				
		SA (5)	A (4)	D (3)	SD (2)	UD (1)
6	By the police engaging on sensitization to the localities of the dangers of child trafficking	150 (75%)	-	50 (25%)	-	-
7	By the Police Public Relation department seeking the co-operation of the communities in reporting such cases.	90 (45%)	80 (45%)	30 (15%)	-	-
8	By the police recruiting and training more of their personnels to uncover perpetrators of this act	120 (60%)	15 (75%)	30	35	-
9	By the government motivating the police through financial and non financial incentives for them to do the job and not compromise to fraudulent practices	70 (35)	30 (15%)	45 (22.5%)	55 (27.5%)	-
10	Without doubt there are workable strategies to be adpted by the NPF Ebonyi State Command in curbing child trafficking practices in Ebonyi LGA.	75 (37.5%)	90 (45%)	35 (17.5%)	-	-

**Field Work, 2021**

On the workable strategies by the police in curbing child trafficking in Ebonyi LGA, majority of respondents in research items 6,7,8,9 and 10 respectively agreed that police could overcome the challenges through engaging the localities of the study area in sensitization programmes of dangers of child trafficking. By the force public relations department seeking for co-operation of the communities in reporting such cases; by the NPF and government recruiting and training more hands to help do the work and by government motivating the personnels of the police force to encourage them not to compromise to corruption.

**Table 3: Data presentation Based on Research Objective 3: Determining the effects of trafficking among children in Ebonyi Local Government Area**

S/No	Research item	Point, frequency and percentages				
		SA (5)	A (4)	D (3)	SD (2)	UD (1)
11	Results to Victims Turning to child Prostitutes	95 (47.5%)	35 (17.5%)	-	70 (35%)	-
12	Results to high rate of juvenile delinquents, misfits and abused children.	110 (55%)	45 (33.5%)	35 (17.5%)	10 (5%)	-
13	Increases the chances of child rituals.	180 (90%)	-	20 (10%)	-	-
14	Results to high rate of school drop out and illiteracy	91 (45.5%)	19 (9.5%)	80 (40%)	10 (5%)	-
15	Results to child labour and early marriages	98 (49%)	42 (21%)	25 (12.5%)	35 (17.5)	-

**Field Work, 2021**

On determining the effects of trafficking among the children in Ebonyi LGA, majority of the respondents in research items 11,12,13,14 and 15 respectively agreed that child trafficking in the study area have resulted to children turning to child prostitutes, misfits and abused children; increased the chances of child rituals, school drop out, child labour and early marriages.

### Test of Hypotheses

#### Hypothesis one

H<sub>0</sub>: The Nigerian Police Force Ebonyi State Command does not face any challenges in curbing child trafficking in Ebonyi LGA.

**Table 4: The significant major challenge the police is facing is poor cooperation by the public especially at reporting such incidence of child trafficking.**

Reponses	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	98	49
Agree	42	21
Disagree	25	12.5
Strongly disagree	35	17.5
Undecided	0	0
Total	200	100

Field Work, 2021

$$\text{Expected frequency (E)} = \frac{200}{5} = 40$$

**Table 5: Calculation of chi-square for hypothesis 1**

Option	Expected	O-E	(O-E) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$
98	100	2	4	0.04
42	25	17	289	11.56
25	25	0	0	0
35	50	15	225	4.5
0	0	0	0	0
Total	200			340

Therefore, the calculated chi-square = 16.1 to compute the degree of (Df) or critical value.

$$Df = (R-1)(C-1)$$

$$\begin{array}{lclclcl} \text{Where} & R & = & \text{Number of rows} & = & 5 \\ & C & = & \text{number of columns} & = & 2 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{aligned} Df &= (5-1)(2-1) \\ &= (4)(1) \\ &= 4 \times 1 = 4 \end{aligned}$$

$$Df = 4$$

We now refer to the table of the sampling distribution of X for 4df at 5% = 0.05 level of significance, the critical value for 4df and 0.05 level of significance that is 9.488.



$$\begin{aligned} \text{That is } X^2 &= (4.005)^2 = 16.1 \\ X^2 &= 16.1 \\ X^2 \text{ critical value} &= 9.488 \end{aligned}$$

**Decision Rule:** From the analysis above, the calculated chi-square ( $x^2$ ) of 16.1 is greater than the critical value of 9.488. Therefore, the researcher rejects the null hypotheses and accepts the alternative. This implies that there is a significant challenges faced by Nigerian police force in curbing child trafficking in Ebonyi LGA.

### Hypothesis two

H<sub>02</sub>: There are no workable challenges to be adopted by the NPF Ebonyi State command in curbing child trafficking in Ebonyi LGA.

The chi-square method is.

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

Where  $X^2$  = chi-square  
 $O$  = observed frequency  
 $E$  = expected the sum of the contingency table.

**Table 6: The hypothesis one will be tested based on research item 1 from the questionnaire.**

**Research item 10: Without doubt there are workable strategies to be adopted by the NPF Ebonyi State command in curbing child trafficking practices in Ebonyi LGA**

Responses	Responses	Percentage
Strongly agree	150	75
Agree	-	-
Disagree	50	25
Strongly disagree	-	-
Undecided	0	0
Total	200	100

**Field Work, 2021**

$$\text{Expected frequency (E)} = \frac{200}{4} = 50$$

**Table 7: Calculation of chi-square for Hypothesis 2**

Option	Expected	O-E	(O-E) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$
89	50	39	1521	30.42
37	50	-13	169	3.38
45	50	-5	25	0.50
29	50	-21	441	8.82
0	0	0	0	0
Total	200			43.12



Therefore, the calculated chi-square = 43.12 to compute the degree of (Df) or critical value.

$$Df = (R-1)(C-1)$$

$$\begin{array}{lclclcl} \text{Where} & R & = & \text{Number of rows} & = & 5 \\ & C & = & \text{number of columns} & = & 2 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{aligned} Df &= (5-1)(2-1) \\ &= (4)(1) \\ &= 4 \times 1 = 4 \end{aligned}$$

$$Df = 4$$

We now refer to the table of the sampling distribution of  $X^2$  for 4df at 5% = +0.05 level of significance, the critical value for 4df and 0.05 level of significance that is 9.488.

$$\text{That is } X^2 = (4.005) = 9.488$$

$$X^2 \text{ calculated} = 43.12$$

$$X^2 \text{ critical value} = 9.488$$

**Decision rule:** From the analysis above, the researcher revealed that the calculated chi-square ( $X^2$ ) of 43.12 is greater than the critical value of 9.488. Therefore, the researcher rejects the null hypotheses and accepts the alternative. This implies that there are workable challenges to be adopted by the NPF Ebonyi State command in curbing child trafficking in Ebonyi LGA.

### Hypothesis three

H<sub>03</sub>: The effect of trafficking among children in Ebonyi LGA is not negative to their development

**Table 8: The hypothesis will be tested based on research item 14 from the questionnaire**  
**Child Trafficking Results to high rate of school drop out and illiteracy in Ebonyi LGA**

Reponses	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	91	45.5
Agree	19	9.5
Disagree	80	40
Strongly disagree	10	5
Undecided	0	0
Total	200	100

#### Field Work, 2021

$$\text{Expected frequency (E)} = \frac{200}{5} = 40$$

**Table 9: Calculation of chi-square for hypothesis 3**

Option	Expected	O-E	(O-E) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$
180	50	130	16900	338
-	50	-	-	-
20	50	10	100	2
-	50	-	-	-
0	0	0	0	0
Total	200			340

Therefore, the calculated chi-square = 340 to compute the degree of (Df) or critical value.

$$Df = (R-1)(C-1)$$

$$\begin{array}{lclcl} \text{Where} & R & = & \text{Number of rows} & = 5 \\ & C & = & \text{number of columns} & = 2 \end{array}$$

$$Df = (5-1)(2-1)$$

$$= (4)(1)$$

$$= 4 \times 1 = 4$$

$$Df = 4$$

We now refer to the table of the sampling distribution of X for 4df at 5% = 0.05 level of significance, the critical value for 4df and 0.05 level of significance that is 9.488.

$$\text{That is } X^2 = (4.005) = 9.488$$

$$X^2 \text{ calculate} = 340$$

$$X^2 \text{ critical value} = 9.488$$

**Decision rule:** From the analysis above, the calculated chi-square ( $x^2$ ) of 340 is grater than the critical value of 9.488. Therefore, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternative hypothesis. This implies that the effect of trafficking among children in Ebonyi LGA is negative to their development in Ebonyi LGA in Ebonyi State.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Without doubt, trafficking in human beings, more so in Children, is one of the fastest growing forms of criminal activity and one of the most profitable industries which the various governments in various states of Nigeria should rise up to the challenge.

One of the major challenges that the Nigerian police and other law enforcement agencies faces in curbing or fighting child trafficking is the lack of co-operation from the public at reporting such incidences or at investigations.

Ebonyi Local Government Area and it's environs have been targeted and known as an easier place where children could be gotten to serve as house help for people of other states and areas in Nigeria and other neighbouring countries.

Human trafficking is a problem that will not disappear soon. If the law enforcement and security agents fail in their expected roles of protection and as long as profits are high and victims are plentiful, traffickers will continue to trade in men, women and children.

People who indulge in child trafficking in Ebonyi LGA does that out of selfish desire to make money. They are not far from the immediate relatives of the victims and sometimes, they are even parents who insist on taking financial rites in exchange of giving out their wards.

This situation has taken a negative toll in the overall development of children involved in child trafficking in Ebonyi LGA. They drop out from school which they hardly get the opportunity again in life. they turn to be abused children and social mis-fits who turn to be means of cheap labour to their task masters. The female children ends up in child prostitution and abuses a situation that haunts them till the rest of their lives.

Hence the following recommendations were proffered:

1. As a matter of urgency, a manhunt for identification of Traffickers and Trafficked Victims with Special Measures for Protection of Trafficked Child Victims should be declared in Ebonyi State. The Rescue of Trafficked Victims Especially in Brothel-Based and Street Based Prostitution with Special Focus on Child Victims should be government priority.
2. There should be rehabilitation, reintegration and repatriation of trafficked victims with Special

- Focus on Child Victims in all the districts through anti-human trafficking units.
3. To prevent child trafficking, awareness creating activities must be undertaken by the police, nongovernmental and religious bodies working in all the blocks of the state. This shall be helpful in diminishing the levels of trafficking prevalence in the Ebonyi Local Government Area and its environs.
  4. The law makers in the country should pass a stiff or strong law against child traffickers to serve as deterrent to others who may wish to indulge in this, heinous crime against humanity.
  5. The public on their own part should co-operate and avail the Nigerian police with useful information to detect and curb this ugly menace.
  6. Finally, the law enforcement agents should be well mobilized with adequate personnels, equipment and good remuneration, to get the job well done.

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