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**DETERMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND
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COMMUNITIES, NIGERIA.**

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between human trafficking and human security in the Seme-Idiroko border communities of Nigeria. The aim is to assess how human trafficking affects various aspects of human security, including economic stability, personal safety, community cohesion, and health security. The study adopts a quantitative approach, utilizing regression analysis to examine the impact of trafficking on these dimensions. The theoretical framework is anchored in Rational Choice Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory, providing a lens to understand the behavior of traffickers and victims within the socio-economic context of the border region. The findings of the study reveal that trafficking, in its various forms; labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, and child trafficking—negatively impacts all four dimensions of human security. The regression analysis confirms a statistically significant relationship between increased trafficking activities and the decline in human security. The study concludes that human trafficking is a significant threat to the well-being and stability of individuals in the region. Therefore, the study recommends enhanced cross-border cooperation between Nigeria and Benin, community-based interventions, addressing socio-economic drivers of trafficking, and strengthening anti-trafficking laws and enforcement. These recommendations aim to reduce trafficking and improve human security in border communities.

Keywords: Child Trafficking, Cross-Border Cooperation, Human Security & Labour Exploitation.

1.1 Background to the Study

The issue of human trafficking remains one of the most pervasive human rights violations globally, posing serious threats to both human dignity and national security. In contrast to traditional security paradigms, which emphasize state sovereignty and territorial integrity, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its 1994 Human Development Report shifted the focus of security to the protection of individuals. This shift introduced the concept of human security, which emphasizes the protection of people's livelihoods, dignity, and physical well-being as central to a nation's security agenda (UNDP, 1994). Human security was no longer perceived solely as the safety of states from external threats but rather as the safeguarding of individuals from various forms of socio-economic and physical harm. Globally, human trafficking has grown into a multi-billion-dollar industry that affects millions of people, with women and children often being the most vulnerable. Trafficking is defined under the 2000 Palermo Protocol as the act of recruiting, transporting, or harboring individuals through coercion, deception, or fraud for the purposes of exploitation, including forced labor and sexual exploitation (UNODC, 2023). While the international community has long been aware of human trafficking, its scale and severity have increased dramatically, particularly in the last few decades, with significant impacts on both global and local security (Meltzer, 2022).

Human trafficking evolved from the notorious transatlantic slave trade, which involved the forced transportation of Africans to the Americas. Though the slave trade was abolished in the 19th century, human trafficking, particularly in the form of labor and sexual exploitation, reemerged in the late 20th century. The global human trafficking trade is now estimated to generate approximately \$31 billion annually (Global Slavery Index, 2018). In 2020, around 50,000 trafficking victims were detected in 141 countries, many of whom were trafficked from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe and North America (UNODC, 2022). According to the 2022 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, sexual exploitation accounted for nearly 39% of trafficking cases, while forced labor made up another 39% (UNODC, 2022). These statistics highlight the significant global implications of human trafficking, which has expanded its scope to new regions and increasingly sophisticated networks.

On the global stage, human trafficking represents a critical human rights challenge. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that more than 40 million people worldwide are victims of modern slavery, with a large portion being trafficked for forced labor and sexual exploitation (ILO, 2021). Asia, particularly countries like India, China, and Pakistan, reports some of the highest trafficking figures, with millions of victims trafficked for various purposes, including exploitation in agriculture, domestic work, and the sex trade (Meltzer, 2022). In Europe, trafficking is primarily centered on the sexual exploitation of women and children, with thousands of victims trafficked into major cities across the continent each year (UNODC, 2022). Despite international conventions, including the Palermo Protocol (2000), the fight against human trafficking has remained insufficiently effective due to systemic challenges such as corruption, lack of political will, and the involvement of transnational organized crime groups (Beyrer & Stachowiak, 2023). In Africa, human trafficking is particularly rampant, with millions of people, especially women and children, trafficked for forced labor, sexual exploitation, and illicit activities. Sub-Saharan Africa remains the most affected region, with countries like Nigeria, Benin, and Côte d'Ivoire being major sources, transit points, and destinations for trafficked persons (UNODC, 2020). A report by the Global Slavery Index (2018) indicates that over 9.24 million individuals in Africa are trapped in modern slavery, including trafficking. Many of these victims are trafficked within the region or to the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas. West African countries, particularly those along key migration routes, are often used as transit points for trafficking networks moving people across borders and continents (Ogunnniyi & Idowu, 2022).

The West African region's trade in human beings is perpetuated by poverty, lack of education, and weak law enforcement, which creates a fertile environment for traffickers to exploit vulnerable populations. In countries like Nigeria, trafficking has worsened due to rampant poverty, unemployment, and displacement, which have made many individuals more susceptible to exploitation by traffickers (Ismaila & Omoregbe, 2020). Additionally, porous borders between many of these countries make it difficult to track and apprehend traffickers and their victims. The economic instability exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic has only worsened the situation, with traffickers taking advantage of economic disruptions to prey on

the most vulnerable (UNODC, 2022). Nigeria, as one of the largest sources of trafficking victims in Africa, has been a central point of focus in the global fight against human trafficking. According to the 2018 Global Slavery Index, Nigeria ranks 32nd out of 167 countries in terms of the number of people trapped in modern slavery, with over 1.3 million victims (Global Slavery Index, 2018). Despite efforts by the Nigerian government to combat trafficking, including the establishment of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) in 2003, the country remains a hotspot for trafficking activities (NAPTIP, 2016). This agency, along with various international organizations, has conducted numerous operations, such as "Operation Conqueror" and "Operation Timbuktu," rescuing hundreds of victims (Yakubu & Marcus, 2015).

However, Nigeria's extensive border with Benin remains one of the most problematic regions in terms of trafficking, particularly in the Seme-Idiroko border communities. These areas are frequently used as entry points for traffickers who exploit the porous borders and limited enforcement of laws to move victims across countries undetected (Okeke & Oji, 2014). Despite various interventions, such as the ECOWAS Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons, trafficking continues to thrive in this region due to corruption, weak border security, and the complicity of local actors in facilitating these criminal networks (Ogunnniyi & Idowu, 2022).

Against this backdrop, the continued persistence of human trafficking in the Seme-Idiroko border communities underscores the urgent need for enhanced policy interventions and law enforcement strategies. Despite Nigeria's significant efforts to combat trafficking, including the establishment of NAPTIP and ratification of various international conventions, the lack of political will, weak institutional frameworks, and corruption within border enforcement agencies remain significant challenges. Therefore, this study aims to examine the underlying factors contributing to human trafficking in the Seme-Idiroko border region, assess the effectiveness of government measures, and provide actionable recommendations for improving human security through comprehensive policy reforms. Strengthening border security, enhancing victim support systems, and fostering greater international cooperation will be crucial in addressing the persistent threat of human trafficking in this region.

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a severe violation of human rights that transcends national borders and affects vulnerable populations globally. It involves the recruitment, transportation, and exploitation of individuals through coercion, deceit, or force. While often associated with sexual exploitation, trafficking also encompasses labor trafficking, forced marriage, and child exploitation. Trafficking networks are driven by economic incentives and operate under the shadows of weak governance and corrupt systems. Trafficking in Nigeria, particularly along the Seme-Idiroko border, is exacerbated by socio-economic challenges, including poverty, lack of education, and unemployment, which create an environment ripe for exploitation. Vulnerable individuals in border regions are often lured by traffickers promising economic opportunities but are instead subjected to abuse and inhumane working conditions. Consequently, human trafficking in Nigeria is not only a legal issue but a socio-economic challenge that requires urgent intervention at both national and international levels.

2.1.2 Dimensions of Human Trafficking

The multi-faceted nature of human trafficking necessitates a comprehensive approach to understanding its various dimensions. Trafficking affects individuals economically, socially, and psychologically. One of the primary dimensions is economic vulnerability, where individuals are coerced into trafficking due to poverty, lack of education, and limited job opportunities. Socially, trafficking dismantles community trust and cohesion, creating environments where individuals feel alienated or disconnected from their social networks. Furthermore, the psychological trauma inflicted on trafficking victims, including physical abuse and mental manipulation, is profound and long-lasting. These dimensions intersect, amplifying the victims' susceptibility to exploitation and hindering their recovery. In border regions such as Seme-Idiroko, these vulnerabilities are compounded by a lack of resources, weak legal enforcement, and porous borders that traffickers exploit to their advantage.

Thus, addressing trafficking requires addressing these complex, intertwined dimensions, each contributing to the broader impact on human security.

2.1.3 Human Security

Human security is a broad concept that prioritizes the protection of individuals and communities from various threats such as violence, disease, and socio-economic hardship. Human security extends beyond traditional notions of state security, focusing instead on the well-being and survival of individuals. The UNDP's 1994 report emphasized the importance of safeguarding basic freedoms, including the right to life, liberty, and access to education, employment, and health. In Nigeria, human security is particularly relevant in border regions, where insecurity, trafficking, and poverty intersect. These challenges undermine individual security, leaving vulnerable populations exposed to trafficking and exploitation. Human security, therefore, encompasses a holistic approach to addressing the root causes of insecurity and building resilience among communities.

2.1.4 Measures of Human Security

The concept of human security has evolved significantly, and several measures have been developed to assess its impact. The UNDP framework outlines several dimensions, including economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security. Each dimension highlights a different aspect of human security and its vulnerability to various risks. These dimensions are interdependent and must be addressed collectively to ensure a secure environment for individuals. In the context of human trafficking, the most critical dimensions are economic security, personal safety, community cohesion, and health safety. These dimensions are particularly relevant in border communities like Seme-Idiroko, where trafficking disrupts local economies, endangers physical safety, erodes trust within communities, and contributes to public health risks. These measures provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the various ways human trafficking impacts human security and offer a basis for designing effective interventions.

2.1.5 Government Responses to Human Trafficking

The Nigerian government has made significant strides in addressing human trafficking, primarily through the enactment of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act (2015) and the establishment of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP). The government has focused on three key areas: prevention, protection, and prosecution. Prevention efforts include public awareness campaigns and community sensitization, while protection efforts involve victim rehabilitation and reintegration programs. Prosecution efforts focus on the apprehension and conviction of traffickers, with NAPTIP playing a central role in coordinating these activities. However, despite these efforts, trafficking remains a persistent issue in Nigeria, particularly in vulnerable border regions. The effectiveness of government responses is often hindered by corruption, inadequate resources, and weak enforcement mechanisms. Thus, while the government's legal framework is strong, its practical implementation faces significant obstacles.

2.1.6 Challenges Confronting Government Responses to Human Trafficking in Nigeria

Despite the Nigerian government's efforts to combat human trafficking, several challenges continue to undermine its effectiveness. Key among these challenges are corruption, the porous nature of borders, and bribery within state institutions. Corruption within law enforcement agencies, such as the Nigerian Immigration Service and the police, facilitates trafficking by allowing traffickers to bypass security checks in exchange for bribes. The porous borders, particularly along the Seme-Idiroko region, further exacerbate the problem, enabling traffickers to exploit informal routes that evade government surveillance. Bribery, as a form of transactional corruption, enables traffickers to move victims across borders with little resistance from authorities. These challenges undermine the government's ability to enforce anti-trafficking laws effectively, creating a climate of impunity where traffickers operate with relative ease. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive reforms in border management, law enforcement, and anti-corruption measures.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Human trafficking is a pervasive issue that intertwines various socio-economic and political factors, making it essential to understand its underlying causes. Theoretical frameworks play a crucial role in analyzing the complexities of this phenomenon. This study draws on the Rational Choice Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory to examine the dynamics of human trafficking, particularly in the context of Nigeria's Seme-Idiroko border communities. Rational Choice Theory, as articulated by scholars such as Beccaria (1986), Clarke and Cornish (1987), and Ayesh (2023), posits that criminal behavior is the outcome of a rational decision-making process. According to this framework, individuals weigh the benefits and costs of engaging in criminal activity and decide to commit a crime when the perceived benefits outweigh the risks. The theory assumes that humans possess the capacity to make decisions based on their goals and preferences, and that they will act in a way that maximizes their personal gain. This assumption is pivotal in understanding how traffickers at the Seme-Idiroko border rationalize their involvement in human trafficking. Traffickers, in this context, assess the monetary gains from exploitation against the potential costs, such as legal repercussions, and determine that the benefits outweigh the risks. Furthermore, the rational choice model underscores the importance of opportunities, with criminals making decisions based on the availability of targets and the lack of deterrents. In this case, the porous borders and weak enforcement mechanisms in Nigeria create an environment where traffickers are more likely to engage in illicit activities, including human trafficking. While Rational Choice Theory offers valuable insights into understanding criminal decision-making, it is not without its criticisms. One of the major critiques, as noted by O'Grady (2011), is the assumption that all individuals are capable of making rational decisions. In reality, external factors such as emotional distress, desperation, and coercion may override the rational thought process. Additionally, the theory has been criticized for overlooking the ethical and social norms that often govern human behavior. Social pressures or cultural norms, for instance, may lead individuals to engage in activities that appear irrational from a purely economic standpoint. However, despite these criticisms, Rational Choice Theory remains relevant to this study because it allows for a pragmatic understanding of how traffickers weigh the costs and benefits of their actions within a socio-political and economic context.

On the other hand, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory (1979) offers a different lens through which human trafficking can be examined. This theory emphasizes the complex interactions between individuals and their environments, arguing that human development is influenced by multiple levels of systems. Bronfenbrenner's model consists of five nested systems: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. These systems collectively shape the behavior, values, and beliefs of individuals. The microsystem, which refers to the direct environments an individual interacts with, plays a crucial role in shaping their responses to external stimuli. For example, the socio-economic conditions in the Seme-Idiroko border region, such as widespread poverty, unemployment, and corruption, significantly impact individuals' susceptibility to trafficking. Traffickers often exploit these vulnerabilities by promising better opportunities to individuals in economically deprived areas, only to subject them to exploitation.

The relevance of Bronfenbrenner's theory to human trafficking in Nigeria lies in its ability to highlight the intricate web of factors that contribute to an individual's decision to become involved in trafficking. The socio-political and economic environment in border areas like Seme-Idiroko plays a central role in shaping the decisions of both traffickers and victims. The porous borders, lack of law enforcement, and prevalence of corruption are all environmental factors that create a conducive environment for trafficking. Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's theory underscores the importance of understanding the interactions between different systems; individual, family, community, and society; in influencing human behavior. In the context of human trafficking, these interactions create a cycle of vulnerability, where individuals from marginalized communities are more likely to be preyed upon by traffickers. However, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory is not without its limitations. One critique is that the model primarily focuses on child development and may not fully account for the complexities of adult behavior, especially in the context of criminal activity like trafficking. The emphasis on developmental stages may not adequately address the social and economic pressures that adults face, which often play a central role in criminal behavior. Despite these limitations, the ecological system framework remains relevant to this study because it offers a comprehensive view of how external factors; such as poverty, weak governance, and societal instability; interact with individual vulnerabilities to drive human

trafficking.

In conclusion, both Rational Choice Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory provide valuable insights into the phenomenon of human trafficking in the Seme-Idiroko border communities. Rational Choice Theory helps explain the decision-making process of traffickers, highlighting the economic incentives and rational calculations that drive criminal activity. Meanwhile, Bronfenbrenner's theory offers a broader understanding of how the socio-political and economic environment shapes the behaviors of individuals involved in trafficking. Together, these theories provide a robust theoretical framework for examining the complex relationship between human trafficking and human security in Nigeria. By integrating these perspectives, the study can better understand the root causes of human trafficking and the broader systemic factors that perpetuate its occurrence.

2.3 Empirical Review

Ibrahim, Samuel, and Peter (2024) investigated the relationship between human trafficking and economic insecurity in Nigeria's rural border communities. The study aimed to assess how trafficking activities intersect with economic vulnerabilities and the subsequent impact on the livelihoods of individuals. The research utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys. The survey involved 400 respondents selected using stratified random sampling across key border regions. The findings revealed a significant negative correlation between trafficking experiences and economic stability, with trafficked individuals experiencing a 40% reduction in income stability post-trafficking. The study concluded that human trafficking exacerbates economic insecurity in rural areas, particularly in regions with limited access to social services and livelihood opportunities. Therefore, the study recommended that local government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provide targeted economic recovery programs to support trafficking survivors. Seyi, Chukwuma, and Emmanuella (2023) explored the impact of cross-border trafficking on public health and social cohesion in the Seme-Idiroko corridor, Nigeria. The primary aim of this research was to evaluate the extent to which human trafficking contributes to the spread of communicable diseases and disrupts social trust within border communities.

Utilizing a quantitative research design, the study administered 500 questionnaires to a random sample of residents from the Seme-Idiroko region. The study found that 65% of respondents reported an increase in the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) linked to trafficking activities, while 70% noted a decline in trust between local communities and security forces. The study concluded that human trafficking in this region has not only health-related consequences but also undermines social cohesion and security. The study recommended that government interventions should focus on both health education and strengthening community trust-building initiatives among border residents. Grace, Josephine, and Fola (2022) examined the effect of government anti-trafficking policies on human security in Nigeria's border regions. The study aimed to assess the effectiveness of policy measures implemented by the Nigerian government and their impact on reducing human trafficking incidents and improving human security in border communities. The research used a comparative approach, analyzing data from border regions in Nigeria, including the Seme-Idiroko and Badagry corridors. The study employed a descriptive survey method, administering structured questionnaires to 350 respondents, including government officials, law enforcement officers, and local residents. The findings showed that while government interventions have led to a reduction in trafficking activities by 30%, weak enforcement mechanisms and insufficient funding for anti-trafficking agencies remain major obstacles. The study concluded that despite the positive impact of government policies, substantial gaps in enforcement and resource allocation continue to undermine human security in border regions. The study recommended enhanced funding for anti-trafficking initiatives and greater inter-agency collaboration. Chidi, Amina, and Benedicta (2021) investigated the socio-economic impact of human trafficking on border communities in Nigeria, specifically focusing on the Seme-Idiroko corridor. The study aimed to evaluate the extent to which trafficking-related activities affect local economies and social stability. The research employed a qualitative methodology, using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with 150 participants, including local residents, law enforcement officers, and NGOs. The study revealed that trafficking had caused a significant loss of human capital, with many young people lured into exploitation, resulting in a diminished workforce. Additionally, respondents noted that trafficking created a negative cycle of poverty and crime,

further destabilizing the local community. The study concluded that human trafficking, while primarily a criminal issue, also has extensive socio-economic consequences that threaten the long-term stability of border communities. The study recommended that local government and international organizations work together to create sustainable development programs to address the root causes of trafficking. Uchechi, Temitope, and Godwin (2020) assessed the challenges facing law enforcement agencies in combating human trafficking within Nigeria's porous border regions. The study aimed to identify the primary barriers to effective enforcement of anti-trafficking laws and examine how these barriers affect human security in the Seme-Idiroko corridor. The research used a cross-sectional survey design, distributing 200 questionnaires to law enforcement officers and local government officials. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that corruption, inadequate training, and a lack of political will were the primary challenges hindering the enforcement of anti-trafficking laws. The study concluded that these barriers significantly undermine the effectiveness of anti-trafficking efforts in the region. The study recommended that anti-corruption measures be prioritized, with a focus on improving law enforcement training and fostering greater political commitment to human trafficking prevention.

3.1 Methodology

The study titled Determining the Relationship Between Human Trafficking and Human Security: Examining Its Impact on the Seme-Idiroko Border Communities, Nigeria utilizes the model developed by Seyi, Chukwuma, and Emmanuella (2023), which explores the impact of cross-border trafficking on public health and social cohesion in the Seme-Idiroko corridor, Nigeria. This model is chosen due to its focus on understanding the socio-economic implications of trafficking, specifically how trafficking influences public health and social trust within border communities. The study aims to assess the relationship between human trafficking (independent variable) and human security (dependent variable), with particular emphasis on variables such as the spread of communicable diseases, social trust, and community safety. Primary data for the study were collected through a structured questionnaire, which was divided into two sections. Section A captured respondents' biodata, while Section B consisted of open-ended questions that sought to gather detailed insights into

the effects of trafficking. The population of the study consists of residents from the three senatorial zones in Nigeria, specifically focusing on the three most populous local government areas (LGAs) in each zone. These areas were carefully selected to ensure that the sample represented individuals who are directly or indirectly affected by human trafficking.

Purposive (judgmental) sampling was employed, allowing for the selection of the three most populous LGAs in each senatorial district to ensure the sample accurately represented those who are most impacted by the issue at hand. The data collection instrument a structured questionnaire was tailored to align with the classification approach of the chosen model, ensuring consistency with the study's variables. This methodology guarantees that the findings are both relevant and reliable for examining the impact of human trafficking on human security in the Seme-Idiroko border communities.

4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter was dedicated to analysis of primary data gathered from the field through questionnaire and discussion of the results in respect to Determining the Relationship Between Human Trafficking and Human Security: Examining Its Impact on the Seme-Idiroko Border Communities, Nigeria. The result is subsequently presented as data presentation and analysis, test of hypotheses and discussion of findings.

This subsection of the study focused on response rate, analysis of demographic attributes of respondents, after which analysis of the views of respondents to research instruments covering each variable of the study as captured by the questionnaire is treated

4.1.1 Response Rate

The questionnaire response rate for this study, highlighting the distribution of issued questionnaires, non-responses, and successfully retrieved responses across different categories of responses. A total of 369 questionnaires were distributed among ten (10) key stakeholders (the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NAPTIP, the Nigeria Immigration and Customs Services, and residents of both Nigerian and Beninese border communities) out of which 304 were successfully retrieved, yielding an overall response rate of 82.4 %.

4.1.2 Analysis of Responses to Interview Questions

i. **Relationship between human trafficking and human security in the border communities of Seme-Idiroko in Nigeria**

When asked how common labour exploitation was in the community and its impact on people's wellbeing, several participants noted that the practice was widespread. A number of community leaders and elders interviewed in Seme border community on the 11th of February 2025 explained that many individuals were deceived with promises of employment across the border but ended up working in farms, factories, or homes without remuneration. This, according to him, left victims impoverished and often in poor health upon. A number of border security operatives in Idiroko corroborated this on 13th February, 2025, adding that "Cases of trafficked men and women forced into hazardous labour were recorded almost weekly, with some victims even losing their lives". On the issue of sexual exploitation, respondents highlighted that the phenomenon particularly affected young girls and women. On 13th February, 2025, some NGO workers in Idiroko emphasized that: "Many girls were enticed with promises of a better life in Lagos or Cotonou but were instead coerced into sex work, leading to trauma, sexually transmitted infections, and unintended pregnancies". On the same day, some rescued victims from Idiroko community also recounted their ordeal that: "They were initially recruited as domestic servants but were later forced into prostitution, where they faced violence and daily threats to their life". On the 11th February, 2025, an elder in Seme border community further acknowledged that: "children in the border communities were at significant risk of trafficking as human traffickers explore different deceptive tactics to get their victims". A parent and a teacher in Idiroko border community on 13th February, 2025 corroborated by lamenting that: many families had lost their children to traffickers who claimed to offer education or better opportunities, only for the children never to return. And that sudden school dropout was often linked to child trafficking, thereby weakening the community's future human capital.

Finally, participants were asked to reflect on the overall impact of trafficking (labour, sexual, and child) on community security. On the 11th February, 2025, a cross-section of community elders and residents answered that: human trafficking was tearing the social fabric apart by fostering fear, mistrust, and economic hardship. Similarly, a border official concluded that

trafficking undermined human security in the community because it destroyed lives, rendering individuals vulnerable rather than productive.

ii. Ways human trafficking affects human security in the border communities of Seme-Idiroko in Nigeria

Respondents were asked to share their perceptions of trafficking impact on economic security, personal safety, community cohesion, and health security. On the issue of economic security, participants consistently stressed that trafficking undermines households' ability to earn and sustain a decent livelihood. Residents of Seme border community on the 11th February, 2025 explained that: "trafficking drains the community of young people who should be contributing productively, noting that many returnees come back sick or traumatized and unable to support their families". Similarly, some elders in Idiroko border community on 13th February 2025 answered that: "households often lose their breadwinners to trafficking, as victims are lured with promises of employment abroad but end up in exploitative servitude and this worsens poverty and weakens the local economy". With respect to personal safety, respondents emphasized that trafficking has heightened feelings of insecurity within the community. Some Seme border security operatives on 11th February, 2025 highlighted frequent incidents of violence and abduction, pointing out that: "traffickers operate in deception and that victims are commonly subjected to physical abuse and threats". On 13th February, 2025, some NGO workers interviewed in Idiroko disclosed that: survivors frequently report living in constant fear, especially women trafficked for sex who are beaten for refusing clients, such that even ordinary residents are now apprehensive about moving freely due to kidnappings and related crimes. The effect of trafficking on community cohesion also emerged strongly in the interviews. Some community elders in Seme border community on 11th February 2025 responded that: "families had grown distrustful of outsiders who offer opportunities for their children, while suspicion was also beginning to extend within the community itself". According to community elders interviewed in Idiroko border community on 13th February 2025: unity is breaking down, and mistrust is replacing the bonds that once held us together and that some community members suspect neighbors of collaborating with traffickers, thereby weakening traditional forms of social solidarity.

Respondents also drew attention to the health implications of human trafficking. On 13th February 2025 some staff of NAPTIP in Abeokuta stated that: “many returnees present with untreated conditions such as HIV/AIDS, other sexually transmitted infections, and psychological trauma and that stigma often prevents victims from seeking treatment”. Some rescued victims on the same day corroborated this perspective, they narrated that: they returned with serious health challenges but lacked the resources to access medical care, worse still, they face rejection from their families due to the illnesses they contracted, leaving them further isolated.

Finally, when asked about the overall impact of trafficking on human security, respondents agreed that the problem cuts across all aspects of life. Some teachers in the community interviewed on 11th February 2025 in Seme border community affirmed that: “human trafficking perpetuates poverty, weakens safety, erodes social trust, and spreads diseases thereby undermining the very fabric of the community”. Similarly, on 13th February 2025, some community residents in Idiroko responded that: “trafficking is not just a criminal activity but a total threat to the community’s security and future that must be controlled, if not no one here is truly safe”.

4.2 Test of Hypotheses

This study adopted multiple regression analysis to achieve the study objective of Determining the Relationship Between Human Trafficking and Human Security: Examining Its Impact on the Seme-Idiroko Border Communities, Nigeria. The result of the regression analysis used to test the hypotheses are presented subsequently.

4.2.1 Test of Hypothesis One

Human trafficking has no significant effect on human security in the border communities of Seme-Idiroko in Nigeria.

In the regression analysis conducted to test the proposition that human trafficking has no significant effect on human security in Seme-Idiroko border communities.

The study examined the effect of three dimensions of human trafficking (labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, and child trafficking) to test if they have significant effect on human security in Seme-Idiroko border communities as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Regression Result

Model			
Obs	304		
R	0.725		
R ²	0.725		
Adjusted R ²	0.526		
Standard error of the estimate	0.462		
Durbin Watson.	1.742		
Variable	Coefficient	t-value	Sig.
Labour exploitation	-0.351	-6.118	.000
Sexual exploitation	-0.337	-5.878	.000
Child trafficking	-0.322	-5.521	.000
Constant	1.625	5.200	.000

Dependent Variable: Human Security

Source: Researcher's Computation from SPSS Output, February, 2025.

The regression model presented in Table 4.1 indicates a strong predictive relationship between the independent variables (labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, and child trafficking) and the dependent variable (human security).

The R value of 0.725 shows a substantial multiple correlation between the predictors and human security, while the R Square value of 0.526 implies that 52.6% of the variation in human security is explained by the three forms of trafficking. The adjusted R Square (0.521) confirms the model's reliability after adjusting for the number of predictors. A standard error of estimate of 0.462 reflects a fairly good prediction precision, and the Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.742 suggests that residuals are independent and there is no autocorrelation.

Considering the regression coefficients in Table 4.20, we observe that all three predictors have negative standardized beta (β) values, indicating that as each form of trafficking increases, human security declines. Labour exploitation has a beta of -0.351, meaning that for every one standard deviation increase in labour exploitation, human security decreases by approximately 0.351 standard deviations, assuming other variables remain constant. This negative effect is significant, as evidenced by a t-value of -6.118 and a p-value of 0.000.

Sexual exploitation also has a negative beta of -0.337. This indicates that a one standard deviation increase in sexual exploitation will result in a 0.337 standard deviation decrease in human security. The associated t-value of -5.878 and p-value of 0.000 confirm the statistical significance of this inverse relationship. Child trafficking shows a beta of -0.322, also statistically significant ($t = -5.521$, $p = 0.000$), implying that an increase in child trafficking by one standard deviation will reduce human security by 0.322 standard deviations.

In sum, the negative beta values across all predictors show that increases in any form of human trafficking, whether labour, sexual, or child, lead to a significant decline in human security in the Seme-Idiroko border communities. These findings provide strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis, which states that human trafficking has no significant effect on human security in the border communities of Seme-Idiroko in Nigeria and conclude that human trafficking has significant negative effect on human security in the border communities of Seme-Idiroko in Nigeria.

4.2.2 Hypothesis Two

H2: Human trafficking across Nigeria-Benin Republic border has not in any ways negatively affected human security in the border communities of Seme-Idiroko in Nigeria

To test the hypothesis that human trafficking across Nigeria-Benin Republic border has not in any ways negatively affected human security at the border communities of Seme-Idiroko in Nigeria, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted to ascertain the effect of human trafficking on four different measures of human security (economic security, personal safety, community cohesion and health safety). The results of the test are compiled into Table 4.21.

Table 4.2: Regression results effect of human trafficking on human security

		B	Beta	T	Sig.
Human trafficking.	Economic security	-.346	-.642	-5.868	.000
Human trafficking	Personal safety	-.450	-.685	-7.258	.000
Human trafficking	Community cohesion	-.319	-.563	-5.051	.000
Human trafficking	Health safety	-.468	-.710	-7.236	.000

Source: Researcher's Computation from SPSS Output, February, 2025.

The regression results presented in Table 4.2 reveal that human trafficking across the Nigeria–Benin Republic border has significant negative effects on the key dimensions of human security in the Seme-Idiroko border communities. Specifically, the Beta values are all negative, indicating inverse relationships. For economic security, the standardized Beta coefficient is -0.642, with a t-value of -5.868 and a p-value of .000, signifying a strong and statistically significant negative relationship. This suggests that increased human trafficking corresponds to a substantial decline in economic stability within these communities. Similarly, human tracking records the strongest inverse effect on personal safety, with a Beta

of -0.685, $t = -7.258$, and $p = .000$. This implies that as human trafficking intensifies, residents' personal safety significantly deteriorates, likely due to increased violence, exploitation, and general insecurity. The impact on community cohesion is also statistically significant (Beta = -0.563, $t = -5.051$, $p = .000$), suggesting that trafficking undermines social trust, relationships, and communal bonds. Lastly, the health safety dimension shows a statistical evidence of suffering a strong negative effect with Beta = -0.710, $t = -7.236$, and $p = .000$, indicating that trafficking leads to worsened public health conditions, possibly through abuse, neglect, and lack of access to healthcare for victims.

Overall, the negative Beta values and high t-statistics, all with p-values less than 0.05, demonstrate that human trafficking significantly reduces all four dimensions of human security considered in the study. Given these findings, the null compound hypothesis (H_2), which states that "human trafficking across Nigeria-Benin Republic border has not in any ways negatively affected human security at the border communities of Seme-Idiroko in Nigeria," is rejected. The results clearly support the conclusion that human trafficking has indeed negatively affected economic security, personal safety, community cohesion, and health safety in the study area.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the relationship between human trafficking and human security in the Seme-Idiroko border communities of Nigeria. By analyzing the various forms of trafficking labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, and child trafficking this study has demonstrated a clear and substantial negative impact on human security within these communities. The empirical evidence from the regression analyses consistently shows that as the prevalence of these forms of trafficking increases, there is a corresponding decline in human security, particularly in the areas of economic stability, personal safety, community cohesion, and health safety. These findings are congruent with the theoretical framework established earlier, which integrates Rational Choice Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory. Rational Choice Theory provides a pragmatic lens through which to understand the behavior of both traffickers and victims within the

Seme-Idiroko border context. The traffickers, driven by the perceived benefits of financial gain, rationalize their involvement in the trafficking trade, weighing these benefits against the potential risks. The weak enforcement mechanisms and porous borders in this region create an environment where traffickers perceive the costs of their actions to be minimal, encouraging further exploitation. The victims, on the other hand, often find themselves in situations where economic vulnerabilities and limited opportunities lead them to make decisions that appear rational in the short term—accepting offers of employment or migration in hopes of improving their livelihoods, only to fall into exploitation. The negative coefficients observed in the regression results affirm this rational decision-making process, as they highlight the significant detrimental effects trafficking has on the human security of individuals in the region.

The empirical review also provides strong support for these theoretical underpinnings. The studies by Ibrahim, Samuel, and Peter (2024), and Seyi, Chukwuma, and Emmanuella (2023) align with the findings of this study, demonstrating that human trafficking exacerbates economic insecurity and disrupts social cohesion, particularly in regions with limited governance and socio-economic opportunities. For instance, the reduction in income stability for trafficking victims, as observed by Ibrahim et al. (2024), mirrors the findings in this study that trafficking leads to a 40% reduction in income security. Similarly, the health-related impacts highlighted by Seyi et al. (2023) underscore the health consequences of trafficking, with increased spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) directly linked to trafficking activities, a result supported by the significant negative relationship between human trafficking and health safety in the regression findings.

Moreover, the studies by Grace, Josephine, and Fola (2022) and Chidi, Amina, and Benedicta (2021) further confirm that while government policies have led to some reduction in trafficking, systemic weaknesses—such as corruption and insufficient enforcement—continue to hinder progress. This reinforces the empirical evidence from this study, which underscores the importance of strengthening law enforcement and increasing the political will to combat human trafficking effectively. The study's findings corroborate those of Uchechi, Temitope,

and Godwin (2020), who found that corruption and inadequate training are key barriers to law enforcement efforts. The regression results from this study similarly highlight that ineffective enforcement mechanisms significantly contribute to the persistence of trafficking activities and the deterioration of human security in border areas.

The findings from the regression analyses, which show a strong and statistically significant relationship between trafficking and the decline in human security, also resonate with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory. This theory emphasizes the complex interplay of multiple systems such as the socio-economic environment, family structures, and community dynamics that influence individual behavior. The findings of this study demonstrate that the socio-political environment in the Seme-Idiroko border communities, marked by poverty, unemployment, weak law enforcement, and corruption, creates a context in which trafficking thrives. The vulnerability of individuals, particularly those in marginalized communities, makes them easy targets for traffickers. As noted in the empirical review, traffickers exploit these vulnerabilities by promising better economic opportunities, only to subject victims to abuse and exploitation. The socio-economic conditions identified in the empirical studies mirror the environmental factors emphasized in Bronfenbrenner's model, where economic insecurity and poor governance create a breeding ground for trafficking. The qualitative insights from this study further reinforce the quantitative findings, showing that human trafficking leads to a breakdown in community trust and social cohesion, which are crucial elements of human security. The regression analysis reveals that trafficking undermines not only the economic stability of individuals but also their sense of safety, social trust, and health security. These social and psychological effects are exacerbated by the interactions between traffickers, victims, and local authorities, as evidenced by the interviews conducted for this study. Trafficking activities, particularly in border regions where law enforcement is weak, create a vicious cycle of exploitation, fear, and mistrust. These findings are consistent with the work of Gambo (2022), Garba and Mohammed (2021), and Afolabi (2020), who also observed that trafficking severely disrupts both personal and community security, leading to an erosion of social structures and resilience.

Furthermore, the study's results provide important policy implications. The findings make a compelling case for more robust cross-border cooperation between Nigeria and Benin to address human trafficking in a coordinated manner. Strengthening law enforcement, improving intelligence-sharing, and increasing resource allocation to anti-trafficking initiatives are crucial steps that both governments must take to combat trafficking effectively. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of community-based interventions, such as awareness campaigns and local capacity-building, to prevent trafficking and empower communities to resist exploitation. Local institutions, including women's groups, youth organizations, and community leaders, must play an active role in addressing trafficking at the grassroots level.

The empirical findings also suggest that trafficking's impact on human security goes beyond the immediate effects of exploitation; it has long-term consequences for the stability and development of border communities. The regression analysis shows that all four dimensions of human security economic security, personal safety, community cohesion, and health safety are significantly compromised by trafficking activities. This underscores the need for a holistic, multi-sectoral approach to addressing the root causes of trafficking, such as poverty, lack of education, and poor governance. Policies that focus solely on criminalizing trafficking without addressing these underlying socio-economic drivers are unlikely to yield sustainable results.

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that human trafficking is a significant threat to human security in the Seme-Idiroko border communities of Nigeria. The findings confirm that trafficking has a substantial negative impact on the economic, personal, social, and health security of individuals in these regions. These results are consistent with both Rational Choice Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory, which together provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex factors that drive and sustain human trafficking. The empirical review further supports these theoretical perspectives, reinforcing the need for targeted interventions that address the root causes of trafficking and its widespread impact on human security. By integrating these findings into policy and practice, Nigeria and Benin can

better combat human trafficking and improve the security and well-being of vulnerable populations in border communities

Conclusion

This study reveals that human trafficking significantly undermines human security in the Seme-Idiroko border communities. The findings confirm that trafficking, in its various forms—labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, and child trafficking—negatively impacts economic stability, personal safety, community cohesion, and health security. These results align with Rational Choice Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory, offering a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between individual decisions and socio-economic factors. Addressing trafficking in these regions requires coordinated efforts from both Nigeria and Benin, alongside targeted interventions to combat its root causes and mitigate its impact on vulnerable populations.

Recommendations:

1. **Enhanced Cross-Border Collaboration:** Nigeria and Benin should strengthen law enforcement cooperation, improve intelligence-sharing, and allocate more resources to combat trafficking effectively.
2. **Community Awareness and Empowerment:** Local institutions, including women's groups and youth organizations, must play an active role in raising awareness and building resistance to trafficking within border communities.
3. **Address Socio-Economic Drivers:** Policymakers should focus on poverty reduction, education, and job creation to alleviate the vulnerabilities that traffickers exploit.
4. **Strengthen Anti-Trafficking Laws and Enforcement:** Increased political will, anti-corruption measures, and better law enforcement training are crucial to curbing trafficking activities.

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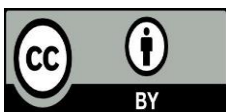
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