

Structural Dysfunctionalitv and Human Trafficking:A Study on Nigerian Human Trafficking Narratives

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Abstract

Human trafficking or sex slavery has been a global social phenomenon in dire need of prompt actions and as a social menace it has attracted interventions from many disciplines, Literature inclusive. This wide intervention is so because of the distressing and disastrous consequences victims and survivors are faced with. Writers' response, as the voice of society, has led to the emergence of the sub-genre of Nigerian Literature: human trafficking narratives. This paper uses four human trafficking narratives to investigate the fissures in societal structures that are instrumental to the phenomenon of human trafficking and sex slavery. It adopts the theory of Structural functionalism to investigate and expose the systemic defects which perpetuate and sustain human trafficking in Nigeria. These defects include amongst others, poor security architecture and political instability, corruption in public institutions, abject poverty, excessive materialism and patriarchy.

Introduction

Human trafficking or modern slavery is a social phenomenon which is currently ravaging nations across the globe. In Nigeria, human trafficking is as pervasive as it is alluring because of the assumed benefits erroneously tied to migration especially within and beyond the shores of Nigeria. The writer in representing human trafficking in Nigeria, interrogates the factors which contribute to human trafficking, with the intention of provoking critical re-evaluation for attitudinal change. This study appropriates the sociological theory of structural functionalism, to deconstruct the root causes of human trafficking. It identifies the lapses in governance, the family and society in general as the reason human trafficking menace appears insurmountable. Four human trafficking narratives are used to deconstruct human trafficking in Nigeria; namely Akachi Adimora's, *Trafficked* (2008), Ifeoma Chinweuba's, *Merchants of Flesh* (2009), Chika Unigwe's, *On Black Sisters' Street* (2009), and Abidemi Sanusi's, *Eyo* (2009).

Structural Functionalism

The theory of structural functionalism emphasizes forms and social structures in terms of the functions of institutions and customs for the sustenance of the social system (Abrahams 2018); in other words, the role specific institutions in society play in maintaining social stability. Structural functionalists view society as an organism made up of various parts with distinct roles and responsibilities. As distinctive as the parts are, they remain inter-dependent for the general good of the society. These parts are the social institutions which exist to meet social needs like: polity, healthcare, family, religion, education and economy. These parts at any given time ought to function optimally for the unity and stability of the society. Social harmony is attained when individuals work in collaboration with others. This collaboration is based on value system, family, kinship, religion, work and many more. The under-performance or dysfunctionality of any part in the structure adversely affects the functionality of the other parts and distorts the equilibrium (Parillo 2012). Structural functionalism is therefore hinged on the interconnectivity and interdependence of social structures. These social structures, function using social parameters which include laws, values, customs, morals, religious belief, fashion, ritual and all social rules that govern social life. Social structures determine social function and social behavior. The functionality of any society is based on the independence and mutual-dependence of component parts of society which is made up of: the population, culture, material products, social organizations and social institutions. A structurally functional society works towards harnessing its resources both natural and its human capital for the good of all its members. Unlike a functional society, a dysfunctional society works for the interest of a few at the detriment of the masses.

Human trafficking as a social problem is symptomatic of a greater malaise and disconnection which stems from the failure or underperformance of some societal structures in carrying out their statutory roles. The failures of institutions and leadership have led to a disconnect throwing up social debilities like: human trafficking, kidnapping, organ trafficking, terrorism and many others. This brings to mind the question: are criminals born or made? Since no one is born a criminal, nurture as a concept is then indicted. The environment influences and sustains criminal behaviours by the way it handles its institutions and people. This study posits that criminals are made. There are certain conditions which favour criminal behaviours to thrive, like abject poverty, unemployment, political instability, injustice and many more. In the quest for survival and affluence, the strong, the intelligent and the well connected, take advantage of the lapses in the system to trample on the weak, the poor and the disadvantaged group in society with little or no consequences. In the case of Nigeria, the government with its policies and weak institutions are mainly responsible for the collapse of the structures giving rise to aberrational behaviours in society. This paper investigates the extent to which systemic failure has contributed to the menace of human trafficking and sex slavery in Nigeria.

Systemic failure and Human Trafficking

A close study of human trafficking narratives in Nigeria reveals that the menace is traced to systemic failures in the social structures with far reaching consequences. The

extent to which social dysfunctionalities account for the menace of human trafficking in the human trafficking narratives under study is made manifest in different ways and forms within the polity. These lapses are seen in the poor security architecture, corruption in government institutions like the immigration, education as well as government's apathy to fight them. The effects of these dysfunctionalities are seen in the high rate of unemployment, the desire to migrate, and abject poverty. The failure of the family to inculcate the right values, excessive materialism and patriarchy promote human trafficking in Nigeria.

Poor security Architecture and Political Instability

In Ezeigbo's *Trafficked*, systemic failure as trigger of human trafficking is pervasive and deeply engrained. It ranges from the government's inability to secure the lives and properties of its citizens, endemic and pervasive corruption, palpable poverty, religious fundamentalism, to government's inability to pay its workers and retirees. The killings and reprisal killings in some parts of the country are indicative of a failure in the security architecture, and the lack of political will to curb this incessant mayhem in Nigeria. These killings were rife during the military era of Generals Babangida, Abacha, Obasanjo and even in the present democratic dispensation. In Ezeigbo's *Trafficked* they were reported on a television station thus:

The riots that began on Friday evening in Maiduguri have spread to locations in the north. Lives have been lost and properties worth millions of naira have been destroyed or looted. Violent attacks have been reported in Katsina and the youths in Onitsha, avenging the death of their kith and kin, pounced on northern traders and slaughtered them. (91).

In her frustration with the senseless killings across the country, Nneoma wonders and rightly too: "What kind of society is this, where people are allowed to kill others with impunity?"(91). The regime's suppression is not limited to the killings by religious fundamentalists but also extend to those considered as the state enemies. Some of the victims who were serially eliminated through assassination are: the Ogoni nine, Dele Giwa, Kudirat Abiola and many others (123). Ezeigbo indicts the Nigerian government's suppressive and dysfunctional security structure which, if allowed to fester could snowball into something sinister like civil war or political chaos.

Like Ezeigbo's *Trafficked*, Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street* (henceforth *OBSS*), illustrates the effect of government's complacency or incapacity to curb insecurity in Sudan. In times of political instability like the political unrest in Sudan, not only are citizens killed but survivors are made vulnerable. With forced movement, women and children bear the brunt of war as they are killed, raped, starved, taken over and enslaved. The 'lucky' ones who survived the onslaught of the *Janjaweed militia* on the Dinka population like Alek- one of the protagonists, lived in a refugee camp in Khartoum which was protected by soldiers. In the camp Alek argues: "but what kind of survival did I have, living in the camp? I couldn't make friends with the other refugees (196). As a vulnerable refugee, Alek easily fell for the lies of Polycarp-a Nigerian soldier on peacekeeping mission in Sudan who told her "one day I'll take you to Lagos and treat you like the queen you are" (200). With no family or relation to fall back on,

Alek out of loneliness, emptiness and the need to start life afresh ignorantly follows Polycarp to Nigeria.

Without a family or government to protect her, Alek is sent into prostitution abroad as soon as her relationship with Polycarp broke down. He exploited her vulnerability and connived with Oga Dele to traffic her to Belgium (229). Alek becomes a victim of human trafficking because of the breakdown of law and order in Sudan, which led to insecurity and the loss of her family to reprisal killings by the *Janjaweed militia* (192). Alex's experience indicates that insecurity in whatever guise could serve as trigger for human trafficking as women and children become vulnerable and subjected to hunger, displacement, poverty, health challenges, or are killed, maimed, raped and displaced.

Corruption and Government's Apathy

Apart from securing lives and property, the government is to provide an enabling environment devoid of corruption to allow for progress. Dysfunctionality also manifests in the government's inability to curb widespread corruption in the country. Corruption can be defined as any act of illegality. The corruption of the political class is the reason education is not given the pride of place it deserves. Teachers constantly go on strike for non-payment of salaries and gratuities of retirees by the government. Corruption is so obvious that "the only people who make money are politicians, bankers... and there's sex trade and oil bunkering" (67). According to the President of the Students' Union, "Our country is richer by far than many African countries, yet their educational institutions are better funded than the ones here. What is responsible for this? Corruption, pure and simple"(160). The effect of strikes on the educational system is at best devastating and at worst far reaching. Ezeigbo in *Trafficked* captures the scenario thus:

Mma, who had remained at home for nearly nine months during a teachers' strike protesting against non-payment of four months' salaries. The government had done nothing to address the teachers' grievances, so the strike had dragged on. Most of the teachers had started trading to survive, as did many of the pupils and students. A few had become armed robbers, terrorizing people in their homes or snatching cars from drivers in the highway... (109).

Strike actions by teachers, and even oil workers do not move the government to action (110). It is only a government with little regards for education that would allow its workers, parents and students to witness constant and prolonged strike actions without taking necessary actions to avoid a reoccurrence.

Corruption is also entrenched within the Ivory Towers that there is recurrence of illegalities both in the academic and administrative arms of universities. Dr komolafe, Dr Ogamba and others, are an embodiment of all that the system abhors. Komolafe's corrupt tendency is seen when he shamelessly asks his student- Ofomata to get some tires for his Volvo (32). He would also tell the same student: Ofomata, "I have a request to make. Could you please get me a jerry can of fuel after our evening lecture? Consider this a request" (106). Knowing that the consequence of turning down such a

request would be suicidal, Ofomata obliges him. Dr Komolafe goes further to demand fifty thousand naira from another student- Ademola with a threat to fail him should he not comply (146). Being a well-to-do student, lecturers were always exploiting Ofomata financially. Dr Ogamba would ask for a loan of fifty thousand from Ofomata which would never be repaid. Other acts of impropriety carried out by lecturers are the sale of shoddily produced handouts which the students are compelled to buy or risk failing the courses, and the sexual harassment of female students (34).

Furthermore, corruption is also seen at the level of university administration. The hostel accommodations, for instance, are allocated to lecturers' children, whose families are living on campus, denying other students of bed spaces. This act of corruption force needy students to then buy bed spaces at exorbitant prices from those who have them but do not need them (33). Even in the hostel, the porter is bribed by the students to allow them organize noisy parties which run late into the night, depriving other students sleep (104). In frustration with all the anomalies in the school system, the President of the Students' Union laments during a press conference: "We are tired of our education and welfare being trifled with by the government and the university authorities" (159).

Unlike Ezeigbo's *Trafficked*, Unigwe's *OBSS* exemplifies the effect of corruption within the educational sector as seen in Ama- an otherwise very brilliant student's inability to pass the JAMB examination. Her failures in her examinations indicate that JAMB results are not a true reflection of a student's academic ability. Some students buy examination papers from corrupt JAMB officials and revised at home, or even pay others to write the examination for them (146). This act of illegality ensures that unqualified students get admitted into the universities depriving some truly qualified students of the opportunity of higher education. In her frustration, Ama reveals that: "Ogonna, the dullest girl in her class, entered the university straight out of secondary school. Yet everyone knew that Ogonna could not even write her own name without misspelling it" (146). Ama's repeated failure of the JAMB examination did not only cost her a chance to further her education but created a fracas with her step-father. She seized the opportunity to expose the step-father as a pedophile and a hypocrite. At the end of the quarrel, Ama was astonished to hear these: "I am not your father. You hear that? I took in your mother and this is all the thanks I get... I want you out of my house. I want you out. *Taday*. Today..." (149). Her stay in Lagos exposed her to the glamorous side of life. Ama sees the life she could live in the appearance of customers at their restaurant. They are young female bankers and concluded she had a right to that kind of life too (161). The corruption in the educational sector denied Ama a place in the university, and eventually exposed her to life of supposed easy money and unrestricted freedom. With no chance of advancing her education, Ama gave in to the lure of a glamorous life in future and to Oga Dele's trafficking propositions.

Ifeoma Chinweuba's *Merchants of Flesh*, in contrast, presents an instance of corruption within the Nigerian Immigration Service. Immigration officers are bribed to issue sensitive documents, like the passport without recourse to due process. Passports are issued without due diligence for: "once you were able to pay the bribe

demanding by the passport issuing officer, he would process the document for you and any other thing you requested. There was no paper to support the data, no birth certificates, no marriage certificates, nothing. One just filled the form with false unsubstantiated information, handed it over with the envelop” (69). Also, immigration and the police officers are illegally entitled to 'body toll', and financial inducements from trafficked victims and their pimps to provide a safe passage out of the country (67). Human traffickers exploit the unhealthy relationship with the immigration and police officers to randomly transport undocumented or poorly documented migrants across the borders. By carrying fake passports and identity cards, victims unconsciously lose their identities. Traffickers take advantage of victims' fake identities ab initio to blackmail and intimidate them into submission and subjugation. These acts of corruption by immigration and police officers are the more reason why the fight against the unlawful entering and exist of both human beings and illegal goods in and out of Nigeria has remained a daunting task.

Like in Chinweuba's *Merchants of Flesh*, Sanusi's *Eyo* also presents the failure of institutions like the police, immigration, and social welfare in protecting citizens. At the airport, immigration officers who are to scrutinize passengers leaving and entering the country, prefer to collect money slipped into passport pages while underage children with fake passports are being trafficked out of the country (38). This act of corruption perpetuates and sustains human trafficking. In Britain, the government's delay in replacing faulty security cameras along its highways is the reason Eyo-the protagonist, was not rescued when she attempted suicide in public (152). That Eyo entered Britain undetected with a fake passport and lived in Clapton for almost two years without being caught, incriminates the immigration agency and the social services of Hackney Council. It took the social Services more than three months to respond after Mrs Richards raised the red flag (119). Without bribe collected by immigration officers at the airport, Eyo would not have been allowed to leave Nigeria in the first instance, talk less of entering Britain and would not have endured long suffering in the hands of pimps and Madam either. Acts of financial corruption are sometimes as a result of the pervasive poverty in Nigeria.

Adject Poverty.

Widespread poverty in any country is a matrix for detecting a non performing government. In Ezeigbo's *Trafficked*, Ogukwe- Nneoma's father, is a retired civil servant whose pension is withheld by the government. Ogukwe was neither paid his gratuity nor pension and out of frustration, he descended into depression and alcoholism (71). As a result, he was thrown into abject poverty with his family. Without money to renovate the hut he lived in with his family or to build a new house, rats and pythons took refuge in the hut (86). As his only source of hope, Ogukwe unconsciously mounts pressure on the daughter- Nneoma with utterances like: “... you reincarnated specially to bale me out of my predicament” (26). In her bid to bale the family, she throws caution to the wind and travels to Britain with the aim of rescuing her family from the clutches of poverty. In the process, Nneoma falls prey to the antics of human traffickers who traffick her to the United Kingdom as a sex slave.

Ifeoma Chinweuba's *Merchants of Flesh* demonstrates the effect of poverty on the people. In Nigeria, poverty is so acute to the point that people lose their lives in pipeline fire, "trying to get fuel for food" (98). Faith, the protagonist describes her economic status as follows: "I am poor, poor, poor..." (36). She again emphasizes their lack when she says "I know that we are poor, very poor indeed" (98). The emphasis on poverty points to the depth of paucity and its multi-dimensional effects. It is because of poverty that Lizzy- the madam, is able to recruit young girls with mere verbal utterances into prostitution because their lives in Nigeria are almost meaningless and without direction. Poverty is also measured in the ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor. This situation presents unscrupulous persons with opportunities to prey on the vulnerable who are desperate to move out of poverty. Lizzy in exploiting the situation argues:

Our people are so used to suffering that they not imagine a better life elsewhere. But just got to Ikoyi and Victoria Island Lagos and see the difference between them and the people living in Ajegunle and Maroko. Even here in Benin, the wealthy are living better in GRA and Reservation Road, while others are mingling with trash and dirt in Ogidan quarters and Oliha area (51).

In a bid to close the gap, the poor take to emigration and their desperation to leave is exploited by human traffickers who prefer women. Women are preferred because they need little or nothing to be turned into prostitutes like Faith and her friends.

Sanusi's *Eyo* like *Merchants of Flesh* and *Trafficked* exposes poverty and the lack of basic amenities as triggers for human trafficking. Jungle City in Lagos, typifies a poor neighbourhood which lacks most basic amenities: "like most of the houses in Jungle City, their building lacked electricity, running water and a bathroom" (8). This is the condition under which Eyo, an underage sachet water seller is raised and trafficked. With poverty biting harder, her parents forcefully give her away as a maid under dubious circumstances. Olufunmi-Eyo's mother was a petty trader and the father- a loafer with three children to take care of, saw the opportunity to send the eldest daughter away as divine. Wale in trying to convince Femi the trafficker insisted that: "she has to go. We cannot continue living like this. The rent is due... It's not just the rent. It's everything. At least, in London she'll be able to go to school. She will have a better life than the one she has here... I don't care what you say. She'll be getting paid for something she does for free here: taking care of her siblings" (20).

The effects of poverty on families become more glaring when in spite of her travails, Eyo is forced back into sex slavery because the conditions that necessitated her being trafficked initially had become more acute. Olufunmi berated Eyo thus: "... There's no money. I did tell you, didn't I? two weeks ago, you said you would endure, that you would find a way. Is this what you mean? We're going to be homeless, you hear? Homeless and faced with starvation..." (338). When families experience abject poverty, parents in order to mitigate its impact easily hand over their children to unscrupulous individuals who in turn trafficked some of these children like Eyo.

High Rate of Unemployment.

Poverty is an index for government's performance to be measured by the rate of unemployment of its active population. High rate of unemployment in a country is a pointer to systemic failure on the part of the government. Chinweuba's *Merchants of Flesh* demonstrates the degree of unemployment in Nigeria and the aftermath. The effects of unemployment could be measured in the number of the productive but unemployed Nigerians who leave the country in search of economic emancipation and self-actualization. At the embassies the number of Nigerians wishing to leave the country is staggering as it is worrisome. Most of the applicants are unemployed graduates looking for job opportunities outside the shores of Nigeria. The conversation below between the two applicants at the embassies x-rays the level of unemployment in Nigeria over the years: "look I am a medical doctor. I graduated since four years, no job. They say there is embargo on employment". In response, the other applicant replies: "You are lucky. I left the university nine years ago. I have not a good job. I tried teaching for some time. Can you believe that for eighteen months, teachers were not paid salaries" (178). The employment issue is so serious that graduates out of desperation go into sensitive field like teaching not because they are professionals or have aptitude for teaching, but because of lack of job. Their performances are abysmal and quality of education keeps falling and this impact directly on the quality of students churned out. In other cases, workers are not paid their salaries, thereby killing their motivation to work and grow the economy. While those with poor jobs manage with their meager salaries, those without jobs become desperate looking for jobs elsewhere, including migrating to other countries. The palpable dissatisfaction among the young and productive population is capitalized by human traffickers to recruit victims for their enterprise. The desperation to survive as an unemployed graduate is exemplified in Unigwe's *OBSS*.

Unlike Chinweuba's *Merchants of Flesh*, Unigwe's *OBSS*, illustrates how unemployment fuels the business of human trafficking in Nigeria. The failure of government to provide jobs or enabling environment for its teeming young population has been one of the fore conditions which breed numerous vices. The government workers practise and promote illegalities like corruption, and nepotism. Many years after graduation, Chisom- or better still Sisi, a graduate of Finance and Business Administration and one of the protagonists, came to the realization that to secure a job in Nigeria, 'connections' rather than qualification worked better. Her friends who were less intelligent but with the right connections were all employed while she roamed the streets in search of an elusive job (22). As her hope of securing a job dwindled, she reminded her optimistic father what it takes to get employed: "unless you have found out that one of your friends is the director of any of the banks, because that is how things work here" (23). Even those who are employed are poorly paid like Chisom's father, who had worked for long with little or nothing to show for it (30). It is as a result of poverty induced by systemic failure and disillusionment at not getting a job, that Chisom concludes that: "this place has no future" (18). Ama- another protagonist goes further to ask: "what choices did we have back home, eh? (114). This is a pointer to the fact that dysfunctionality within a system in whatever guise, has a ripple effect on the lives of its people. Chisom even rejected the offer to leave the country at first but with

persistent lack and gloom, she capitulated and took her chance. Her desire to be employed forced her into becoming a victim of human traffickers. Chisom adds to the statistics of Nigerians who lose their lives abroad, in the battle for economic freedom and self-emancipation.

Like Unigwe in *OBSS*, Ezeigbo's *Trafficked* points to the practical effect of unemployment. Alice-a trafficked deportee reveals that: "I'm a graduate with a good degree. If I had had a job I wouldn't have been trafficked, I wouldn't have ended up in this horrible place, I wouldn't have been deported..." (163). This girl ends up as commercial sex worker in spite of her education because of the dearth in job opportunities in Nigeria. The desire to migrate in search of job opportunities is at the heart of human trafficking. This is the reason Nneoma and Efe who are trained teachers became victims of human trafficking syndicate in Nigeria. Systemic failure is not the only reason why human trafficking is pervasive; the failure of the family contributes to the rise in incidences of human trafficking in Nigeria.

Failure of the Family

The events within the family as a smallest component and bedrock of society, impacts either negatively or positively on the larger society. Therefore, the values propagated within the family reflect the values which shape the society. There is a disconnection when parents intentionally prefer their daughters to go into prostitution instead of giving them out in marriage. It is dereliction of duty on the part of parents and even grand-parent. For instance, a grandmother in Bessie Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather*, encouraged her young grand-daughter to sleep with Makhaya- a stranger on transit for a fee. When Makhaya turned down the little girl's offer and paid her still, the grandmother exclaims "you mean he gave you the money for nothing?" (10). The child grows up to see her body rather than her intellect as a tool for making money. Like the grandmother in Head's novel above, mothers in *Merchants of Flesh*, tell their daughters to: "Go and make money for me, my dear. Good daughter. Good pikin, what would I do without you? Go, the genitals have no measurement, no ruler. It does not finish. When you finish making money, you can marry" (73). The problem becomes magnified when fathers also join the mothers in urging their daughters into a trade which degrades them and can even cost their lives. A father chastises the daughter for wanting to marry early thus:

Stupid girl, you are here entertaining your boyfriend for free. Follow your mates to Italy. Go and meet white man and make money. Foolish girl. Stupid fool. You want to bring disgrace to me? Don't you see my mates riding cars sent by their children? You are here befriending men for free. You say you want to marry. If I hear "marry" from you again, I will slap okra seeds from your smelly mouth (73).

The above instances, point to the decline of positive values within the family. The girls are being taught that violating their bodies for money is not only normal but can also become a means of economic emancipation. These acts of impropriety endorse the objectification of the female body. Unlike some parents in *Merchants of Flesh* who

directly and without mincing words urged their daughters into prostitution, brother Cyril in *OBSS* indirectly pushed Ama- his step daughter by sexually violating her from the age of eight years (132). As a result of the constant violations, Ama longed to go to London where Brother Cyril would not be able to touch her. In making up her mind to leave Nigeria to join the prostitution ring in Belgium, Ama argues that: “Brother Cyril had taken what he wanted, no question asked. No please or may I or could I. discarding her when she no longer sufficed. And strange men taking and paying for her services. And it would not even be in Lagos” (166). After being violated as a child, Ama has come to see her body as an object for men's pleasure. If in giving pleasure to men she is paid, then it becomes an added advantage which was hitherto exploited for free. Brother Cyril's action of sexually violating the step daughter for years, contributed to her whole-hearted acceptance to being trafficked by Oga Dele. With the failure of the family to teach and practise the right values, other vices like unhealthy competition and negative peer pressure become common occurrences.

Excessive Materialism

The craze for primitive wealth accumulation has in more ways than one contributed to the thriving of human trafficking business. The family has enabled and witnessed the erosion of its noble cultural and ethical values which has accounted for the normalization of hitherto aberrant behaviours. As supposed custodians of positive moral values, it is incumbent on parents to impart these values on their children for the general good of the society. It smacks therefore of materialism to see parents endorsing their girls to become prostitutes because of the desire to own cars, houses and join exotic social clubs as status symbols.

Mrs Ogiama in *Merchants of Flesh* takes materialism a notch higher by firstly telling her daughter- Faith, that any business that brings in money but does not require spilling of blood is acceptable (100). This means that drug trafficking, sex slavery, gun running are all worthy businesses. In order to make quick money children join illegal businesses to generate money to appease the parents. Secondly, Mrs Ogiama's aspiration to join a social club- Italy International Ladies Club, where members apart from gathering occasionally to discuss, eat and enjoy themselves, also show off their new status by their flamboyant life style (251-252). The quest for material acquisition has been entrenched so much so that, young girls for want of trendy shoes and dress would sell their bodies to men for money (77). Materialism supports negative peer pressure and blinds the mind from good judgment.

Chika Unigwe *OBSS* presents characters like Chisom, and Efe whose excessive love for materialism landed them in dire situations. Chisom quickly discovers that his boyfriend- 'Peter did not have the means to turn her life around', she would rather prefer men returning from Europe and America with wallets full of foreign currency' (29). It is Chisom's love for materialism that she 'imagined she was a tourist, some rich woman who could afford to travel the world for leisure, taking in sights and trying the food' (255). She derives pleasure walking into exotic shops coquettishly trying on gold and diamond rings and even lying to elevate her status as she tries to live out her dreams (257). Efe is another character who because of materialism became a 'damaged good'. She let down her guard simply because Titus had 'promised Efe new

clothes, new shoes. Heaven on earth and anything else she fancied...' (49). With Titus's assurance that: 'de money wey I get no go finish for dis life' slogan, Efe upgraded her sense of fashion to 'something to make her look like a real *Sisi Eko*'-Classy Lagos Babe (51). She fantasized about owing and driving a car and how 'things were about to change' for good (51 & 52). The money Titus gave her was used to satisfy her material cravings making her fall back to poverty when the cash flow stopped. Even with the shabby treatment she received, she still prefers to date Oga Dele for the simple reason that he 'seemed the type of guy to give his girlfriend a munificent allowance' (81). At any given time in Efe's life, it is all about money. Little wonder she becomes a pimp after paying off her debt, controlling girls and making cheap and quick money off her chattel (278).

Abidemi Sanusi's *Eyo* delineates materialism as the canker worm which is eating deep into the fabric of the Nigerian society. The reverence accorded to wealth, numbs the conscience to the extent that, mindful of how Big Madam made her money her people's concerns are that:

She lived in the UK and went back to the village in Nigeria every Christmas, with money, jewellery and all sorts. Her home was the biggest in the village with three cars which she changed every two years. Her siblings went to the best school in the state and her father never failed to remind everyone about his wealthy daughter in England. And that was what mattered to everyone. That fact that Stella was rich (141).

Like Big Madame's parent, Ifeanyi Ajaegbo's *Sarah House* paints a similar scenario in which the Madam's parents are even aware of the fact that some returnees from abroad came back with harrowing tales of modern-day slavery and sexual servitude. Despite this knowledge, her parents still forced her to follow her Uncle to Italy because he came back with lots of money and flashy cars, after spending so many years abroad (180-181). The Uncle trafficked to Italy and made her his sex slave for many years until she was caught by the police and deported (183).

It is with the above mindset that Wale conceived the idea of sending Eyo to the United Kingdom after "looking at his friend's expensive-looking shirt, trousers and leather shoes. Everything about him spoke of breeding, wealth and elegance"(20). All that caught his fancy on seeing his friend was money and what it can afford. In convincing the wife of the rationality of his decision he challenges her to "think of all those people that go and come back every year with money" (23). It simply means that in sending Eyo to the United Kingdom, Wale and others expected her to come back with lots of money like other returnees. This explains the reason why Eyo is not welcomed when she came back almost empty handed and in protest, she had to submit herself to be re-trafficked. It is clear that materialism is responsible for the 'get rich or die trying' mentality which is eroding noble values of modesty and hard work. Another issue which highlights dysfunctionality with the family and society is negative peer group pressure which human traffickers exploit to their advantage.

Peer Group Influence.

Peer group pressure could be defined as the influence exerted by people of the same age, status, or grade on a person or group of persons. This pressure could either be negative or positive. For the purpose of this study, the negative peer pressure influence would be examined because of its concomitant effect on individuals and society at large.

In *Merchant of Flesh*, Chinweuba presents negative peer pressure which sees Faith leaving for Italy in order to be like her friends. In succumbing to negative peer pressure, Faith concludes that:

my mind was set on going to Italy. Let me go and be like my mates that I saw in the streets of Benin, riding big cars, some “balanced” behind in the owner's corner. Talking into their mobile phones. Posing as big wigs. Wearing expensive gold and coral beads, shoes and bags to match. Opening hairdressing salons and gifts shops, operating transport businesses... (102).

Faith's *raison d'etre* for going to Italy is to be able to compete with her peers materially. She feels left behinds and ignorantly thinks the businesses her peers are involved in are noble and legal. But for peer influence, Faith might have been more circumspect when Lizzy offered her the chance to go to Italy and make money. Just like Faith, her mother desires the son- Daniel to go abroad just like 'Egun's son. Egun's father had recently 'opened' his new storey building. It had taken him six months to build...(100). The mother is feeling left behind by her mates whose children are now oppressing her with their new status and therefore, her son too must join the race. This is how peer pressure can affect decisions parents take for their children which most often than not affect the children negatively.

In Unigwe's *OBSS*, Ama is affected by negative peer pressure, unconsciously exerted by glamorous young female bankers who came to their restaurant to eat. In them she sees herself and remains grateful for their patronage since they keep 'her on her toes so that she could never be complacent' with her dreams (160). Their presence shaped her worldview for 'she saw the life she could live (she had a right to it as much as these women did, didn't she?). Inadvertently, these bankers left a trail of longing, like footsteps in the mud, and Ama knew that she has to leave (ibid). But for the coming of these young bankers in Mama Eko's restaurant, Ama may not have been under pressure to aspire for alluring lifestyle which only excess money can afford. It is this pressure to be like those she considered her mates- the young bankers, that in spite of her Aunt's objection, Ama jumps at Oga Dele's offer to travel abroad and make money. Ama gave her body as a site for exploitation by men, this resonates as one of the tenets of patriarchy which considers the woman's body as a man's property.

Patriarchal System.

Patriarchy meaning “rule of the father.” Derived from the Latin word 'patriarchia', it is a social construct which has been in existence for centuries and Aristotle in his *Poetics* as quoted by Ujowundu (2013), posits that “women were not full human beings and that the nature of women were not that of a full human person” (143). Under

patriarchy, the unwritten rule argued by Darko (1995) remains to: “obey and worship your husband” (13). As quoted by Bakuuro (2017), Hooks defines patriarchy as: “a political social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially female, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence” (31). Patriarchy therefore confers on the man the right to decide that which the woman should be and do as her superior. Under the guise of patriarchy, men have usurped undue power at the detriment of women whose fundamental rights are trampled upon in varying degrees. The power that patriarchy accords men is what Ojaide (2018) implied when he posits that: “women are not meant to be different or abnormal but display sameness and submissiveness to 'disciplinary power' of patriarchy (29). The texts under review have adequately explored the contribution of patriarchy in human trafficking narratives.

Chinweuba's *Merchants of Flesh* elucidates how widows are treated in male dominated society and the consequences especially on the female children. The wife and the children become vulnerable immediately after a husband and father is deceased respectively. This is so because of the laws that govern a patriarchal society. Not only are the late man's properties confiscated by his siblings like in the case of Isaac Owerejo, the responsibility of bringing up the children is ironically left in the hands of the dispossessed widow (56). With many mouths to feed, Angelina gives out her daughter-Amaka to Lizzy the trafficker to ease the burden the husband's death placed on her shoulders. Dispossessing a widow of her late husband's property is a common practice in a patriarchal society. Expropriating a widow of her late husband's properties renders her poor, desperate and vulnerable. Being dispossessed of her husband's properties, is the only reason Amaka's mother, handed her over to Lizzy- a human trafficker, to help train her. Mindful of the plights of widows in a male dominated society, traffickers like Lizzy always lurk around widows in search of new recruits (61). Also, the death of Ogiama- Faith's father, forced her to drop out of school. The mother was married off to Festus- the late father's brother as custom demanded. As a school drop-out and a teenager, Faith had two children with Kingsley who later abandoned her for another woman. Since she is the only bread winner, Ogiama's death made the daughter vulnerable and in search of help got entangled with Kingsley. Her illegal union with Kingsley made her a single mother of two children (96). His departure from their lives plunged her into poverty. As a poor cleaner in a run-down clinic and with many mouths to feed, Faith becomes an easy target for Lizzy who enticed her with fake promises of a better life in Italy. The death of a husband or a father in a patriarchal society exposes the children especially girls to human traffickers who prey on the vulnerability of widows and daughters to perpetuate their trade.

In *OBSS*, Unigwe presents another scenario where young girls are violated by older men who later push these girls indirectly into precarious conditions. Efe-one of the protagonists, is violated at the age of sixteen by Titus- a married man of forty-five years old (49). Owing to his age and experience, he is able to detect innocent young girls, flattering and enticing them with money only to dump them when they become

pregnant. Titus' action turned Efe into a poor and single mother who had to take two menial jobs to help her support her family and son. In her desperation to secure a better life for herself and son, Efe falls victim to Oga Dele's fake offer of turning around her financial fortunes abroad. This entails the selling of her body to willing men for monetary gains in Belgium. But for her romance with Titus, Efe would not have been under undue pressure to fend for her family. It is out of desperation to survive and build a better future for the son who has been abandoned by the wealthy father, that Efe offered herself to be trafficked.

Also, Sanusi's *Eyo* is a representation of a patriarchal society in which the man dominates the woman. Her opinion unlike her body is considered irrelevant. Wale-Eyo's father single handedly took a decision to send their eldest daughter-Eyo to the United Kingdom without consulting the wife. To inform the wife of such a decision, Wale casually says: "I told Femi to take Eyo to London" (22). Wale had already planned and agreed with Femi before disclosing it to the wife who in spite of her fear was cajoled into buying Wale's idea, because she had no choice. The child belongs to the father and the mother has little or no say in the future of her child. Such an unrestrained act of male superiority is the reason Eyo is trafficked to London just like the father had wanted. Also, Sanusi delineates another angle to male domination in which a woman's body could become a mercantile asset. It is because of the money-spinning value of the woman's body that Michael without qualms sends the wife -Bola to join prostitution business in Italy. She is to sell her body to willing men and send the money to Michael to take care of himself and their two daughters. Michael even normalizes prostitution by telling the wife that: "all you have to do is go there for a year or eighteen months and come back with money, just like the other women. It is either that or we die of hunger here" (52). With the subtle threat of death, Bola agrees to monetize her body, so her husband and children would not die of famine. Akombi like Michael did same to his wife Mara in *Beyond the Horizon*. To sustain her family Bola is trafficked abroad to join the prostitution ring for her husband and children to survive. Women and female children are pushed into the hands of traffickers when their fathers and husband fail to cater for their families.

In conclusion, Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street*, Ezeigbo's *Trafficked*, Chinweuba's *Merchants of Flesh*, and Sanusi's *Eyo* have recreated the menace of human trafficking with emphasis on the root causes grounded in systemic failure. They have demonstrated how structural dysfunctionality is at the heart of human trafficking in Nigeria. It is the dysfunctionality in governance, the family and the society which have successfully created an enabling environment for illegal businesses like human trafficking and sex slavery to thrive. These are exemplified through corruption in institutions and government's apathy, insecurity of lives, high rate of unemployment and abject poverty. The collapse of the family, excessive materialism, negative peer pressure influence and patriarchy also contribute to the spike in human trafficking in Nigeria.

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