'Sister, You Understand': Stories Black African women told of their experiences of being trafficked into/through Ireland for sexual exploitation.

A thesis presented to Dublin City University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of **Doctor of Philosophy** is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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Date: 13/01/2023

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Abstract

Title: 'Sister you Understand', Stories Black African Women told of their Experiences of being Trafficked into/through Ireland for Sexual Exploitation

Human trafficking is a hideous and highly gendered crime affecting primarily women and girls and has attracted the attention of researchers, experts and stakeholders from various fields, who continue to explore the phenomenon through multiple lenses. Although black African women are among the most exploited cohorts worldwide, little attention is paid to the racial dimension of trafficking and these women's experiences are largely absent from the anti-trafficking discourse.

Responding to this gap in awareness, the present study explores the experiences of eight black African migrant women who have been trafficked into/through Ireland for sexual exploitation. Unstructured in-depth narrative interviews and thematic narrative analysis are employed to give voice to the first-hand experiences and opinions of these women. The racial understanding of human trafficking is interrogated, informed by my subjective positioning as a black African, migrant woman, a feminist, an advocate, a support provider and a researcher.

The study's findings confirm that the limited extent of race-centred discourse in human trafficking narratives, particularly around the sexual exploitation of black African women, means that the experiences of such women may not always be understood by western researchers and support providers. The findings also highlight distinctively African aspects of the women's experiences that, again, may meet relatively little understanding or sympathy in secular European contexts.

This lack of understanding and a wider lack of awareness and information has meant that most of the participants have had to navigate their recovery and the rebuilding of their lives outside of the sex trade, without any support or intervention. A need for awareness-raising within migrant communities, including residents of direct provision centres, is highlighted. Race-centred support and interventions for trafficked survivors from black and other ethnic minorities are also needed, to address appropriately issues and harms that might be specific to them. By giving voice and visibility to trafficked black women, the study contributes to a race-centred discourse on human trafficking.

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Acronyms

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

CATW: Coalition Against Trafficking in Women

CEDAW: Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

EIGE: The European Institute for Gender Equality

EU: European Union

EUROPOL: European Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation

EWL: European Women's Lobby

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations

GAATW Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women

GRETA: Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

GCE: Global Campaign for Education

IHREC: Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

ILO: International Labour Organisation

IOM: International Organisation for Migration

IMF: International Monetary Fund

INTERPOL: International Criminal Police Organisation

MAPP: Movement for the Abolition of Pornography and Prostitution

OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

OHCHR Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

OSCE: Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

SAP Structural Adjustment Programs

TIP: Trafficking in Persons

UN: United Nations

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (

UNFAO: United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation

UNICEF: United Nations International Children Emergency Fund

UNODC: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0   Introduction

Her real name remains unknown, but she was called Saartjie Baartman, from the Khoikhoi tribe in South Africa and she was also stage-named the 'Hottentot Venus' by those who exploited her, who had seemingly brought her under false pretences to Europe (Parkinson, 2016). Although Saartjie was illiterate at the age of 20, her exploiters, William Dunlop and Hendrik Cezar, still alleged that she had signed a contract with them to be exhibited. They brought her to England in 1810, where she was sexualised, commodified and shamed, first by being displayed almost naked as an exhibition, a freak show, due to her uncharacteristic natural features, particularly her buttocks and later by being trafficked for sexual exploitation in both England and Ireland (Ashley, 2021 and Jones, 2019). By 1814 Hendrik Cezar had moved her to Paris, where her exploitation in the sex trade continued (Parkinson, 2016) and at the age of twenty-five she was found dead and penniless in Paris (Hobson, 2009). Her exploitation and humiliation did not stop there, however, as after her death an application was made and granted for her body to be moved to the Museum d'Histoire Naturelle and Musee de l'Homme, following the autopsy and publication of George Cuvier, in which he gave a detailed account of her anatomy, categorising her characteristics and black femaleness with primitivism and bestiality, as she is likened to species of monkeys (Qureshi, 2004). In addition, his description of her as 'femme de race Boschimanne' (meaning a female of the Bushman race) not only put her race at the very bottom of the human chain but also as a representation of an inferior human (Ngwena, 2018). Her plaster cast and skeletal remains, as well as her brains and genitals, were preserved in jars and put on display until 1974. The French government finally granted the request of the late President Nelson Mandela and returned the remains of Saartjie Baartman to South Africa to be laid to rest in 2002 (Jones,

2019).

Two hundred years after Saartjie Baartman was coerced to come from Africa to Europe and was sexually exploited, other black African women are still going through the same experience as Saartjie, as they continue to be trafficked in Europe and elsewhere – yet very little attention is paid to their specific experiences. The present study, importantly, seeks to understand the experiences of black African women who have been trafficked in Europe and are now living other lives.

1.1   Background: Human Trafficking Globally

Often described as modern-day slavery, human trafficking generally involves the exploitation of an individual by another for-profit and is a global issue (Bales, 1999; Okech, Morreau, and Benson, 2012). Despite a lack of consensus on the definition and interpretation of slavery, human trafficking remains historically linked to the enslavement and colonisation of Africans, mainly people from the west of Africa (Bales, 1999; Bravo, 2005 and Patterson, 2012). It is estimated that over 15 million Africans were shipped from Africa to the Americas and elsewhere during the period of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, a third of whom were women who experienced appalling violence, including forced prostitution, forced childbearing, and other forms of sexual and reproductive enslavement (United Nations, 2015). To justify the sexual assault and dehumanisation of enslaved black women, they were labelled with negative sexual stereotypes (as 'Jezebels', hypersexual and sensual creatures) which portrayed black women's sexuality as deviant, describing their sexual appetite as "at best inappropriate, and at worse, insatiable" (Collins, 2002, p. 83). This myth about black women's sexuality still exists today and

continues to be exacerbated through the media, which objectifies and sexualises black

women and girls (Matthew, 2018 and Rosenthal and Lobel, 2016). The gendered nature and the centrality of the body in slave relations continue to be important parallels between historic trans-Atlantic slavery and modern-day slavery, as women continue to be the preferred slaves in most societies (Patterson, 2012).

Human trafficking, a phenomenon recognised as a crime and an egregious human rights violation (Gallagher, 2002; Office of the Commissioner for the Human Rights, 2011, 2014, 2020; Haddadin, 2019), has been explored from various dimensions in relation to the prevention, prosecution and protection of its victims (O'Connor and Yonkova, 2018; Patterson, 2012; O'Connell Davidson, 2006; Goodey, 2004). More recently, researchers have begun to pay attention to exploring the gendered nature of the crime and its effects on survivors (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2021; Burke, Amaya and Dillion, 2019; European Institute for Gender Equality, 2018; Yonkova et al., 2017; Walby et al., 2016). However, despite the historic assertion of human trafficking and exploitation being traced back to the transportation and enslavement of black Africans into different parts of the world, few studies have explored the experiences of these individuals. For example, the report of the U.S. Department of Justice in 2011 stated that 40% of sex trafficking victims across the United States were blacks (Banks and Kyckelhahn, 2011). A European Parliament report described the sex trafficking of African women, particularly Nigerian women and girls, as one of the persistent flows into Europe (Bąkowski and Voronova, 2021), while an International Organisation for Migration (2017) report estimated an almost ten-fold increase between 2015 and 2017 in the number of west African women, mostly Nigerian women and girls, trafficked into Italy and other parts of Europe for prostitution and sexual slavery. Other news reports by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC News, 2019, 2020) have reported on an

illegal network of traffickers that lures African women into India for sexual exploitation and the trafficking of women from Nigeria and other African countries into the Middle Eastern countries for domestic servitude and sexual exploitation. Nevertheless, there is still relatively little attention paid to exploring the racial dimensions of this crime of trafficking. The myths around black women's hypersexuality and other intersecting socio-economic factors have meant that black women continue to be very vulnerable to trafficking for sexual exploitation.

1.2   Human Trafficking in Ireland

Human trafficking is not restricted to any nation or region but is a global phenomenon that has plagued nations, as almost every country in the world – including the Republic of Ireland – is either a source, transit or destination country (Breen, Healy and Healy, 2021). Ireland remains both a transit and a destination country for trafficking in persons and the hidden and pervasive crime of human trafficking mostly affects those with migrant backgrounds, the majority of whom are women and girls (United Nations Office of Drug and Crime, 2021). Recent reports of the official data on the scale of the crime of trafficking in Ireland have warned that the figure is most likely underestimated, due to the hidden nature of the crime and limitations on the current national referral mechanism for the identification of victims of trafficking (Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 2021). While establishing that the scale of human trafficking remains particularly problematic, the research commissioned by the Immigrant Council of Ireland in 2009 on the sexual exploitation of trafficked and migrant women within the Irish sex trade revealed a lucrative prostitution market, worth over €180 million. The research further revealed that in contrast to street prostitution, dominated by Irish women, close to

97% of indoor prostitution was dominated by migrant women, the majority of whom were

black African women, followed by Central European women (Kelleher, O'Connor, and Pillinger, 2009). Over a decade after the research commissioned by the Immigrant Council of Ireland was published, victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation remain almost exclusively migrant women and such trafficking has recently been acknowledged as a "highly gendered and racist act", not just as a result of the substantial presence of migrants but also because of the discriminatory associated mindset and beliefs that are based on race and gender (IHREC, 2021). The 2018 annual report from Ruhama, an Irish organisation that provides support services to women in prostitution and those that have been trafficked, shows that 122 women from 29 different nationalities were supported in that year and 18 of these 29 countries are in the continent of Africa; a similar pattern was represented in the 2019 annual report (Ruhama, 2018; 2019).

Figure 1 outlines the regions of origin of victims of sex trafficking in Ireland. The data indicates how the proportion of sex trafficked victims from Africa is on the rise in Ireland. This is consistent with data from other parts of Europe showing significant increases in the number of black African women and girls trafficked into Europe for sexual exploitation (Bello and Olutola, 2020; Malakooti, 2020; Europol, 2017). Furthermore, a breakdown of women in the sex trade, including sex-trafficked women, who accessed the support services of both Ruhama and the Health Service Executive's[1] Women's Health Services in the period 2015-2018 also shows that Africans were the most common nationalities (O'Connor and Breslin, 2020).

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[1] The Health Service Executive is the public health service organisation in Ireland

Diagram 4: Victim region of origin*
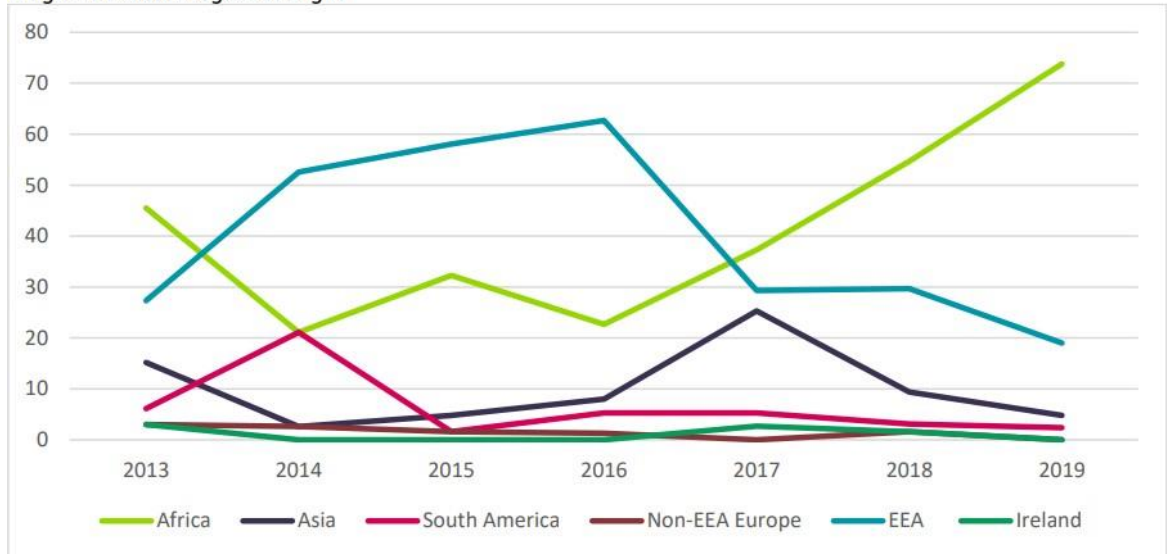
* Percentile representation of victims regions of origin by year.

Figure 1: Trafficking for sexual exploitation by region   (source: Irish Human Rights and

Equality Commission, 2021)

1.3   Rationale for this study

As noted above, it is suggested that the true number of trafficked victims in Ireland is most

likely higher than the official estimates. It is also likely to be dominated by black African

women, for whom stereotypical sexual constructions of black women, used to justify the

sexual exploitation and abuse of black African women during the trans- Atlantic slavery

period, continues to persist centuries after slavery has ended (Barker, 2019). The low level

of convictions for the crime of human trafficking in Ireland not only weakens deterrence and

allows traffickers to continue to operate with impunity, but also further silences their victims.

For all of these reasons, a dedicated study of black

African migrant women who have been sex trafficked is necessary, timely and important

because so little attention has been paid to the experiences of these women, despite the evidence that black African women are one of the most common groups of people sex trafficked in Ireland, Europe and elsewhere. To date, there has been little qualitative research carried out in Ireland and Europe focused specifically on migrant women of black African origin. The present study contributes to addressing this gap in research by exploring black African women's experiences of trafficking and sexual exploitation into and through Ireland. This original study will investigate, from the women's point of view, how they ended up in the sex trade and the impact of sexual exploitation and the sex trade on their lives. By exploring their experiences, the study contributes to a wider understanding of how black African women become trapped in the sex trade, of their experiences of that trade, of the support that is needed and of how they move to other lives after exiting the sex trade.

1.4 Positionality

I have assumed a reflexive position as an essential element of my feminist approach in this study. My relocation between cultures, socioeconomic environments, educational systems and personal experiences has positioned me to enter the study with multiple roles: as an African, a black woman, a black doctoral student researcher in a predominantly white academic environment, a single mother and a practitioner in the field of activism and advocacy on human rights, human trafficking and violence against women. My choice of research topic, however, was mainly influenced by my personal life experiences, particularly the time I spent in a direct provision centre (State-funded accommodation for asylum seekers/refugees) in Ireland, seeing first-hand that such centres continue to be sites for the sexual exploitation of migrant and black African

women (Pollak and Hilliard, 2019).

Born and raised in one of the ghettos of Lagos in Nigeria to parents who, despite their economic deprivation, placed a lot of value on ensuring their children got the education they themselves never had, I received a primary and secondary education and spent two years in a third-level institution. Upon my migration to Ireland and while waiting for a response to my international protection application, I had to live in one of the direct provision centres in Dublin, where I came in contact with vulnerable migrant populations from various racial/ethnic backgrounds. The profound vulnerability of the migrant women in the centre where I lived and the other direct provision centres across the country was equally understood by the men who frequently came to these centres to buy sex from the migrant women, including some of the women who had become my friends. I first learned about the violence and the humiliation of the sex trade in Ireland through the stories the women sometimes told about some sex buyers. There was nothing I could do but listen to my friends as they tell their stories. The understanding and experience of that level of vulnerability, where women are completely helpless with no support and apprehensive about their immigration status and their future, not only inspired me to go back into education and get a degree but influenced and shaped my choice of career and research topics. Both in my master's degree, where I explored the effects of female genital mutilation on Sub-Saharan women and in the present study, I hope to enrich the knowledge base through my research.

My multiple identities, I believe, have positioned me favourably to undertake this study, as in many ways I was similar to the participants. All of the participants interviewed (eight women) were black Africans and though from different nationalities within the continent, we come from similar racial/ethnic/cultural groups as well as socioeconomic backgrounds. I had no difficulty in understanding some of the women when they mixed

English with Pidgin-English and I could readily grasp the cultural meanings within some of their narratives, which might have been difficult otherwise. This allowed me to gather an unfacilitated account of the women's stories directly from them, adding authenticity to the data for this study. However, researching such a sensitive topic meant that I also had to self-reflect on my position as an outsider who has not been trafficked for sexual exploitation and, therefore, can only understand to a certain extent the trauma of the women's experiences and the challenges of overcoming such trauma in order to move on with one's life. Despite being a black African woman, comments made by my first interviewee at the outset of the interview, about my privileged position as a researcher, when she said "you are a big woman in the university" made me reconsider how that may influence the context of the interview and data gathering.

I was roughly halfway through the process of interviewing participants for this study when I started working with the Immigrant Council of Ireland, a non-governmental organisation that supports migrant families and trafficked women. Coincidentally, this was the only organisation that had agreed to help advertise my research during the recruitment phase. I was, at that time, just beginning to develop professional relationships with other colleagues in the field of human trafficking research and did not have the privilege of accessing survivors through any of the anti-trafficking organisations. Recruitment of participants for this study was all done by myself through direct contact with migrant communities and leaders within the community, who sometimes had to reassure the women of my character and sincerity. I was familiar with and known to many people within some migrant communities because of my former position as the chairperson of a migrant women's organisation. This meant that on occasions I had to deal with issues related to migration, gender and violence against

women, coupled with years of service in various capacities within migrant communities. I was conscious that my position and profile could work either for or against me – or both.

My commitment to issues that especially affect migrant women meant that I have learned to be a good and compassionate listener, who can deal sensitively and confidentially with issues that concern women. This, I believe, gave me a good reputation and favourable character references among the migrant community. Nevertheless, I took the opportunity to position myself as an insider in my conversations with five of the women prior to the interviews (in which they mostly asked questions about my background and personal life), because I realised that the women might still be anxious about whether to trust me to keep their stories in confidence, knowing that migrant communities often engage in intercultural activities with each other. By being honest about my socioeconomic background and the fact that I had also gone through the direct provision system for years, I communicated to the women that I was not a black researcher from a privileged background as they perceived me (or 'the big woman', as one of the participants, had called me). I can say with confidence that my 'insider' position in this study allowed for rapport and trust to develop and for the women to tell their stories, despite the particularly sensitive topic. Although not all of the women understood the full significance of my assurances of confidentiality in a research context, however, they understood that I appreciated the cultural and societal implications and impact on their lives and families if they were ever recognised as victims of sex trafficking.

1.5   Central Research Question

Table 1

The central research question of this study is: What is the experience of black African women who have been sex trafficked and how do they move on to other lives after they exit the sex trade?

The study's aim is: To explore and seek to understand the experiences of black African women sex trafficked into/through Ireland and the lives they live now.

1.6   Outline of the Thesis

This study is constructed in eight chapters, of which the present chapter introduces the study by providing a background to the sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of black women generally and African women specifically, as well as the rationale for this study. Chapters Two and Three present a review of the literature and current research on sex trafficking, both from the practical aspects of how trafficking operates and from high-level political and economic perspectives. In Chapter Four, the methodological choices considered for the study are discussed and the processes of decision-making on methodology, planning and precautions throughout the study are described. This chapter is in two sections, beginning with a detailed description of and explanation for my adoption of a narrative approach and a thematic narrative analytical framework; the second section describes the research process in detail, including the recruitment phase, data collection and data analysis processes.

Chapters Five and Six present the study's findings, based on the in-depth narratives of the women's experiences themselves, which were designed to capture as trustworthy as possible these survivors' accounts and opinions about their experiences. Although this essentially forms a single unit, in order not to be excessively long and unwieldy the findings

are presented in two chapters, respectively focussing on the time period prior to being trafficked and the periods during and after trafficking. In Chapter Seven, the study's findings are discussed in relation to existing literature and the contribution of the study to the current state of research is assessed. Finally, Chapter Eight summarises the key findings and significance of the study and its contribution to knowledge, its limitations, and suggested areas for further research and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW – The EXTERNAL STRANDS TO SEX TRAFFICKING

2.0   Introduction: The External Strands to Sex Trafficking

This chapter is divided into four sections, with relevant subsections. The first section introduces the research on sex trafficking from a global perspective. The major issues and challenges of this complex phenomenon are discussed, including the definitions of trafficking and smuggling and the challenges associated with differentiating the two concepts, due to the overlap between being smuggled and being trafficked for sexual exploitation. The various forms of trafficking are identified and the issue of consent within the trafficking protocol is explored. The challenges associated with the misinterpretation/misidentification of trafficked victims are examined as well as the magnitude of the problem. The second and third section explores the 'who', 'what' and 'how' of trafficking. The profiles of both the victims and the perpetrators of sex trafficking are presented, along with the reasons for the continued growth of the sex industry. The core components of sex trafficking, including the experiences/exploitation that sex-trafficked women undergo, are identified and the relationship between the role of globalisation and the sex trafficking of women, especially women from the global south (that is, women from developing countries located mostly in the Southern Hemisphere) is examined.

In the fourth section, theories associated with sex trafficking are explored with a focus on Delgado (1995) critical race feminism as a framework within which the factors fuelling and sustaining sex trafficking can be analysed. The other theory given prominence is Siddharth Kara's (2009) economic framework, which he claims is seminal in understanding the sex trafficking phenomenon. Other policy contexts including

migration, human rights and national security are also explored. A brief conclusion of the chapter follows.

2.1 Sex Trafficking in the 21st Century

2.1.1 Trafficking and Smuggling

Trafficking and smuggling are not new phenomena. They have existed since the creation of state boundaries. Though distinct, they are multifaceted and interwoven, with the shared elements of trafficking and smuggling including recruitment (Jackson 2006), movement (Agustin, 2005), and delivery of migrants to a destination from their country of origin (Kangaspunta, 2003). While different scholars and public affairs commentators are involved in the debate over the acceptability and clarity of operational definitions, some authors suggest that clarity has been established through the definitions enshrined in the Palermo Protocols; Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children and the Protocol against the smuggling of migrants by land, sea and air, adopted by the United Nations in 2000 to supplement the United Nations Convention against Organized Crime (UNODC, 2014). This clarity, however, is not reflected in the general information the public receives through the mass media, which consistently present migrants as trafficked persons, so as to provoke an emotive reaction (Johnston et al., 2014). Clarity is important, Article 6 of the Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children identifies a trafficked person as a victim in need of the State's assistance and protection (United Nations, 2000) while a smuggled migrant may be seen as one who has committed a crime against the State (Financial Action Task Force, 2011). Gembická (2006) noted, however, that despite some differences these two phenomena share certain similarities,

such as the fact that in both cases the vulnerabilities of others is exploited for profit.

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There is no universally accepted definition of smuggling, in this context. However, most stakeholders continue to rely on a prominent definition that was agreed at Palermo in 2000. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime adopted a Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Sea, Land and Air, to supplement the United Nations Convention against Organized Crime. This Protocol (United Nations, 2001, p.41, Article 3a).

defines "smuggling of migrants" as:

the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other

material benefits, of the illegal entry of a person into a state party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident.

Figure 2:   Similarities and Differences between Trafficking and Smuggling.

Legal, illegal or no	Illegal border crossing
Legal or illegal documents	Illegal (False or stolen
Coercion and repeated	Voluntary /Consent
Documents	Commodity: A
Coercion and repeated	Crime against the state
Victimizatio	
Restricted movement/contr	
Commodity: An	
Crime against an	

Profitable Business Involves Human Beings
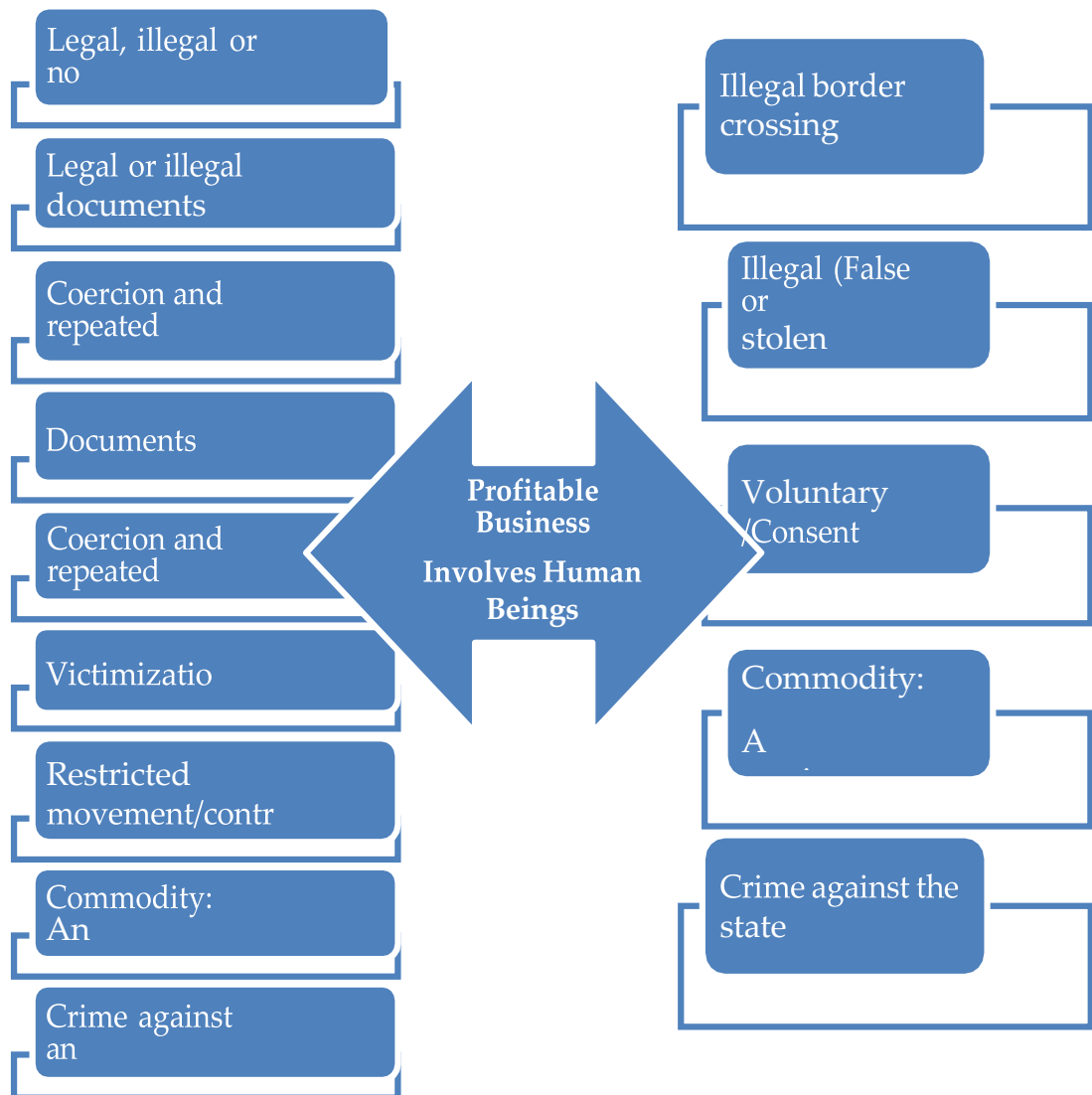
Source: Adapted from International Organisation for Migration (Gembická, 2006).

Smuggling is usually not for the purpose of exploiting migrants upon arrival at the country of destination, nor does it involve a new or ongoing relationship between the migrant and the smuggler (Fergus 2005, p. 3). Smuggled individuals usually have what could be termed an unwritten contract with the smugglers. This contract entails and is limited to illegal transportation from the country of origin and terminates as soon as the individual gets to the destination of their choice (Shelley 2010). What essentially defines smuggling is the element of consent and the movement of people across borders (Gembická, 2006). In contrast, trafficked persons are enslaved from the outset and exploited through forced prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation (Salt, 2000). They are delivered to the individual or organisation that has previously paid the trafficker for them. The buyer puts the trafficked individual to work so as to repay their debt which, unknown to them, they have incurred through being trafficked in the first place (Kelly and Regan, 2000).

The boundaries between smuggling and trafficking become blurred, however, when migrants, who have voluntarily paid for the services of smugglers, suddenly find

themselves in an intimidating situation. Upon arrival at the migrants' destination, they are detained by the smuggler, who then places the migrant in an environment that is controlled, often forcing the migrants into exploitative work in the commercial sex industry or selling them off to traffickers who will use them for that same purpose (Aronowitz, 2001). What began as a contract undertaken by the migrant for the purpose of illicit border-crossing quickly mutates into a trafficking situation as a result of the use of coercion and deception United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2011).

Scholars and policy-makers have defined trafficking in many ways. For example, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) defined trafficking as when

> a migrant is illicitly engaged (recruited, kidnapped, sold) and/or moved within national or across international borders, or when intermediaries (traffickers) during any part of this process obtain economic or other profit by means of deception, coercion and/or other forms of exploitation under conditions that violate the fundamental human rights of migrants (IOM 1999 cited in Berton 1999, p.6).

Of the 148 nations whose representatives gathered in Palermo for the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime in 2000, more than 80 countries signed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children (Raymond, 2002) and by 2010, there were 117 countries that were signatories to the Protocol (Cohen, 2014). The Protocol (United Nations 2001, p.41,

Article 3), defines "trafficking in persons" as

> (a) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons by means of threat or use of force, or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payment or benefits, to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others, or another form of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs

(b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in person to the intended exploitation outlined in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means outlined in subparagraph (a) have been used.

(c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article

(d) "Child" shall mean any person under eighteen years of age (UN, 2001 p.32).

Before the adoption of the Protocol's definition of trafficking in 2000, emphasis was placed on a migrant being moved across the border and forced into an exploitative situation to prove that trafficking has taken place (IOM 1999, cited in Berton 2000). The Palermo Protocol's definition of trafficking states that trafficking consists of three elements: (i) an action; (ii) a means; and (iii) a purpose and these elements exist in all the major forms of trafficking in persons (The US Department of States, 2009). Most research in the area of sex trafficking continues to be informed by the Palermo Protocol's definition of trafficking, which stands as the internationally accepted definition of trafficking for most stakeholders (Huda, 2006). Article 3(b) of the Protocol on trafficking deals with the controversial issue of consent, which distinguishes a trafficked individual from a smuggled person (UN 2001, p. 32). According to the Palermo Protocol's definition, the movement of individuals from one location to another is not a requirement for trafficking to take place. Irrespective of whether an individual had initially given consent, was born into servitude, was transported to a place of exploitation or was involved in criminal activities as a result of being trafficked, that individual will still be regarded as a trafficked victim (United States Department of States, 2014).

The agreed definitions of smuggling and trafficking contained in the Palermo Protocols have enabled governments to incorporate the two concepts into national policies and collaborate more effectively (UNODC, 2004). Arguably the Protocol's definition has

proved effective, to the extent of contextualising the trafficking phenomenon, but some stakeholders in the international community remain sceptical, believing that the issue of consent was not properly addressed in the Palermo Protocol (Huda 2006). The question of consent – as opposed to being coerced – was the crux separating the Palermo Protocols' definitions of smuggling from trafficking, as the issue of whether an individual can consent to being trafficked was raised. However, (Butterfly, 2014) argues that by stating that exploitation and abuse of any form should be the core criteria by which to judge if trafficking has taken place, the Protocol has addressed the issue of whether a consenting adult can be trafficked. Thus, it remains problematic to ascertain the impact of the Protocol's definition in helping governments enact legislation both at international and national levels in the fight against the trafficking of people for commercial sex, particularly with regard to the criminalisation of perpetrators of such acts, as well as enhancing support for their victims.

Weaknesses in both Protocols' definitions, which include the lack of guidelines for distinguishing a trafficked victim from a smuggled migrant, has made it difficult for states to determine the exact levels of prevalence of trafficking and smuggling. Additionally, provisions for protecting the human rights of the individuals are mostly optional for states and most states refuse to recognise the fluidity between smuggling and trafficking – that is, that a smuggled migrant can very quickly become a trafficked victim (Gallagher, 2002). This lack of guidelines for distinguishing trafficked victims from smuggled migrants in both Protocols has paved the way for some governments to look continuously at these forms of irregular migration (smuggling and trafficking) as issues of state security, crime and border controls, rather than as a human rights issue that needs to be viewed with compassion and requires action to protect potential victims.

There is evidence to suggest that some states are taking advantage of this lapse, by defining cases as smuggling in order to remove the financial burden of victim protection from the state (Gallagher, 2002). Sadly, the restrictive migration policy stance that some governments have opted for has fuelled rather than stopped irregular movements of people, as individuals or families who are desperate to leave their home country in search of better lives for themselves end up either being trafficked or smuggled by organised criminal networks (Gallagher, 2002). A consensus on a definition of trafficking among the relevant stakeholders could contribute to stemming the flow of trafficked victims and reducing or eliminating the impunity with which traffickers operate.

2.1.2 Forms of Trafficking

There are various forms of trafficking worldwide. While some victims are captured to be sold as a product, others are kidnapped, deceived or lured by misleading information given by traffickers and then forced to work as slaves (Fowler, Che and Fowler 2010). The three main forms of trafficking are trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced labour, including domestic servitude, and trafficking in organ/tissue.

Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation: Trafficking for sexual exploitation remains the largest subcategory of the transnational form of slavery and the most common type of trafficking (United States Department of State, 2007). Across the world, women and children are trafficked, both across and within country borders, for the sole purpose of exploiting them for commercial sex. While some of these victims are forced into the industry to perform sexual services, others travel aware of the nature of the job but unaware that the money they make will be withheld by somebody

else, thereby qualifying them as victims of trafficking (Fowler, Che and Fowler, 2010).

Labour/Involuntary Servitude: Forced labour is a type of trafficking that is more difficult to detect. It happens as a result of the exploitation of an individual's labour through the use of psychological and/or physical threat and coercion, abuse and deception. When this happens, any consent the individual may have given before his or her labour being exploited becomes legally irrelevant. Migrants are particularly vulnerable to this type of trafficking, but victims sometimes find themselves in involuntary servitude within their own countries (The US Department of States, 2009).

The Trafficking for Cells, Tissue and Organs: As the list of patients waiting for a transplant grows in developed countries, due to ageing populations and various health-related problems, so does the number of people being trafficked for their organs also increase. Criminals seize the opportunity to exploit the desperation of the patients and the vulnerability of the donors, endangering the lives of both as the operations are often carried out in secret, without proper medical facilities or follow-up care (European Union, 2015).

2.1.3 Contextualising Consent within the Trafficking Definition.

The controversy surrounding the concept of an adult being able to 'consent' to prostitution became the crux of the negotiations on an agreed definition of trafficking in the Palermo Protocol. The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), the European Women's Lobby (EWL) and the Movement for the Abolition of Pornography and Prostitution (MAPP), to name but a few, took an abolitionist approach, advocating a

definition of trafficking that can protect all victims of trafficking without taking into account whether they had initially given their consent or not. The contention was that this would offer the strongest support for bringing trafficking to an end, by allowing no loopholes through which traffickers could avoid being prosecuted, (Raymond, 2002). The opposing camp, led by the Human Rights Caucus and the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women, took a regulatory approach, insisting that the definition should not be too inclusive but rather should focus on individuals that could prove they never consented to sex work in the first place (Raymond 2002, Doezema, 2002). It is worth noting that wealthy developed nations that are also destination countries for trafficked victims, such as Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Holland, Ireland, Japan, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, all fiercely opposed an abolitionist approach to trafficking, preferring a less inclusive definition (Raymond, 2002).

After almost two years of intense lobbying and advocacy from both sides, the international community chose to highlight two key points in addressing the controversy associated with the issue of consent versus coercion, in defining trafficking (Abramson, 2003). Firstly, they acknowledged that trafficking can take place through various means, including fluidity – a situation whereby smuggled individuals who had given their consent to be smuggled find themselves, upon arrival at the destination country, being forced into exploitative labour against their will. Hence, the provision of Article 3(b) of the Palermo Protocol states that the use of any of the means set forth in Article 3(a) renders the consent of victims to any form of sexual exploitation legally irrelevant (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2008). Secondly, it was accepted that trafficking has taken place whenever an individual has been subjected to "abuse of a position of vulnerability" or "abuse of power" (UNODC 2004, p.42); in other words, if an individual is subjected to any of these means, there will be no

need for that individual to prove exposure to any other of the elements of trafficking.

Arguing against adopting an abolitionist approach, Doezema (2002) cautioned that such an approach to defining trafficking ends up viewing women as children in need of protection and that history has shown that this only deprives women of rights and empowerment. Re-echoing this view, De Sousa Santos, Gomes and Duarte (2010) asserted that abolitionists often invoke the close relationship between prostitution and sex trafficking as a means to stop the legalisation of prostitution – which they see as a very dangerous path that nations such as Germany and Holland have already followed – arguing that for a state to stop sex trafficking, prostitution must first be stopped. Evidence from around the globe has also shown that most women are aware of the nature of the job before getting into the sex trade (Butterfly, 2014). However, this does not alter the fact that women in the sex trade often have to work in very bad and exploitative conditions, unable to exercise agency and autonomy (European Union, 2014). To date, the legal framework for prostitution which advocates a regulatory approach has not been able to protect women from the violence and exploitation associated with the sex trade, as sex workers themselves have described (Macioti and Geymonat, 2016).

Furthermore, evidence suggests that the regulatory approach has failed in Holland. When the Dutch government legalised prostitution, the rationale behind that decision, according to the government, was to promote the well-being and safety of the women working in the sex trade and to reduce sex trafficking (Outshoorn, 2012). Legalisation was perceived as a realistic answer to a social problem. However, earlier reports suggest that Sex trafficking increased greatly in Holland, while the well-being of women working in the

sex trade declined (Daalder, 2007). By 2008 between 50% and 90% of the women

working in Amsterdam's brothels were victims of trafficking, according to the estimate given by the Dutch police (Dutch National Police Service, 2008). Rae (2014) found that because of high prices for renting windows, government taxes and pimp payments, women were taking on additional clients each night and engaging in risky behaviours such as not using condoms, thus negatively impacting their well-being and health in the longer term.

The ideological stance adopted by the majority of the international community to address sex trafficking with a broad definition cannot eradicate the problem of sex trafficking. It does, however, give state governments a coherent instrument with which to work. It also sends out a message to those groups who profit from the sexual exploitation of women that they will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law if there is evidence to prove that trafficking has taken place (UNODC, 2014). Unfortunately, it is evident from the vague, and sometimes non-existent, references to consent in some countries' major legislative frameworks, such as the United States of America's Trafficking Victims Protection Act 2000 (U.S. Department of States, 2000), that the concept of consent is not adequately emphasised. Other countries such as the United Kingdom, Belarus, and Israel have focused on means or purpose to establish that trafficking has taken place (UNODC, 2014). However, both UN officials and governments have tried and continued to try to weaken the Protocol's definition of trafficking, through misinterpretation and/or misrepresentation. By focusing on parts and not all of the Protocol's definition, they refuse to focus on the fact that the Protocol's definition explicitly states that trafficking can occur with or without the individual's consent, preferring instead to focus on solely trafficking occurring through force/coercion (Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2002; UNODC, 2014).

2.1.4   Challenges of Identification/Interpretation of the Trafficking Definition

The Poppy Project's (2008) report on trafficked women in the United Kingdom has shown the problems associated with trafficked women being identified as illegal migrants. Equally highlighted were the challenges of moving away from a narrower definition of trafficking, focused solely on the use of force or coercion, to implementing the Protocol's broader definition of trafficking, which makes clear that only one of the means in the elements of trafficking is needed for trafficking to have taken place (Hoyles et al, 2011). According to the report, 63% of the women who were involved in the sex industry reported encountering hostility from police/immigration services and being treated like criminals. Women stated that during a police raid of the establishments where they worked, the police/immigration services showed an interest only in their immigration status and not in their welfare. Some of the women were arrested and deported, while others who were detained and awaited deportation were later categorised as trafficked women by an advocacy organisation (Bindel and Atkins, 2008). Too often, authorities are misidentifying or misclassifying victims as criminals or illegal migrants, leading to individuals being wrongfully subjected to more trauma, including arrest, prosecution and deportation (US Department of States, 2013). Denying victims the right to protection and access to services from the state plays into the narratives of the traffickers, who are known to threaten their victims by telling them that they will be deported or imprisoned if they go to the authorities for help. There are cases confirming that government officials sometimes come in contact with victims of trafficking without recognising the characteristics of the offence (US Department of States, 2013).

The misrepresentation/misinterpretation of the Protocol's definition of trafficking was also evident in the report released by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (2002) on the principles and guidelines in relation to human rights and trafficking in people, where the Commissioner, Mary Robinson, extensively discussed the Protocol's definition without once mentioning consent. (UNCHR, 2002). Furthermore, the Commissioner had strongly opposed the definition of trafficking that viewed the consent of women in the sex trade as relevant. Bearing in mind that consent was the most controversial aspect of the Protocol's definition for the international community, it is difficult to be certain if the misrepresentation was a mere omission, a reflection of the Commissioner's views, or simply a reflection of the fact that the Protocol's definition of trafficking was not accepted in its entirety. There is a need for concerted efforts at all levels to ensure the Protocol's definition of trafficking, adopted by the international community, is fully implemented by all stakeholders and not by just some, either through national or regional legislatures and policies. Otherwise one must wonder what hope there is in the fight against trafficking in person if the internationally adopted definition is not fully accepted internationally. There is the implicit danger that the perpetrators of sex trafficking and other forms of trafficking will continue to operate with impunity because of the weaknesses associated with the move from the Protocol's definition of trafficking to the operationalization of that definition.

2.2   Sex Trafficking

It is worth noting that no definition of sex trafficking was specifically put forward at the Palermo Conference. The definition of trafficking that was adopted, however, captures elements that must be present for trafficking of any form, including sex trafficking, to have occurred. The implication is that sex trafficking can be viewed as a subset of the

broader phenomenon of trafficking, involving almost exclusively women and children for the purposes of prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation, including pornography, military prostitution, stripping, sexual tourism, live sex shows and exotic dancing (Davy, 2014 and Deshpande and Noour, 2013).

In the U.S., the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (2000) defines the severe form of trafficking in person as:

a. Sex trafficking, in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18years of age or

b. The recruitment, harbouring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labour or service, the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery (US Department of State 2000 p.5)

Crawford (2017) defines sex trafficking as when a victim (female/male/minor) is sexually exploited in adult entertainment or the commercial sex industry for personal or commercial gain, usually through the use of deception or coercion. She further stresses the importance of understanding that sex trafficking also occurs in non-commercial environments; for example, a young Thai girl who willingly migrates to work in a rich Saudi home as a low wage maid and finds that her chores include sexual services to the sons of that household has become a sex-trafficked victim in a non-commercial setting (Crim, 2010). Kempadoo et al. (2005) argue that women are trafficked for various purposes, including marriage, prostitution, trade in human organs, domestic work and agricultural/industrial work and that not all victims of trafficking are subjected to sexual exploitation. They stressed, however, the fact that some of the reasons for trafficking such as sex tourism, prostitution, pornography and the marriage market are all marked by

elements of sexual exploitations of women and girls. Even when women are not trafficked for commercial sex, they remain vulnerable to being sexually abused and exploited due to their trafficked state (UNICEF 2003).

2.2.1 The Scope of Sex Trafficking Issues

The relevance of the statistical work can be conceptualised as providing insight into the magnitude of the crime of trafficking in human beings described as the fastest-growing illicit business worth billions of dollars and coming second alongside trafficking in arms and narcotics (Sheinis, 2012). Salt (2000)[2] argued that internationally, reliable data for trafficking in persons remains unavailable and it is has been suggested that the actual figure for victims of sex trafficking is most likely much higher than the estimates given (Miko and Park, 2003). In February 2000, at a hearing before the European Parliament professionals from both the European Police Office (Europol) and the International Criminal Police Organisation (Interpol), who are both responsible for preventing and combating international crimes, agreed that sex trafficking remains a growing phenomenon because of difficulties associated with data collection (Kenety 2000, cited in Aronowitz, 2001). Scholars maintain that the clandestine nature of sex trafficking makes the accurate gathering of statistics problematic (Aronowitz, 2010), which is evident in the numerous estimates that have been put forward from various quarters over the past 20 years. In addition to the clandestine nature of trafficking, the definitional and methodological problems in the research on the topic make gathering statistics on the number of trafficked individuals difficult. For example, the United States government

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[2] European Parliament is the institution responsible for EU statse's legislative framework, budgetary power and monitoring of democratic process

puts the annual estimate of people trafficked across national borders at about 800,000 (TIPS 2007). This estimate was criticised as excluding those trafficked within the borders and being based on references to weak methodologies (Anderson and Andrijasevic, 2008). Earlier estimates provided by both the U.S. Department of State and by Kevin Bales, a sociology professor and an expert on modern-day slavery, suggest the total number of people trafficked globally, especially for commercial sex, could be as high as 27 million (Bales, 2004), further underlining the complexity and scale of the sex industry. In 2005, the International Labour Organisation puts the estimated minimum number of people being trafficked at any given time at 2.45 million and claims that 43% of this estimated number were involved in commercial sex trafficking, with figures of 32% and 25% for economic exploitation and undetermined reasons, respectively. Other statistical sources have highlighted the gendered nature of the crime with the US Government for example indicating that of the 600,000 to 800,000 people trafficked across international borders annually, 80% were women and girls while 50% were minors (US, 2005). UNICEF's report collaborates with the US government's findings on both the prevalence of and overrepresentation of females being trafficked for sexual exploitation with its claim that approximately 10 million children, mostly female, have been victims of numerous forms of sexual exploitation worldwide and further claims that an additional million children enter the commercial sex trade annually (UNICEF, 2009).

Over time data gathering bodies have become more experienced, therefore, the more recent statistics may be a more accurate indication of the current trend. In 2012, the ILO conducted a wide-scale data-gathering activity at a global level and found that 20.9 million are being trafficked globally and that 56% of the people being exploited are female. Related research carried out by the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime

(UNODC, 2012), which collected information from 136 nationalities in 118 countries between the years 2007 and 2010, claims almost 60% of identified trafficking cases involve women. When put together, women and girls collectively accounted for 75% of all trafficking cases, while men and boys constituted 14-18 % and 8-10% respectively. Trafficking for sexual exploitation accounts for 58% of all the cases of trafficking, making it the dominant form of human trafficking, but the report warns that there are no accurate statistics regarding the number of victims trafficked and that trafficking in humans, especially for sexual exploitation, remains a global problem (UNODC, 2012). A recent European Commission (2020) report on human trafficking in the European Union from 2017 to 2018 also revealed the high proportion of women and girls among the victims of this crime. According to the report, 72% of all trafficked victims were women and they also continue to be the majority of those trafficked for sexual exploitation at over 60%.

2.2.2   The Profile of Trafficking Victims

Existing literature (Aronowitz, 2009; Bekteshi et al., 2012) maintains that trafficking knows no boundaries and it is often the most vulnerable in society, characterised by poor education, low income, difficult living conditions and lack of employment opportunities, who are the ones that fall prey to sex trafficking. Aronowitz (2009) admits that this may be at odds with contrary data indicating that those trafficked are not necessarily the most socially deprived in society, but other research has identified many of the victims of sex trafficking as coming from countries listed among the most poverty-stricken nations in the world (Omelaniuk, 2005). Further studies show that almost all of the source/transit countries (countries from which sex trafficked victims originate) are also on the list of countries with a medium/low human development index (UNDP, 2015). The debate on sex trafficking continues to focus on women and children because these categories jointly make up over 80% of those trafficked

for sexual exploitation worldwide (European Commission, 2020; Cho, Dreher and Neumayer, 2013; United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, 2009; Abramson, 2003), particularly young girls, often from poor and under-developed nations (Fowler et al. 2010). This is not to imply that men and boys are not trafficked for sexual exploitation, as a substantial percentage of trafficked victims are boys and men (US Department of States, 2013). However, as Vijeyarasa (2013, p.1024) notes, "trafficking is gendered".

2.2.3   The Profile of Traffickers/Exploiters

The phenomenon of trafficking is complex and complicated, to understand it better means examining the perpetrators that engage in the trafficking of vulnerable people (Okeke, Duffy and McElvaney, 2020). McBane (2014) posits that both traffickers and victims are part of the vast web of sex trafficking. Traffickers generally do not fit into a particular stereotype but represent every racial, social and ethnic group. While some traffickers are part of local gangs, others are either part of a larger criminal network or not affiliated with any group. Criminal activities, particularly violent crimes, are often dominated by men and as such it might be assumed that trafficking in persons – where threat and violence are important for the smooth running of the business – will be dominated by men. However, data from 46 countries on the gender of individuals convicted of trafficking in person shows that women play a vital role in the crime of trafficking in persons. Subsequent data from over 50 countries, gathered between 2007 and 2010 by the UNODC (2012), revealed that two-thirds of all those prosecuted and convicted for the crime of trafficking were men, with women constituting 30% of

convicted offenders for the same crime. Central Asia and Eastern Europe, at over 50%,

have an exceptionally high rate of women convicted of trafficking offences. Furthermore, the UNODC (2012) study found that women were more exposed to the risk of being caught and prosecuted, because of the duties associated with the low-ranking positions they occupy in the criminal networks involved in trafficking in persons.

The UNODC study also demonstrated that a large proportion of those convicted were local citizens of the prosecuting country, often involved in both international and domestic trafficking schemes, which suggests that foreign criminal networks use locals to acquire victims for trafficking. This stands to reason, since local connections are needed to win the trust of potential victims, control those victims and intimidate family members of victims who resist (UNODC, 2009). More recent data from the UNODC (2014) suggests that when divided into destination and origin countries, both foreigners and locals are convicted at 58% and 42% respectively in destination countries, while those convicted in origin countries are almost all nationals of the country at 95%.

2.2.4 Sex Trafficking as a High Profit, Low-Risk Enterprise

The growth level in trafficking continues to be linked to trafficking becoming a major source of income for organised criminal networks, with very high profits and low risk. Trafficking for sexual exploitation is estimated to have generated 5-7 billion U.S. dollars in 1993 (Aronowitz, 2009; Pratt , 2004; Fitzgibbon, 2003; Phininy, 2002). In 2003 the

U.S. government estimated the annual profit generated by sex trafficking at 9.5 billion

U.S. dollars (US Immigration, cited in Zhang, 2009). By 2005, the estimate for profits made worldwide from the sexual exploitation of women and children was as high as $27.8 billion, with an average annual turnover estimated at $100,000 per annum per victim (Belser, 2005). Meanwhile, a report from the ILO (2012) asserts that between 2005 and

2009, the annual profit in trafficking for commercial sex and some other forms of exploitation was about $32 billion, making it the third largest profit from illicit activities, behind drug trafficking and arms dealing (UNODC, 2008). The substantial profits and low risk of detection involved in the business of trafficking have made it very attractive for criminal gangs that had been involved in trafficking in other commodities, as well as to new gangs that have recently developed. Criminal gangs have been able to develop high-level expertise by engaging the services of highly-paid facilitators in industrialised countries. The huge money paid out to facilitators is made possible by the vast profits involved in the trafficking business (Shelley, 2003).

Pratt (2004) had argued that with so much money to be made through the trafficking of women and no serious criminal penalties involved with the arrest of traffickers, as well as law enforcement officials allegedly turning a blind eye to the plight of victims of trafficking, it is no wonder that trafficking continues to grow. He posits that it is discouraging to see that despite the large scale of trafficking worldwide, the level of corruption involved in the business ensures that conviction levels remain at one in every ten criminals prosecuted for trafficking. Corruption remains one of the key reasons why sex trafficking is a low-risk, high-profit business. Through the collusion and complicity of criminal gangs with corrupt officials (Holmes, 2009), corruption supplies the leverage needed for trafficking to be as prevalent and widespread as it is (Tremblay, 2010). This allows the operations of the traffickers to remain 'under the radar' and undisturbed, avoiding the risk of being arrested and convicted of the crime of trafficking and thereby ensuring the revictimization of the victim (OECD, 2016). Tranparency International (2011) had earlier noted that the implicit danger in the correlation between sex trafficking and corruption is that it not only facilitates trafficking but also weakens a nation's rule of

law and destabilises economies through payoffs given to government officials, including judges and police, at all levels (www.transparency.org, 2011).

Research carried out in Brazil using a multi-modal approach, including an online survey of various government stakeholders including police officials and the Parliamentary Commissioners of Inquiry has highlighted the correlation between trafficking and corruption, in particular the corruption of government officials (Cirineo and Studnicka, 2010). Furthermore, the findings suggest not just a strong link between trafficking and corruption, but also that trafficking is dependent on government corruption, with 71% of all trafficking cases in Brazil being linked to official corruption. It also revealed that the involvement of these corrupt officials allows traffickers to operate with impunity, knowing that they can make large profits from their illicit business and that even if they are prosecuted, this will not necessarily mean a conviction, and a conviction will not necessarily mean they will be formally sentenced (Cirineo and Studnicka, 2010). Addressing trafficking for sexual exploitation requires a re-evaluation of institutional gaps such as appropriate and adequate protection for witnesses and the low risk of arrest/prosecution that allows perpetrators to go unpunished. Otherwise, traffickers will continue to traffic with impunity. The UNODC (2012) report attests to the depth of the institutional gaps and the impunity with which traffickers operate. The report suggested that in over 132 countries covered in the report, involving trafficking between the years 2007 and 2010, convictions were very low and in 16% of these countries, not a single conviction was recorded 2007 and 2010.

2.2.5 Benefactors of Sex Trafficking Enterprise

While the role of criminal gangs in the development and organising of trafficking of women for sexual exploitation is undeniable, critical attention has yet to be paid to the role the state has played in the development and sustaining of sex trafficking. Richards (2003) notes that it is almost impossible to avoid the economic imperative of trafficking for sexual purposes since businesses such as the airline industry, hotel chains and tourism industry all make huge profits from the sex industry. Combating trafficking for sexual exploitation would continue to present a big challenge, as it is not just the criminal gang networks that depend on the huge profits made from the sex industry, but also state governments relying on the revenue that is generated through the sex industry. For example, a report from the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 1998) estimated that the economic activities of the sex industry represented between 2% and 14% of GDP in Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia.

In 1999 the Dutch government legalised prostitution. The rationale behind that decision, according to the government, was to take the sex trade out of the hands of organised criminal gangs. The government maintained that by controlling the sex trade, the activities of the criminal gangs operating in that trade could be curbed. It equally allowed the government, rather than criminal gangs or traffickers, to make huge profits (or revenue) through the regularisation of the sex industry (Outshoorn, 2012). The Dutch government gave no specifics on how regulating the trade would reduce sex trafficking, since it would be difficult to differentiate women who were there willingly from those who were there against their will. Moreover, no evidence was presented to support the rationale that regulating the sex trade would eventually lead to a reduction in the sexual

exploitation of women and girls. By 2008, the Dutch police estimated that 50%-90% of

the women working in Amsterdam's brothels were victims of sex trafficking (Dutch National Police Service, 2008) and that sex trafficking had increased greatly, compared to the figure of sex-trafficked women identified in 1994 by the Dutch Non-governmental organisation, Foundation against trafficking in women (STV).

What cannot be denied is the fact that the legalization of prostitution brought in revenue for the Dutch government. Dutch law stipulated that women working in the sex industry should charge 19% sales tax per transaction and that profits made by the women, after expenses, were to be taxed at 33% for those making less than €18,000 annually and 52% for women whose profits exceeded €54,000 per year (Columbia Broadcasting Systems, NEWS 2011). Despite claims by the Dutch government wanting to protect and empower women in the sex industry, the legalisation failed to empower women but rather resulted in trafficked women being sold as commodities for the tourist industry. The argument concerning the sex trade's potential contribution to a country's revenue is persistently used by advocates of the legalisation of the sex trade, who maintain that prostitution can add billions to an economy without considering its impact on the women in the sex trade (Alderman, 2014).

Nevertheless, there is the embarrassment caused to the Canadian government by the facilitating role, it plays in the exploitation of migrant women in the sex trade through its exotic dancers' visas and the established link to trafficking in women (Macklin, 2003). Jeffrey (2009) documents at length how, until 2004, the Canadian government was complicit in the trafficking of women by acting as a procurer, importing women of foreign nationalities into Canadian strip clubs through the issuing of about 400 to 500 exotic dancer visas by the State to women from Eastern Europe yearly. To qualify for
these visas, women had to provide immigration officials with 'soft porn' pictures of

themselves as proof that they were strippers. Jeffrey further argued that this was made possible as a result of the influence and power of strip club owners within the national economy, which had made them almost untouchable. Although more recently, as part of its effort to crack down on the trafficking of human beings, the Canadian government announced that it was introducing measures to reduce the number of foreign strippers entering the country to work (Singer, 2019).

2.3   Elements of Sex Trafficking

Traffickers rely on desperate economic vulnerability to lure women into being trafficked. Often the women trafficked are given assurances that procuring the necessary travel documents and money for them to get to their destinations is not a problem and that there are well-paying jobs waiting for them on the other side, but unknown to the women, they are accumulating huge debt *en route* to their destinations (Jones et al., 2011).

2.3.1 Recruitment

There are various ways through which trafficked victims are brought into the sex trade and trapped in sexual exploitation. They include:

Recruitment by former sex trafficked victims: Former sex trafficked victims are given large sums of money and promised a certain percentage for each new girl they can recruit. Being well dressed and apparently with a lot of money makes it easier for these sex trafficked victims to convince their targets to come with them (Demir, 2010). Alternatively, trafficked victims who have been trapped in the sex trade for years get the opportunity to avoid unwanted sex or return home on the basis that they recruit new victims, often from among their own communities or ethnic group (United States Department of State 2005a cited in Jones et al., 2011).

Deceit: This takes various forms, but the most common is the promise of an income-generating opportunity such as a high-paying job offer. In this situation, traffickers take full advantage of women's vulnerable economic conditions (Di Tommaso et al. 2009; Vindhya and Dev 2011). This recruitment method sometimes occurs through a newspaper advertisement, the internet or TV (Hughes 2000) and could involve a stranger, a family member or a friend (Di Tommaso et al 2009). Sometimes women accept the job offers with the knowledge that they would have to perform sexual services. What they are often in the dark about is the exploitative working conditions and how the profits will be shared, because unknown to them they had already incurred debt *en route* to their destination and are told after they have arrived that they are in debt and that they will have to start repaying it immediately (Jones et al. 2011).

Romance or Seduction: Trafficked women are sometimes acquired through the promise of false romance and love. Traffickers gain the woman's trust and can control her by offering marriage or becoming her boyfriend (Deshpanda and Nour, 2013). Violence and intimidation are often used as a means of exerting power and control over the woman, introduced after they have travelled abroad with the supposed boyfriend or husband (Surtees 2008).

Sale by Family Member: There is evidence to suggest that extreme economic hardship and desperation sometimes mean families are forced to sell a child to traffickers for continued survival (Gjermeni et al., 2008). Such sales often involve the promise of a monthly remittance from the traffickers for the work their child would be doing. For example, a study carried out in Albania on child trafficking

suggests that as many as 90% of families not only give their consent for their girls to be taken by traffickers but also enter into agreements with the traffickers regarding what the girl child is worth (Demir, 2010).

Abduction: Abduction is not a method frequently used by traffickers, because of the challenges involved with transporting the abducted victim, who would most likely be looking for an opportunity to escape. However, traffickers still use abduction on occasion (Kara 2009). With abducted victims, drugs or severe beatings are used for the journey's duration to keep them quiet and less troublesome (Orlinsky, 2013).

2.3.2 Movement

The international movement of sex trafficked victims usually involves movement from developing nations into richer countries (Deshpande and Nour, 2013). After the victims are recruited trafficking may take place either across or within national borders through various means, with victims transported to their destination through transit countries or directly. Traffickers sometimes favour particular transit countries over others due either to the harsh or flexible border control policies in place (Demir, 2010). Trafficked women are always accompanied by an escort, who prepares them extensively on how to mislead border and immigration officials, as well as ensuring that women follow the instructions given to them (Jones, 2009). Routes used by traffickers in East Asia primarily start from countries such as Burma, Laos, and Cambodia in the less developed region of Mekong into Thailand's sex industry, as well as into Malaysia, Japan, China, Western Europe, Australia and the Middle East (Miko and Park, 2003). In South Asia, the routes used for the movement of trafficked victims start from Bangladesh, the Philippines and Nepal,

three of the poorest nations in the region, into Indian and Pakistani brothels, from where their journey sometimes continues to Europe and the Middle East (Raymond and Hynes, 2000). Japan, however, remains the largest market for Asian women trafficked into the sex industry, with sex tourism being the major contributing factor in the prevalence and growth of sex trafficking in the region (ILO, 2004). In Africa, victims from other regions of Africa are trafficked into West Africa, particularly Nigeria, from where they are moved to Europe and the Middle East (UNICEF, 2005). Women from Eastern Europe, particularly Russia and Bulgaria, as well as Chinese and Thai women are also trafficked to Southern Africa for sexual exploitation (Fitzgibbon, 2010)

Expansion of the European Union has facilitated the ease with which women being trafficked are moved across borders especially from East European and the former Soviet Union countries of Ukraine and Russia into countries such as Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, Italy and France in Western Europe (Miko and Park, 2003). European Union (EU) victims are trafficked with their own travel documents, thereby removing the risk of detection, and at the same time saving the trafficker the cost of obtaining the fraudulent document (Europol, 2016). Traffickers bring in their non-EU victims via countries such as Italy, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Spain, before they are sent off to other EU countries because these particular countries are situated at the borders of the EU, while Austria's central geographic location makes it a good transit point for victims from Eastern and Central Europe before they are moved to other locations within the EU (Europol, 2016). Traffickers continue to use Europe's major airports as entry hubs for victims originating from Africa, Asia and America, choosing airports they perceive as having less immigration/customs control. When that route becomes difficult to use due,

perhaps, to increased immigration/customs controls, the traffickers simply switch to another route (Europol, 2016; Miko and Park, 2003).

In certain cases the same country is used as a country of origin, transit and destination, when trafficking takes place within national borders and victims are transported either via plane, car, train, ferry, bus and raft (Kara, 2009). Sometimes the victims are marched on foot over mountains and deserts, and on other occasions, they are moved to temporary locations, in villages or urban centres.

2.3.3 Experiences /Exploitation of Trafficked Women

The exploitation of trafficked women and children usually starts the moment they are acquired (Europol, 2016). During transportation or while being kept in a temporary location, sex-trafficked women and girls are beaten, drugged, gang-raped (vaginally and anally) by their traffickers, tortured, secluded, starved and humiliated (Hodge and Lietz, 2007) as a means of exacting control, but more importantly to break them. Accordingly, both Kaye (2003) and Jones et al (2011) maintain that breaking the spirit of trafficked women is an important aspect of the process of trafficking for sexual exploitation, as this makes the women more submissive to instructions given to them regarding the services they have to offer clients upon sale to the brothel owners or whoever buys them. It also ensures they do not misbehave nor attempt to escape while *en route*, and as soon as they get to the trafficking destination passports and travel documents are seized. Sex trafficked victims suffer various kinds of abuse, including the threat of murder and actual murder if they are not compliant with the demands of the traffickers or the client.

Some scholars (Acharya, 2010; Zimmerman et al., 2008;Fergus, 2005;) have documented at length the severity of the exploitation to which trafficked women are exposed. In the

research carried out on women and girls who have been trafficked for sexual purposes by Zimmerman et al. (2008), 192 women aged 15 years and above were interviewed in 7 countries within Europe. They found over 59% of these women reported both sexual and physical violence from their traffickers before being trafficked and 95% reported various types of violence and abuse while being trafficked, including threats to other members of their families. Acharya's (2010) study of sex trafficking in Mexico, using the snowball method to carry out 13 in-depth and semi-structured interviews, found that of the 60 women interviewed, almost all reported some form of intense physical and psychological abuse. 70% of the women reported being beaten with an object, 38% reported that their lives were often threatened if they did not comply with the instructions given to them, and 40% reported unwanted pregnancies and abortions. 10% of the women reported having chilli inserted into their private parts (vagina) to teach them a lesson, while 45% were forced to have sex with more than one client at a time, with some forced to have sex with clients without condoms. One of the women Acharya interviewed summed up the lives of women trafficked for sexual exploitation by stating:

> For us violence is common, it is nothing new, we are habituated on this, here we do not have the right to our body, here we are treated like animal, it is *madrina* (madam) who decide for all for us, when we have to work, with whom we have to work, what to do or not, when we have to eat, sleep … all these depends on her, we do not have right to tell a 'no', if we do not follow her words she just uses her power in many ways, for her our life is nothing, in this place her dog has more respect than us (Acharya, 2010 p. 31).

Sex trafficked victims have no control over their lives as their pimp, trafficker or the brothel owner to whom they have to repay the debt may decide to resell them, at which stage the trafficked individual's debt starts all over again while the trafficker makes more money from the sale of his or her victim (Hughes, 2000).

2.3.4 Venues for Sexual Exploitation

According to Kara's (2009) study of the sex industry in India, there are six types of venues where women are sexually exploited in the sex industry in India. While these venues-apartments, clubs, massage parlours, brothels, hotels and streets are all venues where trafficked women are exploited worldwide, individual countries and regions have particular venues specific to them. In the United States, it is mainly clubs and brothels; massage parlours and red-light districts are also found in these parts of the world. Massage parlours are sometimes used as a cover for the actual exploitation of women and girls in such establishments. Street and hotel prostitution are not popular in the West because traffickers prefer an environment that is secure and where it is easy for them to control their victims without interference from the outside world. Across South and East Asia all the other types of venues, except for the street, are used as places for the sexual exploitation of women and girls. As in Europe, the traffickers want to be able to monitor and control their victims, which is difficult if the girls and woman are allowed to have uncontrolled contact with the public (Kara, 2009).

2.4 Economic Globalisation and Neoliberal Policies

Various factors have been identified both at the macro-and microeconomic level to explain the rise and prevalence of sexual exploitation of women and children. However, the role that globalisation of the marketplace, with its neoliberal policies, plays in this phenomenon cannot be overemphasised, as it directly or indirectly exacerbates other factors, thereby aggravating the vulnerability of already underprivileged and marginalized people and exposing them to varieties of harm (Kempadoo et al. 2005). Globalisation is defined as

> Involving economic integration, the transfer of policies across borders, the transmission of knowledge, cultural stability, the production, relation and discourse of power. It is a global process, a concept, a revolution, and an establishment of the global market free from socio-political control (Al Rodhan and Stroudmann 2006, p.3).

Other scholars (Jones, 2010; Held and Grew, 2007; Yeates, 2001) have all defined globalisation in various forms, including it being the growth in society's cultural, economic and social interconnectedness and interrelatedness that transcends state boundaries and the strengthening of social interaction and relations. Held and McGrew (2000) had argued that globalisation brought with it a new social architecture, which has divided humanity into the elite, the impoverished and the marginalised. The new social architecture has cut across cultural boundaries and territories, rearranging the world into the winners and losers from globalisation (through its transfer of raw materials, wealth and assets from developing countries into already industrialised nations), expressed among other things through organised transnational crimes. Thus trafficking of women is just one of the symptoms of globalisation's inequalities. Globalisation describes a structural move from the world of separate interdependent states to the world as a communal universe (Held & McGrew, 2007). Under globalisation, restrictions on economic and political space are no longer defined by national boundaries (ibid.).

Other scholars (Marshall, 2001; Miko and Park, 2003; Samarasinghe, 2003; Roby 2005) have argued that while trafficking is not a new phenomenon, the context of economic globalisation, has remained the key to the expansion of trafficking. Prior to globalisation, it was contained within countries' borders, or at most may have involved crossing into neighbouring countries. Economic globalisation became the catalyst that caused the explosion in trafficking for exploitation, against a complex web of race, gender and class disparities, and neoliberal policies, suggesting that the latter led to increased

unemployment, low wages, urbanisation, and migration, leaving the most vulnerable groups (children and women) at a disadvantage and commodified. This vulnerable group became important sources of revenue for both criminal gangs and the governments, their bodies used to generate money through trafficking both within and across the borders (Abu-Ali and Al-Bahar 2011).

2.4.1 The Impact of International Monetary Fund (IMF) /World Bank Economic Policies on Developing Nations

Campani (2009) claimed that economic globalisation symbolised the end of national development for countries that were in the development phase and had a negative impact on the quality of life of the ordinary people in those countries. This is more visible in Third World countries, due primarily to the stringent economic structural adjustment policies (SAP) introduced by both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), two of the main international financial institutions that facilitate economic globalisation through the lending of funds and giving of aid to other governments (Bird and Rowlands, 2000). This is contrary to popular claims of globalisation being able to increase the size of government, through safety nets such as public employment provided by the state to its citizens, especially in developing countries where economies are exposed to other international economic forces (Potrafke, 2015). This proved not to be the case for most developing nations when their economies were exposed to a transition towards an open market economy by structural adjustment programmes. In fact, evidence suggests that with the removal of government subsidies, the IMF's neoliberal policies seriously affected the industrial sector in Moldova. A major employer of women at 85%, the government had to lay off people as a result of the closure of many enterprises that

could not compete with cheap imported products (Tavcer, 2006).

According to Nissanke and Thorbecke (2006), some of the major austerity measures imposed by both the IMF and World Bank on developing nations, in their efforts to ensure these countries moved toward the market economy and outward orientation, included trade liberalisation, whereby the local market was opened up to both financial and commercial influences and interests and enforced programmes of privatisation, which allowed for public enterprises to be sold to the private sector (Lopes, 1999). In addition, they also advocated that the prices of commodities, goods and services no longer be dictated by a central authority but by market forces (Moore et al., 2011). This was aimed at cutting down on government expenditure, such as education, health and other services and bringing a huge increase in interest rates. The reasoning behind this austerity measure, according to both of these financial institutions, is to attract foreign investors, encourage the flow of wealth and economic prosperity for all, as well as to increase competition and productivity through conversion to the free market (Birol, 2012).

However, Guttal (2007) notes that these IMF policies did not bring the promised economic growth, but rather led to economic stagnation and an unprecedented increase in poverty levels through unemployment and job losses, economic vulnerability and billions of dollars in assets and capital being transferred out of developing nations into Western economies. Scholars such as Sanghera (1997) and Augustin (2006), have also been critical of some of the aspects of development that globalisation brings, whereby the rich industrialised nations not only get richer through free trade but also impose 'aid' and their perception of 'progress' on developing countries It is not surprising, then, that O'Brien stated that:

> Globalisation's effect on economies and the environment has created a supply
> of women and children to be trafficked and an easy movement of people by
> traffickers, who benefit from corrupt authorities. While the feminization of

poverty and gender-based violence exists worldwide, environmental injustice and unfair economic policies disproportionately harm poor women and girls in developing nations. A system favouring developed nations in the name of globalisation, which promotes free trade, contributes to global sex trafficking by increasing economic inequality and disadvantaging the poorest of the poor (O'Brien, 2009, p.8).

Arguably, this was not globalisation the way it was expected to be and these economic policy conditions, in turn, created inequality in the distribution of income at the international level between the affluent and developing countries, as well as an increase in unemployment, marginalisation of the poor and a fractured working class at the national level in developing economies, thus revealing the IMF/World Bank policies to be questionable political doctrines (Hartzell et al., 2010). With the populations of these countries losing confidence in the future of their nations and becoming desperate, migrating to wealthier countries of the North became a much more interesting prospect (Miko and Park, 2003). The question is, however, whether the IMF could have done it differently. That is, could they have given loans without the stringent conditionality that has been blamed for the total collapse of some countries?

Pfeifer (1999) examined four countries (Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, and Jordan) identified by the IMF's data from the year 1980 to 1996, that were successful in their structural adjustment programmes. She noted that while there was a slight improvement in foreign direct investment in Morocco and Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan were not so fortunate and, while these countries were all commended for strictly adhering to the conditionality given to them and signing trade agreements with the E.U, there was, in reality, no registered growth in export goods and services. Pfeifer argued further that subsidies for basic commodities like food were withdrawn, leaving low-income families worse off than before this conditionality was introduced. Nonetheless, the IMF continues to defend its

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position, blaming the failures of the policies on the developing economies' inability to adhere to the conditions imposed on them (Pfeifer, 1999). The IMF further highlights the fact that there has been a significant shift in its response to criticism of these conditions, since the IMF/World Bank's goal is the long-term promotion of growth, stressing that education and health spending has increased in some cases, especially in non-transitional economies (Guitian, 1999).

It is a fact, however, that the IMF/World Bank allow non-transitioning countries to increase spending on education and health services, while countries in a transitional phase are not given such consideration. The latter countries tend to have a steady migration of women who often end up being trafficked for sexual exploitation, as a result of IMF/World Bank economic policies that have reduced the standard of living for their citizens. This reaffirms the argument that globalisation's effect on economies, mostly as a result of neoliberal economic policies of the IMF and World Bank, which pressured developing nations into an open market economy, has created an environment that marginalises the disadvantaged and devalues certain groups. As Robinson (2002) rightly stated, trafficking does not take place in a vacuum, but what has been extensively proven is that, irrespective of the community, countries or regions where research has been conducted, it happens as a result of the intersection of several variables, with some of these factors being more relevant than others in facilitating and sustaining trafficking.

Neoliberal theorists such as Wade (2004) and Edward (2006, cited in Gamage, 2015) have challenged the argument that globalisation created losers and winners, instead maintaining that the process of globalisation has benefitted all and that even though the rich benefitted the most from the economic growth that came with globalisation, the poor also benefitted from that growth. They have argued not only that the hierarchy between

the North-South periphery is being compressed but that for the past two decades the distribution of income has become more equal, with a drastic fall in the number of people living in extreme poverty. All this progress, they maintain, is as a result of the integration of global economies (Wade, 2004). Escobar (1996) also argued that development means different things for different cultures and that those women who are being trafficked for sexual exploitation are beneficial to the development of their countries of origin, irrespective of whether they are being trafficked into debt bondage, since their monetary remittances assist the governments of their countries of origin in servicing their national debts. Augustine (2006) argues that aside from being used for necessities, the money remitted to their countries of origin by trafficked women is accepted and used in financing vital development projects in the community, yet the women themselves continue to be stigmatised and marginalised when they eventually return home. It is important to acknowledge that this concept of development fails to consider the economic cost to the state in reintegrating women who have been trafficked, when they are no longer useful to the sex industry. It also fails to consider the cost of treating the women, if they return home with sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV or AIDS, for any development strategy that puts the lives and the mental and physical well-being of women and children at risk cannot be sustainable in the long run. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2010) argued that globalisation not only stimulated technology and labour transfer but also liberalised the air market and facilitate a greater division of labour. Globalisation results in the demand for greater mobility and access. Air transport has played a role in fostering globalisation by responding to changes in demand for various services. This has led to customers demanding higher-quality, reliable and faster international transportation for goods and services. This has led to major structural changes within the aviation sector that

continues to shape and reshape itself to meet the demands of both social and economic integration resulting in approximately 40% of world trade being moved by air The media play a core role in enhancing globalisation through various flows of information. images, and film, thus facilitating cultural exchange, international news broadcasts and new technologies (Matos. 2012).   However, the focus has remained on economic globalisation because theoretically, it boosts the output of economies; raises household income and by extension standard of living; reduces high inflation rates; creates new economic opportunities for labour; reduces gender-wage discrimination and gives new opportunities to women (Erixon, 2018). This may have been the reality for the developed world however, for developing countries, globalisation and forced liberalisation did not fuel economic progress or deliver the promised economic growth, rather it made living conditions worsened and increased instability (Loh Rahim et al., 2014).

Globalisation undoubtedly made it easier to acquire, transport and exploit trafficked individuals, through the easier dissemination of information, with the increased changes in technology and communication globally (Campani, 2009).   It further influences an individual's view of life options by making available information on social standards and living conditions across other nations (Beneria et al., 2012). Furthermore, the cost of acquisition of victims became very low because there are thousands of disenfranchised,

poor and vulnerable people desperate to improve the quality of their lives. The vulnerability of these individuals, caused by factors such as civil unrest, natural disaster and internal armed conflict, which put them in a position of being vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking in the first place, was also exacerbated by globalisation. That is not to say that globalisation was the only push factor that created the need for women to migrate in search of better lives for their families and themselves, as depending on the country or region under study, one

will find an intersection of various factors. However, some of these variables are more relevant to the trafficking and sexual exploitation of women than others, and they will be explored in the next chapter.

Table 2:   Macro and Micro Factors of Sex Trafficking by Regions.

Macro Factors Influencing Sex Trafficking	Region	Micro Factors Influencing Sex Trafficking
- Globalisation - Poverty - Corruption - Unemployment - Illiteracy - Gender Inequality - Open border - Demand - Displacement (War) - Migration	AFRICA	- Placement system - Breakdown of family structure - Death of parents - Greed
- Poverty - Globalisation - Unemployment - Sex Tourism - Militarisation - Gender Inequality - Corruption - Demand	SOUTH ASIA	- Caste system - Debt - Birth order - Drug abuse by parent - Family pressure
- Globalisation - Poverty - Unemployment - Ethnicity - Displacement - Corruption - Gender Inequality - Migration	SOUTH AMERICA	- History of sexual assault - Breakdown of family structure - Poor self-esteem - Drug use by parent - Peer pressure - Personal drug use
- Globalisation - Sex Tourism - Poverty - Unemployment - Corruption - Urbanisation - Open borders - Migration - Demand - Gender Inequality - Militarisation - Natural Disaster - Ethnicity - Illiteracy	EAST ASIA	- Debt - Drug abuse by parents - Caste system - Domestic violence

	EUROPE	
• Globalisation		• Low wage
• Open border		• Feeling of abandonment
• End of Cold War		• Breakdown of family structure
• Displacement (War)		• Domestic violence
• Poverty		• Minority group
• Demand		• One parent household
• Technology		
• Corruption		
• Unemployment		
• Gender Inequality		

Table 2 illustrates the macro and micro factors affecting and influencing the sex trafficking of women across regions.[3] Some of the variables identified as affecting and influencing sex trafficking in the various regions of the world do not necessarily come within the ambit of the traditional issues previously interrogated by intersectionality, such as race. However, in exploring these variables through the lens of intersectionality, the belief is that it will add both depth and breadth to the understanding of women who have been sex trafficked.

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[3] **Sources**: Abramson, 2003; Fitzgibbon, 2003; Corrin, 2005; Tavcer, 2006; UNODC, 2008; World Bank, 2009; Bekteshi et al., 2012.

2.5   Theoretical Understandings of Sex Trafficking

2.5.1   Critical Race Theory

One of the dangers of standing at the intersection […] is the likelihood of being run over.

Ann du Cille

Critical Race Theory emerged in the 1960s and 1970s to address not only the gains of civil rights in the United States which had stalled at the time but also as a need for an alternative approach for the new types of colour-blind, institutional and subtle racism that was developing at the time (Delgado and Stefancic, 2007). Although Critical Race Theory has its roots in law, it has since progressed to other fields, particularly within education, mostly among sociologists and psychologists and continues to put race at the centre of the research enterprise by acknowledging the value of 'the black voice' often marginalised and confronting 'race neutrality in policy and practices (Hylton, 2010). Critical Race theorists' core argument is that racism is endemic and rooted in American culture, institutions and the concepts of self and group identity (Lazos Vargas, 2003). Racism continues to exist as part of everyday reality but in more subtle insidious and invisible ways and continues to structure the social, political, economic and ideological levels based on the placement of actors in racial categories (Savas, 2014). Scholars (Degado and Stefancic, 2007; Cabrera, 2018) have mutually argued for some key tenets of critical race theory to be constantly applied in its scholarship including; that racism is not an exception but a normal experience of people of colour, which makes racism difficult to recognise and address. Interest convergence, racism advances both the interest of the white elites and the working class, therefore most of society are not encouraged to

eradicate it. The social construction of race holds that race and races are socially constructed and cannot be essentialised, as they are categories invented by society for particular purposes (Cabrera, 2018). Finally, intersectionality attends to the multiple identities and experiences of subordination of an individual.

Delgado (1989) argued that self-condemnation is one of the contributing factors to the demoralisation of marginalised groups. The stereotypic image that particular members of society have constructed in order to maintain power is internalised by members of minority groups, with the dominant group constantly justifying its power through stories that construct reality in ways that maintain their privilege, thereby rationalising oppression and lack of self-examination of the oppressor. Accordingly, Aguirre (2000) has argued that through the use of its most distinguished feature; storytelling and narrative, Critical Race Theory can give voice to the marginalised minority and their communities. As narratives of the experiences of the marginalised including discrimination, racism, oppression and victimisation that communicate and construct their social realities are often ignored in traditional social sciences (Savas, 2014).

2.5.2 Critical Race Feminism and Human Trafficking

Applying a Critical Race Feminist perspective to the understanding of sex trafficking provides an important dimension to the analysis of this particular cohort of women's experience that is often overlooked. Critical Race Feminism, which is a strand of Critical Race Theory, initially emerged "as a race intervention in feminist discourse" (Wing, 2003, p.7) in interrogating the multiple systems of oppression experienced by women of colour (Wing, 1997). Its feminist lens, which addresses the experiences of women of colour to distinguish it from men of colour, makes critical race feminism a feminist

intervention within critical race theory (Clutterbuck, 2015), as women of colour expressed feelings of marginalisation within both the feminist and critical race theory movement.

Some writers (Clark and Saleh, 2019; Berry, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Wing, 2000) have highlighted the shared assumptions between critical race theory and critical race feminism but pointed out that critical race feminism is centred on the "role, experiences and narratives of women of colour" (Pratt-Clarke, 2010, p.24). They argue that critical race feminism extends the scope of critical race theory by drawing upon both critical race theory and feminism in exploring social phenomena from the viewpoints of groups doubly marginalised by both gender and race and highlight the relevance of multiple and intersectional identities (Childers-Mckee and Hytten, 2015). At various levels, including policy and scholarly discourse, a critical race feminist lens informs our understanding of how a traditional gender discourse on the commercial sex trade has not wholly considered the role of race, structural racism and intersectional oppression that obscure choices for people of colour in America (Nelson-Butler, 2015). Clark and Saleh (2019) argue that critical race feminism's employment of counternarrative as a point of resistance allows for the construction of a narrative that illuminates the voices of women of colour and the impact of the intersections of their multiplicative identities on their experiences.

For example, one of the central debates about black women in the sex trade filters through to the master narrative that propagates the continuous stereotype of the sexually promiscuous black woman, 'Jezebel', a lost woman, a hypersexual animal who is ready for sex at any time with anyone and therefore should be blamed for her victimisation (Page, 2019; Nelson, 1993). Such a narrative infers that black women accept prostitution and sexual abuse. However, the narrative overlooks the arguments that not only was

prostitution imposed on black women from the time of slavery and colonisation when black women were sold and rented for sexual exploitation like a disposable commodities and obscuring choice but also that racism makes black women and girls vulnerable to sexual exploitation both in America and Europe and ensures that they remain trapped there (Parkinson, 2016; Holmes, 2016; Nelson, 1993). Therefore, recognising the multiple vulnerabilities found in the experiences of African women who were sex trafficked is important in this study.

Critical race feminism also rejects the stress on gendered oppression within a patriarchal society without examining the role of racism and classism, arguing that such an approach often presents the experiences of white women as the experience of all women (Clutterbuck, 2015). Hughes (2014, p. 3) argues that female victims are more likely to be recruited outside the EU and transported into the EU. By rejecting the sole emphasis on gendered oppression within a patriarchal system, without exploring the roles of racism and class subordination, critical race feminism ensures that black women are not further disempowered through the theorisation of oppression in an integrative approach.

2.5.3   Kara's Economic Framework of Demand and Supply

In analysing the economics of sex trafficking Siddharth Kara (2009), an expert on contemporary slavery, explained that for market forces to create supply to meet a particular demand, other market forces must have generated the demand for that product in the first place, because the industry needs both forces to exist. Similarly, in an earlier analysis of the sex industry, Kempadoo et al (2005) stated that sex trafficking is a demand-driven phenomenon tied to the diversification and growth of the sex industry and that the drive to increase profit in an economically competitive environment increases the

demand for vulnerable, exploitative and controllable labour, mostly women and children. The Cambridge Dictionary defines demand as "a need for something to be sold or supplied" (https: dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/demand), while Raymond (2004, p. 2), citing an economic definition, states that it is "the desire to possess something with the ability to purchase it". Referencing the Swedish legislature on prostitution, Raymond (2004) asserts that without male demand for commercial sex, the supply of women for this purpose would decrease greatly, as the prostitution market cannot stay in business without male consumers. This implies that traffickers, pimps and recruiters need to see the demand and be assured that there is a profitable business in order to decide whether it is worth their while to continue in the business. Thus, the profit that traffickers make from trafficking their victims must exceed the cost of bringing these victims from the source countries to the destination country (Wheaton et al. 2010).

In his analysis of sex trafficking (represented in Figure 2), Kara noted that sex trafficking has two components, slave trading (supply) and slavery (demand) and that acquisition, movement and exploitation are three major elements that make up these two components. Using the analogy of sex trafficking as a disease that is infecting humanity to illustrate his point, he further stated that to have clarity as to how the business of sex trafficking functions, the molecular anatomy of trafficking for sexual exploitation – acquisition, movement and exploitation – must be understood, since clarity in the *modus operandi* of the industry will also expose the business's vulnerable point, as well as the market forces of demand and the drivers of profit. He further asserts that this will in turn help in finding the best strategies for treating the infection (sex trafficking) to ensure its long-term eradication because the condition in the "host organism", namely economic globalisation

and poverty, that gave rise to the infection in the first place needs to be addressed (Kara, 2009).

Figure 2:   Kara's Anatomy of Sex Trafficking Framework
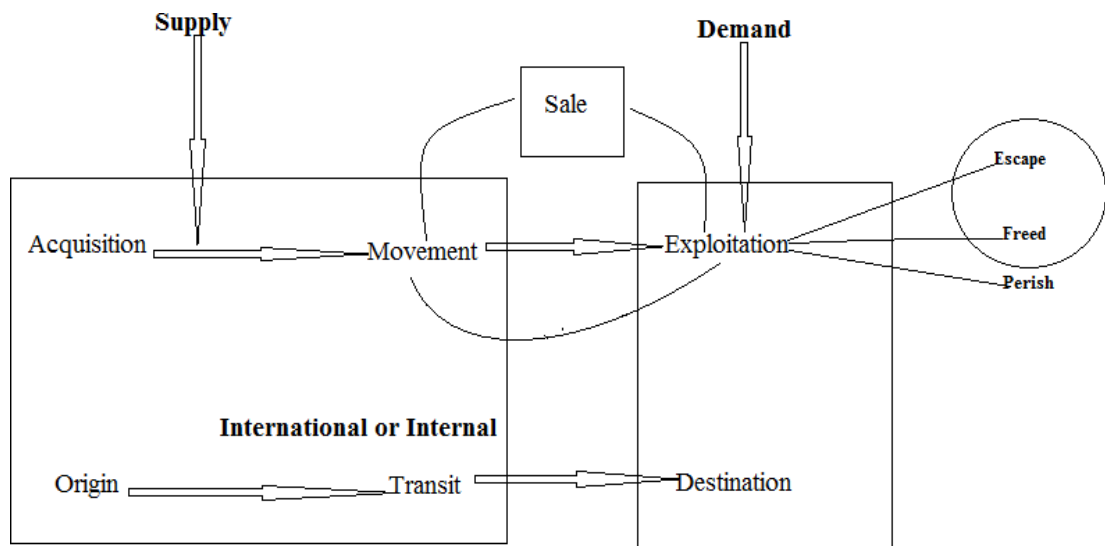
Source: Kara 2009 (Diagram slightly modified to suit project's theme)

Recognising and understanding the demand-and-supply phenomenon that makes the sex industry continue to run smoothly and expand is also vital to combat sex trafficking in humans. The supply of individuals for trafficking, particularly from developing countries, is seen as the function of specific economic conditions in these countries, while the demand for the services they are expected to provide is also seen as a function of certain social and economic processes in the industrialised nations (Taylor and Jamieson, 1999). Scholars continue to disagree over whether the demand for prostitution/sex trafficked women created the need for supply of these women, as claimed in some quarters by popular market theorists (Hughe, 2000; Raymond, 2004; Kara, 2009) or

whether the abundance in supply has generated demand, as is claimed by Aronowitz (2009), who posits that the availability of certain services creates the demand for them. He argues that the market supply of trafficked women as a result of various socioeconomic factors has generated the demand for them and that the exploitation of these women in the demanding country should be blamed on the uneven power relations that occur in patriarchal communities and that the objectification of women for consumption and other factors have disempowered, marginalized and made women and children so vulnerable that they become disposable people who can be exploited in the sex industry (Bale 2012).

2.5.4   Availability of Vulnerable Women From War/Conflict Zones

The idea of market demand creating the need for market supply has been extensively documented by scholars such as Raymond (2004), Kempadoo et al. (2005), Kara (2009) and Cho et al. (2013), but one should not accept this analysis as being conclusive without critically examining the other side of the argument, that often remains unheard. Shelley (2003) acknowledged that the former superpower conflicts have been replaced by regional conflicts in many areas, making women in these areas destitute as well as vulnerable to the manipulations and exploitations of trafficking networks.

One such example is Guatemala, where traffickers are able to manipulate the vulnerability of girls that have been raped during the war, because of the societal stigma of being labelled a rape victim. Such girls see themselves as not being worthy of anything better and become easy targets for traffickers. *The Guardian's* (2014) report on the ongoing Syrian war noted that 11,000 Syrians were on the missing person list. Some of these people likely ended up being trafficked, either within the war zone or outside of the

region. Most of these women had lost their homes and were afraid for their lives and that of their children. Even when they made their way to refugee/displacement camps, their situation did not necessarily improve, as there are reports to suggest that living conditions in these camps were often deplorable, due to inadequate medical facilities, unsanitary environments that caused other health problems and malnutrition, making women desperate and vulnerable to the lures of traffickers (Toppings, 2015). One sees this pattern being repeated over and over again in war/conflict zones, such as in Syria (ISIS), Mexico (EZLN) and Nigeria (Boko Haram), where females go missing or are abducted and are either kept as sex slaves for combatants or sold/auctioned for as little as 25 dollars to men willing to pay for their sexual services (Acharya, 2009; Anadozie, 2016).

The environment created by such situations becomes a haven for pedophiles and traffickers, who take advantage of such vulnerability to recruit young girls and women with promises of a better life. This, however, does not fit with Kara's framework analysis since it is not the demand for the sex market that is driving the supply and expansion of the market; rather, various intersecting factors have created the availability of supply that is most likely driving the demand and expansion of the sex trafficking market.

2.5.5 Economics of Migration

The significance of the various perspectives on sex trafficking is based on what they offer both theoretically and with regard to policy suggestions. From the mid-1960s international migration has been on the rise (Bhabha, 2005). Kaye (2003) posits that trafficking and migration are separate, yet remain inter-related issues and that migration could either be an individual's choice or be forced upon the individual as a means of survival, which can take place both through irregular or regular channels. Chuang (2006,

p.146) suggests that there is a need to position trafficking within the context of labour demand and migration, because "traffickers fish in the stream of migration", that is to say, victims of trafficking are people already seeking to migrate before being approached by their traffickers. The report released by GAATW (2010) notes that irregular migration has become synonymous with trafficking and as such it is now assumed that to combat trafficking, mechanisms such as border control need to be used to clamp down on irregular migration. The Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women report critiqued this assumption, arguing that it fails to consider that individuals who migrate through regular or legal channels could still be trafficked.

Further complicating the link between migration and trafficking is the fact that coercion and exploitation is experienced by many migrant workers. Often, it is assumed that migration is voluntary and as such cannot be exploitative, but the evidence suggests otherwise. People displaced by famine or conflict are vulnerable and may be left with no choice other than to migrate, thereby making them potential targets for exploitation (Fergus, 2005). According to the GAATW (2010) report, there is a danger involved in combating the issue of trafficking without a comprehensive knowledge of the shifting context of migration and labour in a rapidly globalising world.

In recent times, economic despair coupled with other push, pull and facilitating factors have promoted the migration of women across national and regional borders in search of a better life for their families and themselves (Jordan, 2002; Mai, 2013, p.7). The disparity in the growth of wealth, both between and within countries, has led to more people making the decision to migrate, while in the western countries ageing population and low fertility rates have increased the demand for migrant workers. It is this demand from certain sectors of the economy for particular labour that has created the supply of

migrant livelihood-seekers (Kempadoo, Sanghera and Pattanaik, 2005). Jordan (2002) contends that economic growth in industrialized economies has meant that citizens are no longer willing to take up low-paying jobs, which in turn has increased the demand for imported labour, particularly women. It is not surprising that increases in human trafficking are taking place at a time when there is a huge increase in the demand for migrant workers, but restrictions to regular migration opportunities/channels have meant that migrants, in trying to access jobs in developed countries, continue to fall victim to traffickers and smugglers (Kaye, 2003). Criminal networks continue to take advantage of Europe's migration crisis to coerce vulnerable people, including children, into sex trafficking and other forms of trafficking. For example, the 300% yearly increase in the number of Nigerian girls and women being trafficked into Italy through Libya is today a problem for Italian authorities (Rankin, 2016).

The U.N. Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, while agreeing that developed nations' immigration policies are exclusionary and restrictive, highlighted the fact that not all migrants end up being trafficked. She further pointed out that people fleeing poverty, conflict and other emergencies put themselves at risk of being exploited and trafficked as a result of the unsafe migration channels they take due to inadequate routes for regular migration (UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2016). The language of some commentators continues to focus on the relationship between sex trafficking and the surge in the level and willingness, on the part of women, to migrate (Cho, 2013). This perhaps explains the campaigns and policies that have been geared towards discouraging women from travelling abroad and tightening controls at national borders, both of which have been criticised by those who believe that the issue of trafficking has been hugely exaggerated in a bid to curtail female migration.

Cho further argued that the misrepresentation of women's migration in information and prevention leaflets, where women are given the impression that in seeking to migrate and work abroad they might end up being forced to work in the sex industry, has not worked (Andrejasevic, 2007). When women find themselves in desperate economic situations in their home country, it is hard to imagine that tightened border controls would discourage them from the choice of migrating in search of a better life for themselves and their families. In fact, tightening the border could cause more harm for women wishing to migrate, in that it could make them more vulnerable than they already are, as they may end up seeking the services of human smugglers, thereby increasing the chances of becoming victims of trafficking. Arguably, if the issue of linking sex trafficking to immigration is to be resolved, then the focus would have to shift from trafficking to citizenship and the migration rights of illegal immigrants (Anderson and Andrjasevic, 2008; Andrijasevic et al., 2012).

2.6   Perspectives on Sex Trafficking

2.6.1   Human Rights

Saunders (2005), noting the level of violence in relation to women and children, has stressed the need for the process of sex trafficking to be viewed through the lens of human rights. She suggests that a human rights approach would be the best in dealing with the needs of individuals whose fundamental human rights have been broken by the process of sex trafficking. Touzenis (2010) posits that it is now widely accepted that trafficking has a human rights element, with diverse instruments both at the international and regional level being used in trying to address this phenomenon. Sex trafficking violates fundamental international human rights conventions, especially Article 6 of the 1979 U.N. Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

(CEDAW, 1979) and more recently, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNODC, 2004). These rights include the right to freedom from torture and violence, rights to bodily integrity, security, dignity, equality and health, irrespective of whether it is within or across state borders (Fergus, 2005).

Article 7(2)(C) of the Rome Statute (1998) of the International Criminal Court defines enslavement as "the exercise of any or all powers attaching to the right of ownership over a person, and includes the exercise of such power in the course of trafficking in persons, in particular women and children". Some of the offences related to trafficking are categorized as war crimes, offences such as rape, sexual slavery and enforced prostitution (International Criminal Court, 2011). Touzenis (2010) suggest that it is as a result of the gravity of these offences, associated with sex trafficking, that the International Criminal Court called the traffic in humans a crime against humanity. Whilst commending the efforts of states in seeing the need to develop a strong international law enforcement instrument to combat trafficking in persons, despite its weak language on human rights, she critiqued the fact that the Trafficking Protocol was developed by the U.N. Crime Commission. As a law enforcement body and not a human rights body, this made the Trafficking Protocol a law enforcement instrument rather than a human rights instrument.

Amnesty International (2004) has stressed that women and girls are exposed to various kinds of human rights abuses that may violate women's right to life. According to the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW, 2010), there is a direct link between the failure and refusal of states to accord women the same human rights as men and trafficking in women and girls. They argued further that denying women their rights

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including the right to education, means denying them the right to control their own lives, leaving them unskilled and economically dependent, and ideal candidates for trafficking (Pearson, 2000). However, Bandyopadhyay et al. (2006) rejected this view, pointing out that their study of women working in India's sex industry challenges the concept of sex trafficking being a human rights issue. Their findings suggest that these women were fully aware of what they were getting themselves into when they started working in the sex industry. In fact, it was often the case that once they had paid off their debt, they chose to remain and work in the sex industry.

Such a study lends support to the argument of those who maintain that consent should be the core criteria for determining if trafficking has taken place since some of the women working in the sex industry do indeed give their consent. However, Bandyopadhyay and colleagues did not appear to consider what the alternatives were for these women. For migrant women who have been sex trafficked in India, the choice may have been between remaining in the country to which they were sex trafficked or going back home to the stigma, shame and rejection from their own communities that may well await them there (Van der Zee, 2016). In addition, the study failed to acknowledge that the level of violence and intimidation associated with the industry still constitutes a human rights issue.

2.6.2 Threat to National Security

Bruinsma and Bernasco (2004) pointed out that trafficking is a transnational criminal activity and a threat to various countries and their citizens, consistent with the claim made by Pratt (2004), who noted that crimes and conflicts in different parts of the world are financed by money obtained from the trafficking of women. The address in 2012 by the

United States National Security Adviser, Denis McDonough, at a task force meeting further highlights the fact that states view trafficking as an issue of state security rather than a human rights issue. In his speech, he made it clear that trafficking was at the nexus of organised crime, a means through which international terrorist organisations are funded and as such poses a threat to security, which is one of the reasons it was given high priority by the U.S. government (Soo Suh, 2012). This is a view shared by Welch (2017), who argues that "trafficking is a two-fold national security threat", through the funding of international criminal organisations and the movement of illegal migrants across national borders. She suggests that the victim-centred approach adopted by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in its efforts to combat trafficking is incomplete without an agency that incorporates law enforcement and national security leading the fight, because it is through a national security law-driven approach that trafficking can be effectively combatted, especially now that trafficking, particularly sex trafficking, is being used by terrorist groups as a wartime tactic.

An earlier analysis by Pati (2014) of the relationship between trafficking and national/human security argued that trafficking remains one of the most serious security difficulties in our contemporary world, through its perpetuation of corruption, which challenges the rule of law. She suggested that trafficking was at the intersection of all the six main threats identified (environmental degradation, inequality in economic opportunities, uncontrolled population growth, extreme international migration, drug production, international terrorism and trafficking). She claimed that it constituted a global challenge to human/national security, irrespective of how powerful a nation is, either through creating an environment that augments these threats or because these

threats are the push-and-pull factors for trafficking, thereby impairing the national security of a nation.

While acknowledging the issue of the national security of states, Goodey (2003) argued focuses on state security and not on giving assistance and protection to women who have been trafficked the focus on state security has principally led to two initiatives; (a) government policies that allow for tighter border control and (b) systematic raids on establishments where trafficked individuals are kept, without addressing the needs of the women who have been trafficked. Similarly, feminist scholar Lobasz (2009) has noted that looking at trafficking through the lens of national security means neglecting the voices of the victims, whose fundamental rights the state is legally obliged to protect. She acknowledged that trafficking must be treated as a law enforcement priority because of the substantial profits made from sexual and labour exploitation of others, which enables traffickers to diversify into other illicit activities, thereby giving them social, economic and possibly political power. However, she asserted that a traditional security- based approach complicated, rather than solved the problem of trafficking, firstly, because migration becomes more risky and difficult as a result of its oppressive border control policies, making victims more vulnerable and secondly because deporting victims means that they are exposed to being trafficked again.

Aradau (2004) also critiqued the security perspective, arguing that this not only views traffickers as being dangerous to states but also sees victims as a potential risk to the state security of the receiving country, based on the belief that abused women often become abusers themselves. Thus, it is in the interest of the receiving country to deport trafficked women back to their country of origin, so as to avoid this vicious cycle repeating itself (Muftic and Finn, 2013). While evidence exists that aligns with this argument, such as

the case of Nigerian Madams, it does not apply to the majority of the sex-trafficked victims (Ajagun, 2012). Furthermore, it is impossible to distinguish a trafficked victim that will eventually become a trafficker herself from one that will not. This line of argument fails to consider that deporting trafficked women back to their country of origin victimises them a second time and puts their safety at serious risk by putting them back into the situation where they found themselves in the first place and which led to their being trafficked.

It is, finally, worth pointing out that while Article 5 of the Palermo Protocol advocated the criminalization of trafficking in each state (UNODC 2003, p.2), Article 6 of the same Protocol strongly reminded states of their ethical obligations in providing trafficked women with all necessary assistance and protection, including psychological and medical assistance, counselling, housing, education and training opportunities and employment (UNODC 2003, p.3).

2.7   Africa's Migration Pattern in the past Decades

There is significant and growing literature on African migration and diaspora, yet scholars cannot reach a consensus on what constitutes the 'African diaspora' or the 'new African diaspora'. Some focus on the original African diaspora that arose from the dispersal of Africans due to the slave trade. While others argue that the focus should be on the increase and new pattern of African migration that has created a new diaspora. As these diasporas have emerged both in sites where relationships were established through colonial ties and in new contexts including pathways of religious organisations, NGOs and transnational refugee networks (Koser, 2003). Furthermore, Koser argues that while there were differences within the African diasporas, there were also shared elements amongst them; cultural heritage, the experience of ambiguous identities and overt racism

and exclusion from host communities. (Koser, 2003).

Some have concluded that the rights of immigrants need to be truncated to stop the migration of Africans into Europe from spinning out of control (Collier, 2013). This view has arisen from the acceleration of the emigration of Africans, coupled with sensationalized media reportage of Africa as Contrary to these assumptions and journalistic impressions which are not backed by empirical evidence, researchers have questioned the implicit hypothesis that African migration is 'exceptional' and essentially different from migration elsewhere (Flahaux and De Haas 2016, p.2).

Flauhaux and De Haas (2016) state that evidence indicates that Africans migrate for study, work and family. Furthermore, recent evidence points out that the majority of the perceived increase in African migration is mostly intracontinental (Schoumaker and Beauchemin, 2015; Okunade, 2021). Equally, the majority of African migrants leave the continent with their visas and travel documents and Europe is not always their destination of choice. This aligns with Koser's (2003) earlier argument that Africans' motivation for migration can influence the movement and be considered the primary difference between these diasporas The difference is often a result of strict immigration policies in receiving countries, especially for low-skilled workers, who end up as illegal migrants. Maru (2022) states that more than a decade has passed since the joint Africa-EU partnership, was adopted in 2007. Amongst other things, the joint Africa-EU partnership agreed to address areas of common concern and challenges. An important element of concern was migration, while for Europe a particular challenge that persists is an increase in demand for labour in wealthier economies due to the ageing population. In an attempt to regulate and reduce 'the mobility of irregular immigration' into Europe, Europe has implemented immigration restrictions on Africa. One could be forgiven for thinking that by implication all irregular immigrants are Africans.

2.7.1   Development of African Communities in Ireland and the role of Religion

Documentary evidence shows that people of African descent have been living in Ireland as early as the eighteenth century (Mckeon, 1997). Though there is no estimate of the number of Africans that were in the country at that time. It is believed that the majority of them would have been or may have been runaway slaves, members of the Armed Forces, and a few wealthy individuals who were accompanied by servants (Mutwarasibo, 2002). Ireland transitioned from a society of emigration into a country of immigration as a result of various factors including; membership in the European Union, education, economic prosperity, and natural and man-made disasters closer to home and far afield. Over time, the reasons for Africans coming to Ireland changed. From the 1950s to the 1990s many Africans moved to live and work in Ireland. The presence of these African immigrants meant a new dimension of interaction between Africa and Ireland (Ugba, 2008). Koser (2003) asserted that the majority of these 'new African diasporas' were skilled workers such as doctors and nurses. Students and visitors on the one hand were accepted due to their small numbers and the temporary nature of their stay. On the other hand, skilled workers drew a distinction between the more recent migration of Africans into European states and Africans who were historically forcefully shipped out of the homeland for slavery. Data from the Central Statistics Office in 1984 shows that African and Asian immigrants made up less than 6% of the population of the Irish population in Ireland. By 2002, almost 21,000 Africans were living in Ireland (Central Statistics Office, 2002) and this number doubled in 2006 with 35,326 individuals claiming African nationalities (Central Statistics Office, 2006). It is however believed that these figures do not give an accurate statistical representation of people of African descent in Ireland as

they did not for example take into consideration Africans with dual citizenship (Ugba, 2008). The 2016 Census illustrates that 57,850 people identified themselves as either Black Irish or Black African (CSO 2016) this was a decrease of 1.4% from the 2011 census figures of 58,697.

The increase in the immigrant population, including asylum seekers coupled with negative media representation of the African continent and African people has led to an uneasiness towards immigrants in general and a negative attitude and stereotype of African immigrants and communities in Ireland in particular (Ejor, 2011). This increase equally led to the formation of cultural, social, ethnic and national institutions (Ugba, 2008). Groups such as African Solidarity Centers were created for migrant communities to participate in the decision-making process through regular consultations, particularly in sectors where they remain under-represented (Mutwarasibo, 2002). Pentecostal groups, mostly led by and populated by sub-Saharan Africans were one of the prominent social and cultural institutions formed by newer African immigrants, and whilst some groups have flourished and floundered, membership of these churches has continually grown. It is difficult to accurately establish the number of African Pentecostals in Ireland and their members because not only do the majority of churches not maintain a register but also as the number of churches increases, others are formed, and splinter groups emerge from existing ones (Ugba, 2008). However, an earlier report from Dr. Ivan McKay, the moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland estimated the number of African Pentecostal migrants at 30,000 in what he called black-majority churches (McGarry, 2004). Kogan, Fong and Reitz (2020) have argued that religious institutions provide communal services that allow immigrants to gather and interact with people of the same faith and often the same ethnicity. This sense of community cushions immigrants –

particularly recent immigrants – from the stress of acculturation and provides a psychological buffer against the prejudice and discrimination they may be exposed to. This idea echoes an earlier claim by other authors (Akinade, 2007) who noted that religion and spirituality can be especially beneficial to the new African diaspora as an important identity shaper that allows them to preserve both individual self-awareness (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2014), cohesion and community acceptance within a group in post-migration adjustments (Lauterbach and Vahakangas, 2019)

2.8   Conclusion

It seems clear that the lack of consensus on the definition of trafficking has created difficulties in moving from conceptualisation to operationalisation. It is concerning that the debate over 'consent' of who should and should not be categorised as trafficked victims continue to be a barrier in the fight against sex trafficking of women. A review of the literature suggests that globalisation has contributed to creating an environment that has fuelled and sustained sex trafficking of women through IMF/World Bank Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) policies. The SAP programme, which most developing economies accepted out of desperation, to alleviate people's suffering and improve the quality of life for their citizens, has been argued to be unsuitable for these economies to have contributed to the collapse of the economies in the global south. That in turn left women vulnerable to trafficking and traffickers. Nevertheless, the factors that contribute to sex trafficking are variable.

Kara's theory on the economics of supply and demand provides a framework for understanding the economic contributors and impact and assists with understanding the *modus operandi* of certain aspects of the sex industry. The much cited argument that the demand for sex services creates the supply is challenged, drawing on the impact of war

and economic migration on women and children in particular. Sex trafficking is clearly a significant profitable trade that directly or indirectly benefits various stakeholders, including in some countries the state itself.

It may also be viewed through the lens of a national security issue, which goes some way to understanding the response to trafficked victims in certain countries, viewing them as a threat that needs to be removed, and neglecting to consider the needs of these individuals. It is suggested that the theory of critical race feminism provides insight into the multiple marginalisation of women based on race. Given the high proportion of black women? Southern countries? Marginalised populations? Say something here about why this theory is a useful lens through which to view this issue.

CHAPTER THREE: THE PERSONAL STRANDS OF SEX TRAFFICKING

3.0 Introduction

The previous chapter addressed the conceptualisation of sex trafficking that in turn influences how nations respond to those who have experienced sex trafficking. It also identified possible contributing factors, such as economic factors, migration and war. This chapter will examine the reasons why women are the highest sex-trafficked demographic group. It will include an exploration of the stressors that may influence entry into sex trafficking and prostitution, followed by an investigation of the links between poverty, gender and sex trafficking, based on the inequality of the labour market, job segmentation/gender pay gap and lack of education as core contributing factors that make women easy targets for traffickers. Finally, this chapter will conclude with the exploration of why the study is being focused on the experiences of sex-trafficked migrants within Ireland.

3.1 Relationship between Traumatic Stressors and Sex Trafficking

The various complex intersecting factors fuelling and sustaining sex trafficking across various regions were illustrated in Table 2 (see Chapter 2, p. 63). However, Crawford (2010) argues that in order to understand these intersecting factors driving the phenomenon in certain regions and countries, one needs to understand what being a woman means in these regions and how that puts them in such vulnerable positions to be easily trafficked for commercial sex purposes. It has been argued by various scholars that more often than not, the kind of family structure a young girl grows up in may create

an enabling environment that allows the young female to be easily drawn into prostitution/trafficking, but what they do not agree on is which of the variables is more directly responsible than another (Abramovich, 2005). Similarly, Dalla (2003) asserts that while family interaction is not a prerequisite for human development, family structure/dynamics do, however, create a context that deeply influences an individual's socio-emotional ambition and functioning, beginning at birth. Using the concepts of intergenerational transmission and holism models, (Dalla, 2003) highlights how patterns created in one generation are bound to be recreated in future generations, irrespective of whether those patterns are destructive or progressive. In essence, this implies that individuals repeat what is familiar to them and as such, to understand an individual means understanding that individual within their larger family context.

Studies of juvenile/adult prostitutes found that most of the young women were from dysfunctional family environments (Wilson and Widom, 2010) characterised by neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, family discord, educational failures or absence, emotional vulnerability and alcohol/drug abuse (Lukman et al, 2011). Such environments often result in high rates of youths running away from home and putting themselves in difficult and vulnerable situations, which indirectly influences the decisions they make (Wiechelt and Shdaimah, 2011). As these youths have no skills or education, they either turn to prostitution as a survival strategy or become easy targets for traffickers and are exploited in the sex industry (Roe-Sepowitz 2012 and Nadon, Koverola and Pattanaik, 1998). These studies found that there was a strong link between childhood neglect/victimisation and entry into prostitution/trafficking, as these traumatic experiences are believed to lay the foundation for entry into prostitution and being trafficked.

In an interview by *Al Jazeera* a Romanian psychologist, Iana Matei, whose NGO rescues and provides shelter for young girls who have been sex trafficked, made it clear that all the girls she has rescued come from exceptionally dysfunctional families where they have suffered all types of emotional/physical abuse and violence, which make them easy targets for traffickers. She suggests that addressing dysfunctional family structures would lead to a reduction in young girls being easily drawn into the world of prostitution/sex trafficking (Van der Zee, 2016). Stella Marr, an activist and an ex-victim of sex trafficking, fell into the hands of traffickers after she was disowned by her "troubled family" (Stephanie, 2012). Sleeping rough and with no job or money, she was vulnerable and became an easy target. When a stranger offered her a job in a restaurant, she did not hesitate to go with the man, not realising that he was a pimp. The friendly stranger soon turned violent, using threats and coercion to keep her working in the sex industry for many years.

Previous research has found that traumatic stressors such as childhood physical and sexual abuse, homelessness, war or death can leave individuals vulnerable to entry into prostitution/sex trafficking, especially where abuse is inflicted by a caregiver (Farley, Lynne and Cotton, 2005). Furthermore, an earlier study carried out in nine different countries and based on the response of 70% of the interviewees found that extended and recurrent trauma is usually associated with entry into prostitution (Farley et al., 2004). For example, a child that has been sexually abused repeatedly might grow up without a clear memory of it, but may still find herself drifting towards violent relationships and prostitution without understanding why. Although De Vries and Goggin (2018) have maintained that this behaviour is typical, early sexualization due to child sexual abuse may be expressed in later life in the form of sexual addiction, prostitution and

promiscuity. Schulze et al (2014), however, argued that despite the well-established link between traumatic childhood experiences and entry into the sex industry, not every woman in the sex industry has had a traumatic childhood. Whilst accepting the connection between childhood trauma stressors and entry into the sex industry, it is equally important to recognise that this does not account for every woman's experience. This is perhaps the reason why Dawn (2013) had earlier warned against restricting our enquiries about women in the sex industry to childhood experience and family dynamics, as this might impede our understanding of the role of social and structural factors, such as poverty, gender and unemployment, play in women's vulnerability to being drawn into the sex trade.

3.2   Self-Worth and Esteem

According to George, Vindhya and Ray (2010), there is evidence to suggest that initially some sex-trafficked victims knowingly consented to work in the sex industry without the use of coercion by their traffickers. They knew that they would have to sell their bodies for financial benefits, but it could also be argued that there was naivety in that knowing, because sex-trafficked women are never told of the exploitation that will be involved. They are often unaware that all, or a large percentage of their earnings will have to go to someone else, nor are they aware of the fact that they could be held against their will from leaving and have their passport taken from them. It may be that this initial consent to work in the sex industry is indicative of a lack of self-esteem on the part of the women, which in turn is a reflection of the individual's sense of self-worth as a woman and a human being.

Research carried out by Crocker and Knight (2005) points out that self-esteem can only be found in the contingencies of self-worth, implying that an individual's belief in what

needs to be done or what they need to be would give that individual worth and value as a person. They argue that everyone has contingencies of self-worth, but that people are different based on what their self-esteem is contingent upon and as such will continuously seek emotional highs in areas related to their contingencies of self-worth. Crocker and Wolfe (2001) had previously noted that perceived failures and success in those areas upon which an individual's self-worth is contingent will greatly determine the individual's self-esteem.

In a recent documentary on sex-trafficked victims (Global Citizens, 2017), one victim who had been deported back to her home country talked about how worthless she felt, because of her inability to provide desperately-needed medical care for her younger brother and her older sister, who were both critically ill. Eventually, both siblings died and she was left to bury one after the other, which made her see herself as a failure. Another victim, whose story of being sex trafficked had started as a juvenile, talked about how special and powerful it made her feel knowing that she was needed by her clients. What constituted the contingencies of self-worth for these two women was related to their ability, either to provide essential medical care or to meet the needs of their clients. In either case, it would be difficult to infer that their consent to enter into the sex industry was a result of a lack of self-esteem on their part. Victor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor, once stated that because the meaning of life differs from person to person, what is important is the interpretation of each life at a particular time. He cited, as a demonstration that humans can always choose to rise above their circumstances, in the case of a doctor known as "the mass murderer of Steinhof" when working for the Nazis in Austria. Imprisoned after the war by the Russians, this doctor was later described by a

fellow prisoner as "the best comrade you can imagine ... [who] gave consolation to everybody ... [and] lived up to the highest conceivable moral standard" (Frankl, 2004).

Evidence suggests that most sex-trafficked women are often from developing countries, often with low or no education and are marginalised (US Department of State, 2015). Perhaps, the need to better their lives and that of their families, coupled with other intersecting variables such as poverty and gender inequality, drove them to consenting to the unknown. It could also be that the trajectory of the stressors in their lives led to such decisions. It is only by allowing the women to tell their own stories and listening to those voices that often remain silent, that these questions can be understood.

3.3   The Relationship between Poverty, Gender and the Sex Industry.

The US Department of State (2019) report states that severe poverty remains the core factor causing people to become a target for traffickers. Traditionally, poverty has been perceived as a state of material deprivation arising from a lack of access to productive assets, resources and income (Eurostat, 2010). Others have seen poverty as a deprivation of their basic right to participate fully in diverse domains of social life, as well as preventing them from attaining their maximum potential in the way they see fit within the community. Poverty remains difficult to measure because of its numerous dimensions (Fukuda-Parr, 1999; Gorniak, 2001; Whelan, Watson and Maitre, 2019). An earlier report from the U.N. (UNDP, 1997) states that it is the denial of choices, life opportunities fundamental to humanity that include being able to live a healthy, creative and long life, enjoying a reasonable standard of living, with freedom, dignity and respect from other people. Poverty, when measured regarding human conditions, could also be said to be the lack of the components of well-being, including education, leisure time,

health and nutrition but when calculated in monetary value, it is insufficiency in income (Buvinic, 1997).

Researchers of gender studies have maintained that poverty is gendered, because of the distinctive ways that men and women experience it and that there is a need to accurately analyse the ways and the extent to which women become poorer than men (Basto et al., 2009). The term 'feminization of poverty' was first coined by Diane Pearce in her study of gender patterns in poverty levels within the United States (1978). Her research findings suggest that while increased participation in the labour market gave women greater independence, poverty levels amongst women still rose, while the number of men living in poverty continued to decline (Pearce, 1978). A decade later, Glendinning and Millar (1987) noted that women's poverty became visible as a result of a revolution in the conventional concept of both social and poverty research policies, arising from the transformation of family structures. This include the increase in lone-parent households, an acceleration in the divorce rate, and more elderly women living alone, which would very likely expose women to higher levels of poverty. Pearce's (1978) study focused on two key areas in explaining why poverty was becoming a female issue: (a) the increase in female-headed households, and (b) the increase in the number of women among the poor. It has been argued that the risk of poverty is worst in female-headed households, regardless of whether that resulted from divorce, separation, being unmarried, or being widowed (Daly, 1992). Similarly, it has been argued that because the feminization of poverty is linked to gender inequality and poverty, both negative phenomena, it should be seen as a relative concept where, depending on the method of measurement, it is based on the comparison of differences between men and women at any given time (Medeiros and Costa, 2008).

Not everyone accepted Pearce's approach to the feminization of poverty. While not discarding this concept of the feminization of poverty, scholars such as Pressman (1988) and Northrop (1990) pointed out that the feminization of poverty can be analysed using several demographic perspectives. However, they chose to modify Pearce's approach to feminization by comparing the increase in poverty levels in female-headed households with those of households headed by men, to gauge whether the level of poverty in the household with a woman at the head leads to greater vulnerability among women. Pressman (1988; 2003) found that some of the causes of the feminization of poverty included the reduced participation of women in the labour force compared to men. This was due to factors such as caregiving responsibilities for children that fall disproportionately on women and impact negatively on the income of households headed by women, increasing the chances of women being poorer than men. Pressman (2003) further suggested that occupational segregation and a gender pay gap between women and men also leaves women poorer than men and reduces a woman's chance of opportunities and a better standard of living both for herself and her household. Pressman argued that these factors increase the vulnerability of women and influence their decisions to migrate in the hope of finding better job opportunities, which sometimes leads to being trafficked in the commercial sex industry.

Other scholars (Daly 1992; Medeiros and Costa, 2008; Owusu-Afriyie and Nketia-Akponsah, 2014) have been even more critical of Pearce's approach to measuring poverty amongst women based on household and income levels. They argued not only that this measurement is not universal, as incidences were found mostly in developed nations, but that its narrow framework also leads to other disparities being ignored, as poverty based on a lack of opportunities and choices could be easily masked by research that focuses

on poverty based on income. They suggested that more standardised indicators that show gender inequality in relation to poverty, both at global and national levels, need to be used in measuring the different effects of poverty that have reduced women's survival rate while increasing their vulnerability (The European Institute for Gender Equality, EIGE, 2016 and Bieri and Sancar, 2009).

Albania is a good example of a country where a complex intersection of poverty, gender inequality and other variables have heightened women's vulnerability and their risk of being trafficked for sexual purposes. Albania was one of the poorest and most repressive of the communist Eastern European countries until 1991. By 1997 the country was ploughed further into poverty as a result of the collapse of a pyramid scheme which led to many Albanians losing their life savings (Van Hook et al., 2006). The decline in agriculture, which was the main source of employment, meant that people living in the rural areas, especially women, were most affected as unemployment and poverty level rose drastically, further disempowering women in a society where women's status was already low (Dashi et al., 2016 and Territo, 2010). This resulted in huge migration of people to the urban centres from rural areas and many Albanian men, mostly the young with good education, firstly emigrated to other countries in search of work, but the migration trend later turned to become mostly women and girls (Lerch, 2016). According to an earlier report, the high levels of poverty and migration led to an increase in female-headed households, reduced economic opportunities for women (Red Cross, 2011) and a lack of marriage opportunities for young girls, making young girls vulnerable to sex traffickers, as young men used the promise of marriage/friendship and the promise of a better life to snare young women into being trafficked for sexual purposes (United Nations 2016).

3.4 Inequality in the Labour Market

3.4.1 The Employment Gap by Gender

Some years ago the E.U made it clear that it planned to raise the employment rate, considered to be a key analytical tool in the labour market, to 75% for both men and women by 2020 (Eurostat 2016). According to figures from 2014, the gender employment gap between men and women across the 28 countries of the E.U. was 11.5%, implying that the percentage of women in employment in that particular age cohort was below that of men by 11.5% (Eurostat, 2016). However, there were considerable disparities among member states, for while countries like Finland, Sweden, Lithuania and Latvia all had a gender employment gap below 5%, while others, namely the Czech Republic, Romania, Italy, Greece, and Malta, all had employment gaps that exceeded 15% (Eurostat, 2016). This trend is not peculiar to the E.U. A report from the United Nations Development Programme (2015) shows that globally, women's participation in the labour market across the globe was considerably lower than that of men in almost all countries and has consistently stayed like that for decades. According to this report, data for the employment gap by gender for 2015 across the globe showed that 77% of men were participating in the labour market, compared to 50% of women. Participation for women was considerably lower than that of men in almost all countries, but particularly in the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) states, where women's participation in labour market was as much as 40% below that of men within these states.

3.4.2 Job Segmentation/Gender Pay Gap

Employment segmentation and gender pay gaps are major factors putting women economically at a disadvantage compared with men in labour markets worldwide.

Women continue to be disproportionately employed in low-paying jobs and are paid less

than the rate a man would earn for doing the same work. Data from across E.U. states has shown that women earn far less than men do. Data from Eurostat (2016) shows that in 2014, women's overall average earnings were at 16.1% below that of men within E.U. states and 16.5% within the Eurozone. It is important to note that there are significant differences in the gender pay gap among E.U. member states, ranging from as high as 28.3% in Estonia to 2.9% in Slovenia. It has also been suggested that the work profile (full-time versus part-time) may be one of the factors contributing to the gender pay gap between women and men, due to ideologies that allow employers to view women's participation in the workplace as secondary compared to their primary role of caregiving within the family (Bruegel, 1979, cited in Bastos et al., 2009). Thus, employers are more comfortable giving women what they term "more appropriate" jobs that are suitable for the life of being a woman, which often means part-time/poorly paid jobs (Bastos et al., 2009, p.2). However, even in part-time work, an area that is supposedly women's comfort zone within the labour market, evidence from Eurostat (2017) suggests that there is a gender pay gap, ranging from 10.5% in Malta to 32.1% in Croatia for the year 2014. The greatest danger in this level of inequality in the labour market is the impact it will have, not just on women and the economic sustainability of a society but also on children in families where a parent's participation in the labour market is restricted/denied in any form based on gender, or if there is a sudden change in the family structure for any number of reasons, thereby creating a vicious cycle of poverty that goes into the next generation.

Both Casper, McLanahan and Garfinkel (1994) and more recently the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2020) have stressed the need for a gender balance in employment composition if the gender-poverty ratio is to be reduced.

The significance of working towards an equitable gender balance in the labour market cannot be overemphasized, as, despite various factors influencing and sustaining the trafficking of women for commercial sex, poverty and gender discrimination are two of the factors that are found across all regions (See table 2 in Chapter 2). Relatedly earlier research by Buvinic et al. (2009) also argued for the importance of acknowledging women's contribution to the growth of an economy. They believe that gender inequality, aside from restricting women's involvement in productive employment, which puts women in vulnerable situations, also impacts negatively on a country's growth prospects and that any growth in such an environment cannot be sustainable in the long run. Buvinic et al. (2009) further maintained that the consistency in inequality in the labour market across the globe that continues to put women at a disadvantage relative to men is one of the major reasons why poverty has become feminized. The policy document released by the European Union (2014) on gender equality noted that despite the diverse reasons for women's entry into the sex industry, lack of employment opportunities and gender discrimination in the labour market were among the primary reasons, as they put women in vulnerable situations that made them easy targets for traffickers. Citing the study carried out by Farley and colleagues (2005) of women in the sex industry in nine countries, the E.U. document further noted that 89% of these women wanted to leave the sex industry but felt trapped by a lack of alternative opportunities. The document further suggested that the violence and vulnerability, based on poverty, in the sex industry was the reason that the abolitionist approach does not differentiate prostitution from trafficking, since all women in the sex industry are victims of some sort, either as a result of lack of income opportunities, or being forced into selling sex.

3.5   Lack of Access to Assets and Economic Resources

In most developing countries within sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and southeast and southern Asia, women play major roles in agriculture but mostly as a labour force, despite self-employment being the more prevalent form of agricultural work (Fontana and Paciello 2010). This is because their access to and control of assets continues to be inhibited due to gender discrimination based on traditions and customary laws, which has negatively reduced women's productivity, affecting not only their income and well-being but also their ability to provide food for their households, as well as the economic growth of the state (Fonjong, Fombe and Sama-Lang, 2013 and World Bank Agriculture and Rural Development, 2009). Accordingly, Fox and Romero (2017) claim that such gendered discriminatory practices illustrate women's lack of economic autonomy to choose, which disempowers women by reducing their bargaining power, both within the household (decision-making) and in the public sphere. Gendered discrimination is not a new practice, but it fails to consider how this will impact negatively on households, since greater bargaining power for women has been shown to result in a positive increase in labour productivity, due to maternal spending patterns that focus on education and healthcare (Deere et al., 2005).

Some societies, however, continue to defend the gender gap in assets such as land on the grounds of cultural norms and preferences (OHCHR, 2017) and although data on the extent of the gender asset gap relating to land ownership is not substantial, there is still enough to suggest that the gap is quite significant. For example, (Pemunta, 2017) highlighted how in a country like Cameroon, where women constitute 52 % of the population and ownership of land is both an economic resource and a determinant of participation in both the community and home sphere, women are still suppressed and discriminated against in relation to inheritance of land. This is done often on the basis of

socio-cultural norms rooted in matrilineal and patrilineal societies, where male children are preferred over female children, or simply on the basis that a woman is part of a man's property and, as such, a property cannot own another property (Fonjong, Fombe and Sama-Lang, 2013).

Cameroon is not an isolated case in Africa and other places where access to and ownership of the land is an important source of income and wealth (Abidogun and Falola, 2020). Previous data collected by the World Bank across Africa show that land policies have not been favourable to women and that the land reform schemes have not benefitted women, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO, 1995). South Asia is another region where the same trend persists and the choice and opportunity for women to own and farm their land is very limited as a result of gender bias, leaving wage employment and unpaid family work as the alternative means of survival (Fontana and Paciello, 2010). Although a more recent report from the World Bank shows that the supreme courts in certain countries in Africa and Asia have taken unprecedented steps in recognising and strengthening women's rights to land and properties, there remain great gaps in the understanding of women's right to land and property (Hanstad, 2020). The trafficking of girls and women affects most countries and regions in the world, either as a source, transit or destination country (UNODC, 2022), but data also suggests that most victims of sex trafficking are from developing countries and regions of the world where gender inequality and poverty is most prevalent (TIP, 2016). It is difficult to ascertain how poverty will not continue to be gendered with the level of inequality in women's participation in the labour market, access to assets, resources, and opportunities, which creates situations that make women vulnerable and easy targets for traffickers.

The relationship between poverty, gender disparity and sex trafficking remain interwoven and complex. It would be unrealistic for a woman who finds herself in a vulnerable and desperate economic position not to sell her labour cheaply or be willing to do anything as a means of survival, especially if she has dependents or is the head of her household. Poverty always forces women into poorly paid employment, in unfavourable conditions, stripping them of any form of bargaining power in the labour market (Deere et al., 2005). The political sphere is no better, regarding political empowerment and opportunities for women. Although data compiled by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2016) for women in national parliaments across regions has shown significant improvement in the representation of women in houses of the senate, especially within African economies (Rwanda, Senegal and South Africa), making it into the top ten in world rankings of gender parity by political empowerment (Hausman et al., 2014), women still have a long way to go.

At the U.N. Millennium Summit in 2000, world leaders coordinated a project to be carried out by the task force on education and gender equality. The project aimed to answer one question: how can gender equality and female empowerment be achieved worldwide? Noting that gender is a societal construct that defines the male and female economic, political and social powers based solely on biological differences, the task force came up with a three-dimensional gender equality framework:

- **The Capabilities Domain**: This refers to fundamental human abilities, measured by education, health and nutrition, that are required for an individual's well-being and as a means for accessing other forms of well-being necessary for human development.

- **The Access to Resources and Opportunity Domain**: This refers to equal opportunity to the use of capabilities through access to economic resources (such as employment and income), assets (such as housing and land) and political opportunities (such as parliamentary representation), as the lack of access to economic and political opportunities and resources would disempower women depriving them of their capability to achieve the well-being of themselves, their families and the society as a whole.

- **The Security Domain**: This is defined as reduced vulnerability to conflict and violence, which cause psychological and physical harm and lessen the ability of a community, household or person to reach their potential, with violence as a fear tactic that is often used to keep women and girls in their place (Grown, Gupta and Kes, 2005).

3.6   Illiteracy, Education, and Economic Vulnerability

Citing equity as one of the major challenges facing educational development and reflecting on a human capital approach in its plan, the World Bank in 1995 announced that they were investing in education, with more attention paid to equity, particularly for girls, the poor and marginalised ethnic minorities. They stated:

> Education – especially basic (primary and lower secondary) education – helps reduce poverty by increasing the productivity of the poor, by reducing fertility and improving health and by equipping people with the skills they need to participate fully in the economy and the society (World Bank 1995, p.1).

The World Bank is not alone in this regard, as access to education for all has long been recognised and enshrined as a basic human right by various conventions, including but not limited to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948), the

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (OHCHR, 1979), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (UN, 1995) and the Dakar Education for All framework for action, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2000).

Scholars within both the sociological and economic fields have made a concerted effort to explore the link between poverty, education and economic growth under the human capital approach. The work of Theodore Schultz (1961; 1989), who has been credited with making famous the human capital theory first coined by Adam Smith, the 18th-century economist, argues that human beings are capital. He suggests that investing in humans not only increases the availability of choices but also enhances an individual's freedom and dignity. Other scholars (2011; Psacharopoulos, 1988; 1975; Hicks; Becker, 1967), like Schultz, have tied earnings not solely to productivity but also to educational expenses (capital investment), arguing that education makes an individual technologically savvier, superior and more productive than those amongst their peers who are less educated. In previous research Sobel (1978, p. 28) had also acknowledged this viewpoint, noting that the conviction that investing in human beings through training and education brings greater returns coincided with the era (the 1950s) of "revolution of expectation" that portrayed access to education as the only means of achieving greater income equality and equality of status.

DeWitt (1964) asserted that the concept of human capital became accepted and incorporated into underdeveloped and developed democracies as a result of Russia's success in placing its satellite (Sputnik) in orbit in 1957, as well as the success of its nuclear development programme, which was attributed to the country's educational policy and investment in humans. DeWitt's analysis of Russian success is highlighted

by the huge proportion of the country's national income spent on education, allowing for the development of individual (male/female) abilities irrespective of family background/resources through the reduced cost of schooling in the form of stipends and student scholarships, believing that the skills acquired through education can facilitate greater levels of productivity. All of these scholars maintained that the provision of low-tuition or free education at the higher education level by the state is the best route to achieving greater income equality, as the rate of return in education has been shown to be considerably higher compared with the return on physical capital (Walker et al., 2019).

However, Vo (2016) points to evidence suggesting that in countries such as Cambodia, whose sex industry is notorious for sex trafficking in women and minors, gender inequality, lack of access to education – especially for the girl child, who grows up without jobs skills to support herself and her family – coupled with poverty has meant that girls and women continue to be vulnerable to being trafficked for sexual purposes. She argued that quality education was not accessible to all from the secondary level due to cost and because most parents cannot afford it. Parents therefore prioritize educating their male children over the females, thus disempowering the girl child, making her economically vulnerable and an easy target for traffickers, because she is not able to develop the skills necessary to enter a competitive workforce through education. Vo further stressed that Cambodia has failed in its duty to protect women from gender-based discrimination that limit access to education for women, reduce women's economic choices and expose them to exploitative work in the sex industry. She suggested that reforming Cambodia's educational system to uphold the right of the girl-child to education was a more effective way of combating the sex trafficking/prostitution of

women, which the country has become notorious for, than focusing on laws to control the sex industry (Vo, 2016).

The analysis drawn by proponents of the human capital concept is not without its critics. Many (Marginson, 2019; Maglen, 1990; Shaffer, 1961) have cited its one-dimensional view of humans, noting that as a general rule expenditure for the improvement of people should be undertaken without the expectation of monetary return, since this may jeopardize the educational system in the long-term if education is no longer seen as having the rate of return expected. Furthermore, they criticised Schultz's human capital theory for paying too much attention to individual economic advancement through education and ignoring the contribution of education to a nation's well-being. This, however, does not reflect reality considering that the well-being of a nation is often measured by the well-being of its citizens, attained by a good standard of living, which includes economic advancement.

The study by Stromquist (1990) had argued that women's educational level had not improved, despite empirical evidence to support the social and economic benefit associated with women's education, both to their families and themselves. She found that comparative literacy statistics from 1960 to 1985 revealed that 133 million of the 154 million who were illiterate were women, with the highest figure of illiterate women found in Asia and Africa. She argued that illiteracy, far from being a random occurrence, is rather a characteristic of the poor and powerless in society and a fundamental manifestation of society's unequal distribution of resources and power that puts women in vulnerable situations. Yet, research shows that educational characteristics are continuously being used by managers as a proxy for the suitability and salary of employees (ILO, 2018). The World Bank examination of poverty and education from a

gender perspective found that despite the cost associated with education, the benefits afterwards make investing in women a worthy expenditure (World Bank 2018).

A report submitted by the Global Campaign for Education, a civil society coalition (GCE, 2012) to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on women's issues from around the globe found that despite education being a facilitating and transformative right, two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults were women. Through the analysis of the three As (accessibility, acceptability and adaptability) GCE (2012) found that girls remain disproportionately disadvantaged regarding education due to the financial cost, as well as the natural preference of most parents to have boys educated. In line with other previous research, they highlighted that gender disparity in education is a function of the patriarchal cultural and social structures that exist worldwide (GCE 2012), making girls and women the most marginalised amongst marginalised groups. A later report by (Gordon et al., 2019) further stated that 'no girl left behind' initiative on the importance of 12 years of quality education, gender parity was achieved in 31 of 44 commonwealth countries but equally noted that more needs to be done as schooling remains a distant reality for the majority of marginalised girls living in the commonwealth nations.

Figure 4: Regional trends in secondary education 1970-2010

Regional trends in secondary education, gross enrolment ratio by sex 1970 and 2010
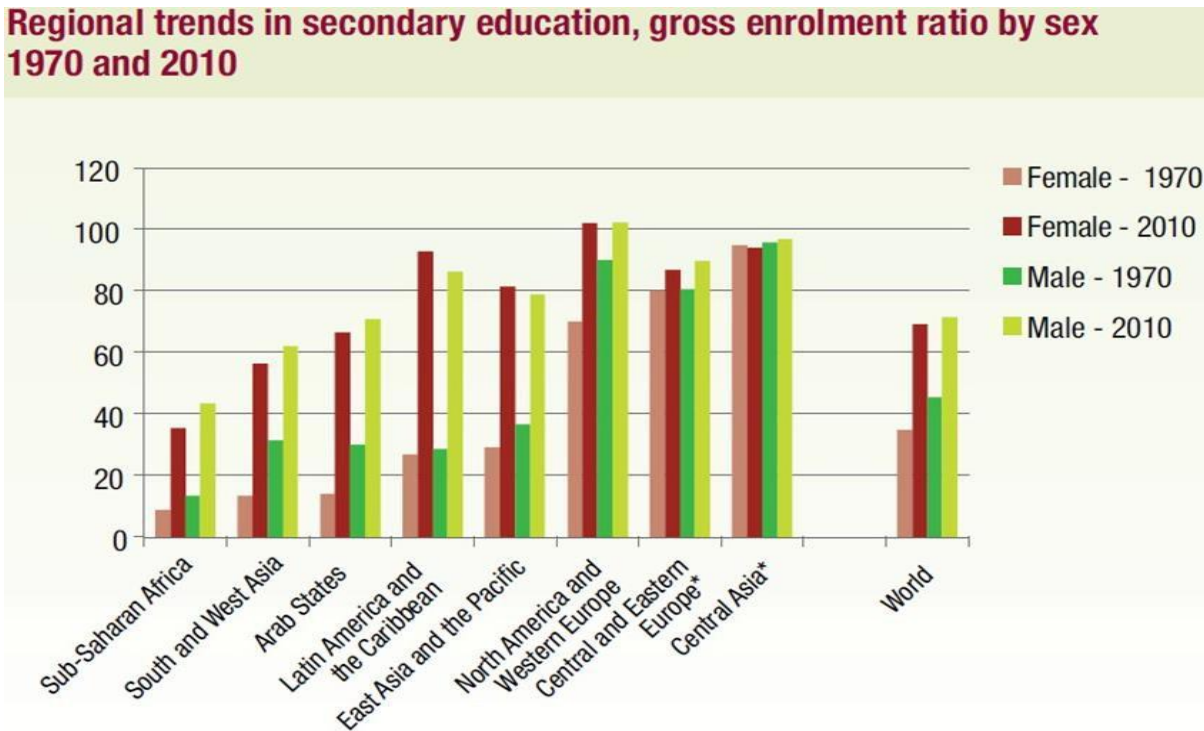
[Source: UNESCO].

Whilst it is encouraging to know that there has been a steady acceleration of parity in enrolment, both in primary and secondary education, this does not necessarily equate to academic completion. Figure 4 illustrates the regional acceleration of the enrolment ratio by both sexes at the secondary level and it equally shows the narrowing of the gender gap in the enrolment ratio in the last four decades across the regions. Worldwide statistics gathered between 2005 and 2014 also reflect this narrowing in the gender gap by completion of a secondary level in education (UNDP 2015).

The narrowing in gender parity in education was not just restricted to primary and secondary levels. According to Snyder and Dillow's (2007) review of the United States' statistics, up until1982 women had lagged behind men in bachelor's degrees, but from then onwards the percentage of women awarded bachelor's degrees continued to rise so that by 2005, 58% of the bachelor's degrees awarded in the United States were awarded to women. Furthermore, a similar trend has occurred within the various ethnic groups in the United States, with black women having the highest percentage at 66%, followed by 61% of Hispanics, 60% for Native Americans, 57% for whites and 55% for Asians. A later review also indicated that there continues to be an influx of college-educated women 41.7% compared to men at 36.2% entering the workforce in the United States (Cheeseman Day, 2019). Furthermore, an examination of the gender gap reversal in education found that the reversal in the educational gap from favouring men to favouring women was not limited to the United States alone (Delaruelle, Buffel and Bracke, 2018). Education, according to scholars from diverse fields (Olopadeet al., 219; GCE 2012; Klasen and Lamanna 2009; Becker 1975) can reduce poverty through the increase in the human capital of women, thereby improving life for women, their households and the wider community. Statistical findings in the labour market, however, do not reflect the reversal in women's education or educational statistics in general (Cheeseman Day, 2029) – nor do the lives of millions of women across the globe reflect the improvement in women's education and their human capabilities in general, and as such many women remain desperately poor and vulnerable.

3.7   Conclusion

The reasons why women remain the highest sex-trafficked demographic group are varied, multifaceted and complex. While there is evidence that dysfunctional family

backgrounds and childhood abuse are linked to later entry into the sex industry, this explanation cannot be applied in the case of all women in the sex industry. Similarly, issues around self-esteem and self-worth may also be a factor in many women's entry into prostitution but this cannot be universally applied. It seems very probable, however, that poverty is the single most important and ubiquitous factor making people vulnerable to trafficking. In this context, the disadvantaged status of so many women (constituting the majority of the world's poor), as a result of inequalities in labour markets, job segmentation and gender pay gaps and the denial of women of access to assets and resources (including education) can be seen to expose them to increased risk of trafficking.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

Wherever there are humans, there appear to be storie
Cobley 2001.

4.0   Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored the various strands of and the root contributing factors to continued trafficking of people, particularly women, for sexual exploitation. This study aims to explore and gain an understanding of black migrant women's experiences of sex trafficking in Ireland through the stories they tell and how these experiences have influenced the realities of their present lives. The chapter begins with a discussion of the origins of narrative research, in which I present the underlying methodological approach that informed the study and the adoption of Catherine Kohler Riessman's (2008) Thematic Narrative Analysis approach as the most suitable for this study. I also discuss the process of decision-making and planning, as well as the ethical precautions put in place in the course of this study, starting from the planning phase, ethical approval, gaining access to participants, to the data collection process and the challenges encountered. The management of data and analysis of data is also discussed.

4.1   The Origins of Narrative Research

The exploratory nature of this study makes it suited to a qualitative method, particularly a qualitative approach that emphasises the way the world is constructed (Sandelowski, 2008). Reissman (2008) claims that there are several histories on how narrative became an object for careful study in human sciences. However, the most referenced is the history of narrative analysis that is traced back to pragmatists in the University of Chicago in the 1930s, who collected and treated data as raw accounts of everyday life as it is lived

and experienced by individuals. The salient classical work of Thomas and Znaniecki (1918-1920), titled 'The Polish Peasant of Europe and America' is an example of such data. Thomas and Znaniecki used the accounts collected of life histories through storied letters and life documents to explore Polish migrants' experiences of relocation and migration between countries, cultures, norms and the influence of their cultural values to their adjusting to life in the United States (Bulmer, 1984).

This seminal example of narrative analysis focussed on immigrants who had migrated to a foreign country (America) and their experiences of an alien culture is relevant to the present study, which seeks to explore migrant black women's experiences of sex trafficking in Ireland. The naturalistic approach used by the pragmatists in the University of Chicago was, however, criticised for various reasons, one of which was its neglect of the gendered, ethnic and social context in which the narrative was generated (Czarniawska, 2004). Czarniawska argues that while the history of narrative analysis can be traced back to the hermeneutic of the Bible, Koran and Talmud, present-day narrative analysis has its origin in four traditions, namely;

- French structuralism, first seen in the work of Ferdinand de Saussure and later in the work of the anthropologist Claudia Levi-Strauss. French structuralism proposed that a phenomenon cannot be seen in isolation but should be considered based on its relationship to a broader system (Encyclopaedia Britannica, A).

- Russian formalism, which emerged in the early 20th century under the leadership of Viktor Shklovsky. This tradition is associated with both the OPOJAZ (Society for the Study of Poetic Language) and the Moscow Linguistic Society (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, B) and focuses mainly on poetry. It places

importance on form and technique above content and views literature as an autonomous language (Erlich, 1973).

- US new criticism, developed in the 20th Century in the United States of America, which primarily emphasises close analytic reading of the text as autonomous (Jancovich, 1993)

- German hermeneutics, which first emerged as a branch of Biblical studies focused on the understanding and interpretation of linguistics. This tradition has since shifted to encompass not only communication but also the essentials of human life and existence; that is an interrogation into human culture and interaction (Zalta et al., 2005).

Narrative research has received wider recognition in the seminal work of Vladimir Propp (1928), with its focus on analysing stories and its meaning-making. This focus on the structural properties of narrative has been adopted and developed by other researchers, notable Labov and Waletzky (1997) who adopted a strict definition of narrative in analysing and constructing meanings. By the end of the 1970s, few had become many, as a large number of academic scholars including Jerome Bruner (1990) and Donald E. Polkinghorne (1987) in psychology, Laurel Richardson (1990), Ken Plummer (1995) and Corinne Squire (2007) in sociology and Deirdre McCloskey (1990) in economics, were all working in the field of narrative. Most of these researchers, including Bruner, Plummer and Squire, adopted a constructionist approach to their work, arguing that narratives are positioned within the broader construct of personal, social and cultural relations. These narrative scholars opened an interdisciplinary space that allowed researchers the use of narrative as a tool in analysing individual experiences of a wide

range of social issues including migration, social inequality, gender relations, health and illness (Esin, Fathi and Squire, 2013). This makes narrative suitable for this study, as according to Turner:

> Structural and other social factors intersect with multiple layers of inequality to increase women's risk of trafficking – internationally and domestically – into sex trafficking around the world (Turner, 2012, p.33).

Andrew, Squire and Tamboukou (2008) have categorised individuals' experiences into the experience-centred and event-centred narrative, with the experience-centred commonly preferred due to its person-centred focus and its recognition of the construction of stories and the multiple meanings produced through the narrator's stories, in contrast to the event-centred, with its focus on gathering corpuses of stores. Thus, people will construct stories to fit their current sense of identity while leaving out experiences that undermine that identity. Brunner (1990) posits that individuals have a unique perception of themselves, which is embedded in their cultural and social location. Thus, "stories" do not "happen" in the real world but are constructed in people's heads. Narrative, then, is a version of reality and lives in narrative are not necessarily lived lives but told lives. Further, Bruner's (2003) emphasis on the constructive nature of narrative is asserted when he stated that self-making is a narrative art, that is guided by an unspoken assumed cultural model of what selfhood should and might be, as well as what it should not be. Bruner posits that:

> we constantly construct and reconstruct a self to meet the needs of the situation we encounter, and we do so with the guidance of our memories of the past and our hope and fears of the future, which leads to the kind of stories we tell about our self (Bruner, 2003, p. 210).

4.1.1 The Rationale for a Narrative Study

This study adopted a narrative methodology as the central focus in narrative studies is the lives of human beings. Narrative methodology privileges position and subjectivity or individuals' meaning-making through the stories they tell and their construction of personal truth and experiences (Casey, Proudfoot and Corbally, 2016; Bailey and Tilley, 2002). Through in-depth inquiry, this study explored migrant women's experience of sex trafficking and the sex trade in Ireland. The use of narrative, therefore, allowed the study to focus on the collecting, analysing and presenting of storied texts or personal accounts with the aim of establishing a rich description of the meaning of the women's experience of the sex trade and life since exiting (Riessman, 2008). Through restoring or retelling we are able to process and understand our own and others' thought processes, actions and reactions (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002).

Bruce (2008) highlights the link between narrative and experience and states that much can be learned from stories, as they define human knowledge concerning actions and experience, and that these lives must be put in a narrative form for them to be understood (Czarniawska, 2004). One of the core fundamentals of narrative is that stories are constructed to reflect the narrator's version of their realities/identities (Smith, 2007). Stories are told for specific reasons and they reflect societal norms and traditions and 'amplify other' voices (Riessman, 2008). Bamberg similarly suggests that:

> When narrators tell a story, they give narrative form to experience. They position characters in space and time and, in a very broad sense, give order to and make sense of what happened or what is imagined to have happened. Thus, it can be argued that Narrative attempts to explain or normalise what has occurred (Bamberg, 2012, p. 3).

Polkinghorne (1988) claimed that narrative is the core form through which human experience is made meaningful. Frank stated that there is no reality without

narrative because "we have stories, we believe we are having experience, and experience is at best enactment of pre-given stories", meaning that stories represent lived lives being represented (Frank, 2010, p. 21).

Accordingly, narrative researchers Carless and Douglas (2017) propose six qualities of narrative research, which they maintain offers significant use for psychosocial phenomena and research. Firstly, narrative research provides an in-depth insight into the complexities of an individual's lived experiences to understand the individual's subjective response to certain events in their lives, as the individual is in control and tells their story in their own way. Second, through its focus on individual experiences creates and communicates meanings of an event. It calls for a dialogical interaction which positions participants as the experts of their own life, allowing researchers to learn from such understanding and co-construction of meaning. Third narrative is not static, rather it offers in depth understanding into the trajectory of life across time and reveals the consequences of events that would have appeared irrelevant. Fourth, narrative research highlights the socio-cultural context in which an individual's story is shaped based on the dominant discourse, and assumptions. It allows researchers to learn by positioning participants as the experts in their story and experiences. Fifth, the use of narrative forms (stories) engages diverse audience, allowing for emotional richness and embodied presence to be persevered. It offers an understanding of life as a human being through storytelling and individual's experiences of life through one's body. Sixth, narrative research, calls for ethical engagement within an empathic and trusting interview process between the participant and researcher. This offers individuals the freedom and safety to speak about issues that are taboo or silenced, whilst challenging the dominant narratives within society such as women in the sex trade (Carless and Douglas, 2017).

For example, the narrative exist that stereotypes black women as hypersexual and exotic sexual objects with insatiable sexual appetite and this depiction of black women continues to be heightened in films and by the media (Anderson et al, 2018). Another existing narrative is that black women choose to go into prostitution (Brooks, 2020). However, through narrative interviews and the counternarrative stories women tell such widely held dominant narratives are challenged and other narratives are created.

Narrative research, it has been argued, is useful in exploring the lives of women usually marginalised and excluded from research (Boonzaier and van Schalkwyk, 2011), such as survivors of sexual exploitation. Through storytelling individuals have the power to construct their experiences and identities, which may be in conflict with the 'grand' narrative or the counter-narrative (Holloway and Freshwater, 2007), as in this study. Consequently, the use of narrative in analysing the stories of women's experiences of the sex trade and the influences of these experiences in their present lives will generate unique understandings into the range of various intersecting forces that order and illuminate relations between society and the women (Bailey and Tilley, 2002).

In parallel to historical truth, narrative truth provides information on an event or phenomenon in the form of a personal story, which can add to the 'black and white' nature of quantitative data too, allowing for a well-rounded picture. Josselson (2011) states that the epistemology of narrative research adheres to the relativity and multiplicity of truths. Narrative researchers' opinions vary in terms of how or if one objectively constructs a reality from the narration of another. However, narrative truth is based primarily, not on a factual record, but on the premise of a constructed account of an experience and how that experience is understood and recounted by the narrator

(Josselson, 2011). Accordingly, narrative research is invaluable for the examination of how people choose to decide what they say to others and how they connect the various pieces of a story to create a particular experience (Josselson, 2011).

4.1.2   The Social Construction of Reality

While there is no consensus on the origins of social constructionism, Slater (2018, p.2) maintains that the true origin of social constructionism can be traced to the work of Max Schiller in the 1920s, whose "sociology of knowledge" promoted the understanding of reality as a social construct. However, the seminal work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) remains very relevant, especially in the field of sociology. Berger and Luckmann's work 'The Social Construction of Reality', suggests that all knowledge is developed, transmitted and maintained in a social situation, and that the process by which it is done congeals into a taken-for-granted "reality for the ordinary man" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p.15).

This study takes a social constructionist epistemological position that considers individuals' narrative of reality and knowledge as being socially situated and relationally formed, meaning that social realities are collectively and individually constructed. Therefore, "an individual's knowledge of everyday life-world is partly uniquely constructed by the individual and partly socially determined" (Schutz and Kaufman,1984, p.143). The sense-making process of social constructionism based on generated understanding of the world is premised on the belief that reality is intimately linked to subjective experience, therefore a person's understanding of experience will correspond to constructed concepts that form, direct and normalise the meaning of such experience (Slater, 2018).   Constructionism maintains that meaning is constructed and not

discovered. It acknowledges the existence of subjective and multiple realities, implying that overarching or innate truth is non-existent, rather truths are contingent on subjective cultural, social, historical bases (Berger and Luckmann, 1996). Therefore, it is the researcher's responsibility to develop an awareness of the context in which the phenomenon under study is occurring, so as to gain an in-depth understanding of the individual's perspectives.

4.1.3 Thematic Narrative Analysis

Riessman (2008) outlines a typology of approaches to analysing narrative data that includes Thematic Narrative Analysis, Dialogical/Performance Analysis and Structural Analysis and notes that what distinguishes each of these approaches is its focus on specific features of the narrative; the 'what', 'who', 'how', 'when' and 'why' present in each approach. Broadly speaking, Thematic Narrative Analysis focuses almost exclusively on the 'told' of speech or 'what' is said, in contrast to either Dialogical Performance Analysis or Structural Narrative Analysis. Dialogic Performance Analysis by contrast focuses on 'who' a story is told to, 'when' and 'why' the story is told. Dialogical Performance Analysis emphasises the co-constructive elements of narrative, making the interviewer an active presence in the text by focusing on the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee and the use of language in the narrative.

Riessman, suggests that Dialogical Performance Analysis is most suitable for focus groups and classrooms and its departure from the more detailed feature of what is 'told' by the individual makes it unsuitable for the present study, as the sensitivity of the topic makes it challenging to recruit participant for a focus group. Structural Narrative Analysis on the other hand is cantered on the 'telling' or 'how' a narrative is told. It

focuses on the linguistics of the narrative. Its use of only bounded speech and the lack of attention to the experience and social context, makes this approach unsuitable for the present study. Riessman also cautions on the use of this approach for studies that use language that is not North American English. In contrast to the two approaches, Dialogical Performance Analysis that interrogates the 'who' 'when' 'why' or Structural Analysis that interrogates 'telling' or 'how', Riessman (2008) argues that specific features of Thematic Narrative Analysis, such as its suitability to a wide range of narrative text including interviews, documents, published biographical account, ethnographic observations makes it straightforward and a preferred method of analysis to researchers from multiple disciplines.

Thematic Narrative Analysis involves detailed analysis of narrative accounts through the use of mostly extended texts and life stories, which focuses on the 'told' reports or 'content' of events and experiences. The use of extended (length extract) or biographical text of the individual's accounts of their experiences through stories also means that the narrative is kept as intact as possible while allowing for the interpretation of data based on themes developed by the researcher (Riessman, 2008). In Thematic Narrative Analysis, minimal attention is given to the local context, which is the micro-level interaction of account between the interviewer and interviewee. The consideration is for the broader context, which is going beyond the interviewer and participant interaction. Such interactions may include cultural ones and institutions that shape personal accounts and the construction of meaning they ascribe to their experiences, whilst theorising about the social structures and inequality that have influenced such experiences. Crenshaw (1989) notes that discrimination are not created equally and that a black feminist lens allows the depth of concurrent forms of oppression to be understood. Thematic

Narrative Analysis is defined by the notion that narrative reconstruction and interpretation seeks to 'realign the present and past and self and society' (Riessman, 2008, p. 57).

Riessman does not provide a specific procedure of analysing data using Thematic Narrative Analysis, which re-echoes what other researchers of thematic analysis such as Braun and Clarke (2006) had previously stated about the lack of consensus on how to go about doing thematic analysis. Riessman (2008) presents a number of studies that she suggests adopt a Thematic Narrative Analysis, defined by attention to the content as she conceives it, with the primary focus being on what narrative communicates through stories to make meaning of individuals' construction of events and experience, whilst preserving sequences, that is the order in which the story is narrated to make sense. The narrative account for one of the studies she presents makes use of the chronological biographical narrative to identify general themes, range and variations for analysis and comparison of the participant's individual narrative. Thus reality is conceptualised as constructed based on the overlap between the broader social structures and personal account of that reality. Such an approach is valuable in this study as it allows for the broader social context that permits the sexual exploitation of women as told by the narratives to be explored.

4.2   Research Process

I have outlined in detail below how the participants were selected and recruited and include significant insights regarding the interview process and challenges. No financial or other incentives were offered to participants who took part in this study.

4.2.1   Recruitment

The inclusion criteria for participation in this study included:

1.   Participants who were trafficked in Ireland, either as a final destination or *en route* to another country.

2.   Participants who had exited the sex industry at the time of the interview.

3.   Participants who were 18 years and over at the time of the interview.

4.   Participants who were migrant women.

Potential participants were recruited by various means and arrangements for interviews were made at mutually agreed private locations. The advertisement materials used for recruitment contained both a mobile phone number and an email address so that potential participants could make contact through whichever means was safest and preferred. All contact with the women and gatekeepers was either through phonecalls or text messages and at the initial contact, I always asked if I had their permission to contact them. Two of the women said that they were happy for me to contact them, but never to leave any messages; four women insisted that they would call or text me; and two did not want any direct contact from me, except through the gatekeeper. Woodley and Lockard (2016), in their study on the limited numbers of black women educators in New Mexico colleges, argued for accessing participants from particular ethnic backgrounds through places they

may frequent. They highlighted the challenges they initially encountered in recruiting participants for their study, until they went into the local black hair saloon to talk about their research.

Three recruitment strategies were employed (see Figure 4). Firstly, posters/flyers were distributed in Dublin and in seven other towns. Each time I entered a town I went into businesses/establishments owned by migrants to explain what my research was about, to ask their permission to place the flyer in the female toilets and to seek their assistance in spreading the word about the study amongst other migrants living locally. Secondly, flyers/posters were distributed through professional migrant associations such as the African Association of Social Workers, African Scholars Association Ireland, and ethnic minority organisations, both within and outside of Dublin and they were invited to share the poster amongst their contacts. Finally, relevant frontline services, government bodies and organisations that are either involved with migrants or trafficked women were contacted for assistance in recruiting migrant women whom they had assisted in the past and might be interested in telling their story. I always included the following documents at the initial contact: an ethics approval letter for the study (see Appendix A), a Garda vetting letter (Appendix B), an information sheet (Appendix C), a copy of the consent form (Appendix D) and a recruitment poster and flyer (Appendix E).

In the event, responses from organisations and government bodies were minimal, as only one of the seven organisations that I contacted advertised my research. The remaining six organisations gave various reasons why they could not engage with the study, mainly that it is a topic that might cause further trauma to vulnerable women and that the poster/flyer was inappropriate for an environment with children, such as direct provision centres. As a result

Figure 4: The Recruitment Process

| Individual sees recruitment flyer and makes contact | Individual is told about the research by a frontline service | Individual is told about the research by a participant and contact | Individ makes co throug migra com |

Rapport is established through several phone calls and text messages. This study, including available counselling services if needed, is sometimes discussed

Participant initially agrees but decides the

I focused on community-involved participatory approaches to recruit women for interviews. Congruent with the sampling of hard-to-reach populations, networking sampling, also known as 'snowball' sampling, was used in this study based on how the sample is assumed to grow (Lee 1993). This involves recruiting participants through referral by others who had already participated in the study (Auerbach and Silverstain, 2003). Snowball sampling provides researchers with an opportunity to study marginalised and oppressed populations through the use of social networking, without further risk of marginalising them (Woodley and Lockard, 2016). After each interview, I encouraged the participant to pass the flyers to other sexually exploited migrant women who might be interested in being part of this study.

4.2.2. Challenges with Recruitment of Survivors

There were some challenges which I had to overcome in recruiting participants for this study, such as over-zealous gatekeeping and a lack of response to my efforts to recruit.

4.2.2.1 Gatekeeping and Gatekeepers

Holloway and Wheeler (2002) describe gatekeeping as the process of denying or consenting for another individual to have access to something or someone. Some writers (Erzikova , 2018 and Lee, 2005) have argued that the concept of gatekeeping is broadly understood as judgement or decision making by a secondary source about information that is collected, evaluated and ultimately shared. This is usually done by individuals or organisations (gatekeepers) with the power of allowing or denying access to the information or research population. Researchers (Singh and Wassenaar, 2016; Crowhurst

and Kennedy-Macfoy, 2013; Homan, 2001) contend that there is often a disconnect between gatekeepers as conceptualised in books and gatekeepers in action and that because gatekeepers are often seen as neutral and monolithic, the multiple ways through which gatekeepers impact on a research process is often overlooked.

In keeping with the Nuremberg code, which requires that individuals are informed of the type and implications of the research in which they are being invited to participate (De Angelis, 2016; Homan, 2001), various documents (Appendices A-E) were sent to those institutions/organisations that I considered as gatekeepers, including Pentecostal churches[4], governmental and non-governmental organisations, explaining what the study was about and what was expected from the research participants. In articulating the role of a gatekeeper, Singh and Wassenaar (2016) contend that while institutions have an autonomous right to either give or deny access, the individual's autonomy can not be overruled. However, the reluctance of gatekeepers to inform the women of the study based on their response to me would suggest that the women's autonomy to choose may not have been paramount when decisions were made not to share information about the study. For example, after one of the gatekeepers stated that the poster was not appropriate to be displayed in direct provision centres because there are children there, I suggested leaving the smaller flyers at the reception desks but they did not respond to that email or subsequent emails.

De Angelis (2014) has criticised the silencing of sex-trafficked womens' voices in international legal instruments, arguing that because the information that the women have

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[4] Pentecostal churches: The church tradition in which the majority of the African communities worship.

is not sought after, the knowledge that they possess remains hidden. She references the work of Morris (1997), who contends that there is far greater harm in silencing the voice of a survivor when he stated:

> Voice is what gets silenced, repressed, pre-empted, denied, or at best translated into an alien dialect, much as clinicians translate a patient's pain onto a series of units of audio-visual description. Indeed, voice ranks among the most precious human endowments that suffering normally deprives us of, removing far more than a hope that others will understand or assist us. Silence and the loss of voice may eventually constitute or represent for some who suffer a complete shattering of the self (Morris, 1997 p. 29, cited in De Angelis, 2016)

After several unsuccessful attempts to reach out to gatekeepers who did not call back or respond to emails sent to them, I moved on to other migrant organisations within the community, including local migrant businesses, migrant leaders and organisations and Pentecostal churches with large migrant congregations.

4.2.2.2   Non-response to Recruitment

Researchers continue to attribute the reluctance to participate in studies exploring sensitive topics to various factors. McNeeley (2012) has argued that one of the core challenges encountered with sensitive research is people refusing to participate due to the sensitivity of the topics or questions being asked. Arfken and Balon (2011) have argued that low response to sensitive studies can be attributed to various factors including issues with confidentiality measures, and the sometimes cumbersome information sheets that participants find difficult to understand. However, an earlier report by Shavers-Hornaday et al. (1997) posits that unethical conduct within the American medical and scientific community have led to a lack of interest in research participation within marginalised populations. In a study of women trafficked for sexual exploitation Brennan (2005) identified various reasons for low response and stated that:

they have been voiceless for different reasons: because of fear of reprisals from their traffickers, their stage in the recovery process, and concerns that their community of co-ethnics will stigmatise them. Given these obstacles, it is possible that few ex-captives will ever step out from the anonymity of their case managers offices, to give interviews to a researcher, let alone public representations or press conferences as part of anti-trafficking movement activities (Brennan, 2005 p.43, cited in De Angelis, 2016).

For the women who refused or changed their minds about participation, the fear of losing their family or relationship if their former lives were ever discovered was very real. The women saw their family as very important, something good that has happened to them after the experience of being trafficked in the sex trade and the thought of being part of a study that might put at risk the life that they have created for themselves was unthinkable. In her book *Hiding from Humanity*, Nussbaum (2004) contends that our most intimate relationships through which we find life's meanings are contained in the family. She further notes that despite most family relationships being packed with hostility and ambivalence, our assigned roles as "the good mother" or "the good father" are valued as familiar norms that allow individuals to define themselves as normal.

Kish-Gephart et al. (2009, p. 2) note that "Fear is a powerful emotion that shapes many aspects of our lives" and traumatic past experiences with specific situations may progress into an automatic fear association based on cues from those past experiences. They claimed that repeated episodes of fear-driven silences can lead to 'habituated silences' which is actually a manifestation of fear's long shadow at work, though it resembles resignation. Some of the participants' comments highlighted fear, particularly the fear of their spouses/partners finding out about their past lives and included the fear of being shamed:

> "I am sorry to be calling back to decline, but you see, my partner does not know anything about that life, and we have kids together. If it ever comes out that I had lived that life, he will leave me and the kids."

"It is too risky. I am engaged to be married, imagine what will happen if he finds out."

"I understand the importance of the research and what it means for people to know exactly what happened to us, but I have to protect my husband and kids. They are all I have."

"My sister, I will lose everything if it comes out. You cannot imagine the shame. I am sorry for saying yes in the first place."

"I honestly cannot take the risk, it's too risky, I will be finished! My life will be over. I deserve a life."

4.2.3 The Sample

Eight female survivors of sexual exploitation were interviewed. Holloway and Freshwater (2007) state that because the central aim of narrative is to gather in-depth stories, sampling can involve small samples, as in this study. What is important in qualitative research is the number of interviews required to meet the study's aims and objectives (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006). Not all prospective participants met the criteria for participation; for example, some of the women who contacted me were never trafficked in or through Ireland, but in other E.U. countries and their home countries. Six survivors who did meet the criteria and had initially expressed interest in participation did not go through with the interview, because of fears of being exposed.

All the participants were black African women with the majority of them coming from West Africa (see Table 3). At the initial phase of recruiting participants, I had hoped to be able to interview migrant women from diverse backgrounds and ethnicity, which was why I went to various migrant shops and reached out to migrant leaders within communities. However, it ended with only black African women contacting me to participate in the study. Being a black African female researcher myself, I had to rethink how I wanted to proceed with the data and what such data means for the discourse on trafficking for sexual exploitation in Ireland. Apart from one of the participants who had

a college degree, the other women had minimal to no education. Four of the survivors were raped as minors, at the ages of 7, 12, 14 and 17 respectively. While the rape of two of the women as minors had happened outside the context of sex trafficking, the rape of the third woman as a minor had happened within the context of sex trafficking, as she had entered the sex trade as a minor and stated that she had been raped multiple times as a minor. The fourth woman, while she did not say she was raped as a minor, still falls within this category as she was not yet 18 years of age when she was first trafficked for sexual exploitation. All of the women came from vulnerable socioeconomic backgrounds, with two of the participants reporting being homeless as minors. Two participants reported being physically abused, both by clients and their traffickers, showing the researcher very serious scars on their bodies.

Pseudonym	Ethnicity	Gender	Region	History of child rape	Children during trafficking	Age at Exit	Age at Interview
Elombe	Black	Female	Central African	Yes	2	38	49
Fanya	Black	Female	Central African	Yes	None	30	32
Edowaye	Black	Female	West African	No	None	33	39
Sarah	Black	Female	East African	No	3	28	32
Osareti	Black	Female	West African	Yes	None	19	21
Blessing	Black	Female	West African	No	None	25	26
Afaafa	Black	Female	East African	Yes	3	22	24
Mgbafo	Black	Female	West African	No	None	26	27

Table 3: Participants' Profiles and Demographic Information

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4.2.4 Interviews with Participants

All interviews were audio-recorded using a digital recorder and lasted between forty to eighty-three minutes in length. In total, eight in-depth interviews were carried out with survivors who in line with the Palermo protocol's definition of trafficking identified as women who have been trafficked in the sex trade (UNODC, 2000). Interviews took place in a suitable and private location mutually agreed on by both the researcher and participants, with identifying details altered to protect women's identity. Three interviews took place in the School of Nursing Psychotherapy and Community Health at Dublin City University, while the other five interviews took place at various locations agreed upon by the participants and myself including two that took place in their homes. Two of the participants were no longer living in Ireland at the time of this interview, and I had to travel outside of Ireland to interview them. From the initial contact till the time of the interview, I was also careful about when, how and if I can contact the women. Some were very specific about when I can contact them while others insisted that they will contact me, which was fine because it was important that they felt safe doing the interview. Recorded interviews were transcribed and all the materials from the interview both written and audio recorded were stored in a secured password-protected file, on a password-protected encrypted computer in the University.

This study utilised unstructured or in-depth interviews on the grounds that it allows participants the flexibility of narrating their experiences and understanding of what a particular phenomenon means to them, as well as introducing topics they see as important which the researcher may not have thought of. Riessman (2008) maintained that no

interview is completely unstructured, as interviews make use of guiding principles that give them some form of structure, which was true in this case to some extent because I had prompted the women with an open-ended question, that is "tell me about your experience" and sometimes I had to ask them to elaborate on an issue. However, it was still unstructured, allowing individual perspectives in a natural, less technical, and conversational way, which meant that the women were able to take the lead in the interview (Elmir et al, 2011) thereby addressing some of the issues linked with control and power in the co-construction of narrative.

My choice of interview style (Narrative) was conversational, which made the technique seemingly simple (Guest, Namey, and Mitchell, 2013). Furthermore, Riessman (2008) notes the importance of asking questions in a way that opens up topics and gives participants the opportunity to construct their narrative in ways that are meaningful to them, which is why after making sure that a participant was comfortable I started the interview with an open question "In your own time and words, can you please tell me how you found yourself working in the sex trade". Riessman states that narration depends on expectations, if extended accounts are welcomed, some participants and interviewers collaboratively develop them (Riessman, 2008).

In keeping with the narrative tradition, the phrase "tell me how" clearly calls for an extended account. The ways through which narrative accounts can be organised were very visible through the interviews; some women switched back and forth in time in their narratives whilst others gave a linear, chronological account of events. Most participants responded with narratives about the dynamics of their life trajectories before during and after being sex trafficked. One woman had difficulty starting and looked for guidance by asking me where I wanted her to start from. Aside from the initial opening question, I

limited myself to simply indicating that I was paying close attention to what was being said and I encouraged participant to continue with the use of minimal lexicons such as 'ok', 'I see', 'mmm' and bodily cues such as touching their arm or nodding my head. Another woman repeatedly asked me "you understand me?" or "you understand my English?", to which I simply responded, "your English is fine". These aforementioned limited encouragers were used on purpose to avoid influencing participants from sharing the aspects of the experiences that they may think I was most interested in. It was significant that their stories reflect the importance of their experiences to them and not what they might perceive is interesting for me. I never interjected while participants were talking, I simply listened and took notes, only asking for clarification, elaboration, or simply showing interest in particular issues raised by the participant but not developed further when there was an extended pause or at the end of the interview.

4.2.5 Challenges with In-depth Interviews with Survivors

A few challenges were encountered during the interview process. For example, the first woman I interviewed lives two and hours from Dublin and wanted to meet after 7 pm. One participant came with her new-born baby and a toddler to the venue for the interview where we had agreed to meet. I had no idea she was a new mother until I reached the location, and despite her having brought someone to take care of the children while we talked, I had to stop the recorder twice for her to attend to them. Another person was interviewed in a public place, a private booth in a pizzeria, and despite the pizzeria being empty at that time of the day, there was considerable background noise coming from the basement of the building that interfered and made transcribing difficult, although ultimately this did not undermine the quality of the transcription. Also, it seemed as if she was having difficulties gathering her thoughts and focusing on the conversation.

During the interviews I was very observant, looking for signs in the tone of the participants' voices, and facial or body language that might indicate that the participant was distressed. Also, whenever participants paused for a period of time, I asked if they wanted to take a break, and reminded them that it was perfectly fine if they no longer wished to continue with the interview.

While it is recommended that a researcher write down their reflections and observations immediately after each interview, I was almost always numb after each interview. For the most part, I had to distance myself from the data for a day or two before commencing to articulate my thoughts into words.

4.3   Doing Sensitive Research with a Vulnerable Population

Research that involves a vulnerable and/or hard-to-reach population is almost always very challenging, not only due to ethical and methodological issues, but also because every stage of the research process may also be sensitive (Poudel, Newlands and Simkhada,2016). This is why a thorough examination of the consequences of undertaking such a study is required for a comprehensive understanding of the issues (Dickson-Swift et al., 2008). Lee (1993) argues that research into sensitive topics poses substantial threat that is either physical or intrusive, to those who have been or are involved in it, but he stresses the importance of embarking on sensitive research, as 'it shines a light on the dark corners of society, addressing some of society's policy queries and social issues (Lee, 1993, p.1).

Prior to starting this study, one of my main concerns was how to ensure that participants were not re-traumatised by their participation (Liamputtong, 2007). Holloway and Freshwater (2007) have argued that the awareness and experience of vulnerability can

force an individual into a process of active inquiry that allows the individual through a reflection on events to engage, refine and reinvent the self. However, studies suggest variation in participants' reactions to discussing sensitive topics such as violence and interpersonal trauma (Edwards et al., 2017; Campbell et al., 2009; Beck, 2005). While a few participants were upset at recalling their traumatic past, the majority of the participants found the experience empowering and beneficial. They maintained that it allowed them to help others, support research in that particular area, and help themselves through self-reflection (Edwards et al., 2017; Sivell, 2015; Campbell et al., 2009; Beck, 2005). This aligns with statements made by participants during the interview, as three of the women stated that their hope was that their participation will help not only women who have been sex trafficked, but also women hoping to better their lives to be careful of promises of a better life and who makes these promises.

According to McCosker et al.(2004) and McNeeley (2012) an issue is sensitive depending on how it is viewed within specific social and cultural societies, which is perhaps why researchers cannot come to a consensus as to what constitutes a sensitive research topic.

> A topic is sensitive if it requires disclosure of behaviours or attitudes which would normally be kept private and personal, which might result in offence or lead to social censure or disapproval, and/or which might cause the respondent discomfort to express (Wellings, Branigan and Mitchell, 2000, p.256)

Lee (1993) argues that three issues are generally viewed as sensitive: sacred and stressful events such as sexuality, issues of stigma and fear that may impact on identity and the self, and political threats that may lead to social conflicts or controversy. Fontes (2004) posits that gender-based violence fits into the category of sensitive studies due to the psychological and physical threats that it poses, as well as the concepts of power, sexual integrity, love and family contained in it (Lee and Renzetti, 1990). Research into the sex

trade, often seen as a form of gender-based violence as it disproportionately affects girls/women, contains all three strands as defined by Lee, with varying degrees of stigma (Benoit et al., 2005; and 2018), which can inhibit an individual from having a fulfilling life, affecting the individual's identity and may lead to social exclusion (Corrigan, Kuwabara and O'Shaughnessy 2009). However, because the sex trade is often associated with violence and various kinds of threat, trauma and distress, women who have survived these traumas are often unwilling to talk about it and participants who choose to speak out remain very cautious about the choice of people they disclose to (Ahrens et al., 2010).

Using feminist theory, CampbelL, Loving and Lebel (2014) developed a recruitment protocol which they maintained was a guiding principle for research into issues of gender and power differentiation. They highlighted three features that were transferable to the methodological concern involved in the recruitment of vulnerable population: (1) "lived experience", that is privileging the woman's or girls' perspective even when it may not be congruent with the researcher's presumptions; (2) challenging the power imbalance that might arise within the participant-researcher relationship, as it undermines trust between the two; and (3) focusing on sharing emotional information with the researcher through participation. For example, at the recruitment stage, some of the potential participants were sceptical about why I was doing this research, they wanted to know why I was interested in the topic, and if I was a journalist or being paid to do the research, and what I was going to do with their narrative. Sharing a bit about my background was very useful in building trust between the participants and myself and reassured them that my motive for asking them to tell their stories was for research purposes. Sielbeck-Bowen et al., (2002) had earlier noted that the process of sharing emotional information between researcher and participants could have either positive or negative implications. Therefore,

the researcher has the responsibility of being sensitive to the participant's well-being, safety and consequences of a participant's engagement. I have been mindful of these by focusing on participant-led interviewing, through my choice of methodology/interviewing style (Narrative) which allows participants to tell their stories as they see fit.

4.4 Managing Ethical Concerns

McCosker et al.(2001) identified some methods that they believed would help meet the safety needs of participants and minimise the risk of psychological harm, including ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, building rapport with the participant before the interview, providing information on options for counselling and support, as well as the researcher's ability at managing sensitive disclosures and debriefing. Full approval for this study was received from Dublin City University in April 2018. Ethical challenges and considerations for the study include informed consent, providing a plain language statement, recruitment design and strategies, gatekeeping, researcher's and participants' safety, a sensibly designed interview process and the measures taken to protect participants' identity. They are detailed in the following sections.

4.4.1 Informed Consent

The Medical Research Council of Canada (1998) states that the principle of free and informed consent is widely acknowledged to be at the core of the ethical treatment of

human participants. Embedded in the principles of the Nuremberg code (Shuster, 1997), informed consent in research implies that participants are aware that they are taking part in research, understand what the research is about and the risks and benefits of the research (Nijhawan et al., 2013). Adhering to the principles of informed consent means respect for the rights and interests of others (Homan, 2001). Considering the evidence that trafficked women have survived situations where they believe that displeasing or wrong answers could cause them great harm, it was important for participants in this study to understand that the right to refuse to participate was their fundamental right (Internation Organisation for Migration, 2007). Riessman (2005) posits that as significant as informed consent is to all researchers, the link between narrative research and ethics is strong. Informed consent presents even more challenges in narrative tradition than in other research methodologies due to its focus on participants' experiences and keeping the stories of these experiences as intact as possible through extended text as compared to other methods that use short extracts (Riessman, 1993).

In this study, the lack of total confidentiality for participants was addressed mostly at the initial contact. In addition, an information sheet was given at the initial contact to potential participants, explaining what the research was about, how it would be conducted and what their participation would mean. Two potential participants withdrew on hearing that the interview would be audio recorded. The information sheet given to participants explicitly stated that participation was voluntary and as such participants were free to stop or withdraw at any stage. Before each interview commenced, participants signed consent forms which were stored away in a secure place. Two of the participants could not understand both the information sheet and the consent form, so I had to interpret the

information contained in the document in pidgin English, a language I speak well to ensure that the women understand what they are consenting to.

4.4.2 'Do no harm' – Confidentiality and Safety

The confidentiality of information provided by participants has been upheld throughout the entire research study, as well as the limitations outlined in the plain language statement. Wills (2018) postulates that maintaining anonymity can be very challenging to address in narrative research as the greater the context and details offered in the narrative account, the greater the chance of compromising the anonymity. Prior to the commencement of recruitment, I had sought and ensured that the services of a reputable counselling service were available if needed by a participant, as regardless of preliminary precautions taken to avoid the risk of harm during interviews, there could have been a need for such a service.

My supervisors and I understood that the women we sought in this study had already exited the sex trade, but we were still concerned and discussed possible scenarios/considerations. Due to the violence associated with the sex trade, one of the primary concerns was my safety and the possibility of potential participants being at risk from their traffickers or others in the sex trade. In narrative traditions, respondents tell of their experiences through stories, and even when details have been altered to protect the participant's identity, the risk of the story being recognised is very real for the participant. To ensure anonymity, and that no unnecessary risk was taken my supervisors and I took measures to safeguard and protect the identity of the women. Some of the strategies to mitigate risk and harm included:

- Assigning each participant with a pseudonym, used at all times throughout the text in place of their names

- Assigning individuals with the names of their relationship to another individual in the transcript, such as a boyfriend, husband, mother-in-law, or daughter.

- Substituting the name of places with the letter Y but countries of origin have not been altered in the transcripts to show that the sexual exploitation of women is a global issue.

To ensure that participants felt at ease, I endeavoured to establish trust early, which is consistent with Josselson's (2007) argument on the importance and relevance of building trust between the participant and interviewer, especially if the topic is sensitive. Balancing the 'well-being and safety of victims with the need to draw attention to the situation of sex-trafficked individuals is always difficult, as such specific guidelines must be considered when interviewing survivors (Rende, Taylor and Latonero,2018 and Easton and Mathews,2016). Thus, I have adhered to the ethical and safety recommendations for interviewing trafficked women outlined by the World Health Organisation, which include; consideration of location for the interview, remaining calm and alert, knowing your surroundings, carrying a mobile phone, having an emergency exit, working with a partner whenever necessary World Health Organisation (WHO, 2003). For example, in most of the interviews, the location was decided upon by the researcher and participant. Although I was more familiar with the university and always suggested this location to participants, I was flexible and willing to adapt to a participant's location preferences, considering that it was a very private, emotional and sensitive topic (Herzog, 2005). If a participant got upset during the interview, I would pause the

interview to ask if they wanted they wanted to continue or take a break to finish another day. In addition, a safety protocol was put in place for my safety. I checked in with my supervisors by text when conducting interviews in unfamiliar locations and had opportunities to discuss the personal impact of the interviews. As mentioned earlier, I had to travel abroad to interview two participants, and while abroad I stayed with friends, one of whom accompanied me to the interview venues. The ethical concerns and challenges dealt with in the current study have ensured that the principles of respect for individual rights, autonomy, beneficence, justice and non-maleficence were applied to this study (Haahr, Norlyk and Hall, 2014).

4.5 Data Analysis

The analytic process chosen in this study follows the Thematic Narrative Analysis approach, as outlined by Riessman (2008), because of its described suitability for various types of data, including interviews and life stories, and seeks to identify common elements in order to theorise across cases. Riessman (2005), however, maintains that to use the data collected in narrative form in social research, the narratives need to be analysed and reinterpreted, as they cannot speak for themselves. Thematic Narrative Analysis was also employed to yield the maximum insight into the subjective viewpoint of the women who shared their experiences in this study, both from the personal and societal context. Riessman does not give step-by-step rules on how thematic analysis ought to be approached; she is not restrictive in approach rather she facilitates the crafting of the story based on the data and in true feminist tradition allows things to emerge.

4.5.1 Preparing the Interviews for Analysis

Having conducted all of the interviews myself, as well as the initial lengthy transcribing process, I was already immersed in the women's stories and how these stories were narrated. However, after transcribing each audio interview, I went back to listen again, while reading through the transcript to ensure accuracy and taking note of any previously unobserved aspects of the interview, paying particular attention to important moments and how the women expressed themselves while telling their stories. I took note of silences, speech break-off, pauses/hesitation, when the women cried or showed fear or sadness and/or laughed, of the anger expressed (often directed more at themselves than anyone else). Sustained engagement with the text took place.

The transcripts of the women's narratives were then reviewed and all possible identifying information that could potentially link the women to the interviews was removed or altered, including names of arrival airports, initial country of arrival, cities and towns where trafficking took place, exact number of children and so on. The only transit country named was Libya, which was purposely named because of the high levels of harms and trauma, including death, encountered by Africans migrating or being trafficked through that route to Europe. The route and the harms encountered in Libya are essentially specific to African migrants and as such it was relevant to highlight how, for some people, the dangers and the traumas of trafficking begins even before reaching the trafficking destinations.

During the initial phase of reading the transcripts for familiarisation, it quickly became apparent that the sequence of events in most of the women's narratives was in a non-linear form; the stories were not in a chronological order. The original transcripts

appeared messy, but Knisely (2014) posits that stories are messy because the human experience is messy but that they help tell the most important truth of the human experience and are vulnerable, authentic, honest, and personal. Adams (2017), however, has argued that in the narrative tradition, the narrative represents a sequence of events that must have an order and, since the purpose of a narrative is to show how one event leads to another, it is essential that the events in the story appear in chronological sequence. In this study the women's stories were told in ways that allowed the women to tell them and it was for me to present them in order. I then proceeded with each individual narrative, ordering events into a chronological sequence, with a beginning, a middle and an end (Riessman, 2008).

4.5.2 Emerging Themes from the Data of Participants and Analysis

While I am conscious that the data from the women's in-depth interviews could be dissected in various ways, the process for determining the themes for analysis, involving prioritisation and decision-making at various stages, was applied in constructing a picture of the women's narratives. Following the transcription and ordering each narrative in a chronological sequence, the analysis of the women's accounts through a coding process was the next phase and I worked systematically through the data. This involved an open coding exercise carried out with the aid of the NVivo data management software program, (QSR International, 2018) and because I was working with multiple participants in this study, one dataset was coded before proceeding to the next, allowing for the emergence of ideas from the raw data of women's experiences of their journey before, during and after the sex trade.

This study is exploratory and therefore it was important that I did not try to code the data into any pre-existing framework; rather codes were assigned in order to capture the experiences that were important to the women. After completing the initial coding, I reviewed and adjusted the codes before proceeding to the next phase of sorting the codes into potential categories, which was done manually. To ensure appropriate consideration was given to how different codes combine together to form a category, each code was written down on a separate piece of paper and a board with the different coloured paper was used in assigning the different themes. The final phase, which was the refinement of the themes, involved rigorous examining and re-examining of my interpretation of the meanings the women assigned to their experiences and sometimes reworking the themes in the process of further determination and accuracy of the final themes being merged. Therefore themes reflecting the same content and complementary content were merged into cohesive overarching themes and this phase of the analysis was carried out without the aid of software.

The relevant themes were grouped into four main themes for analysis. In the final phase, particular cases were selected to explore the general themes, similarities and variations outlined and the underlying assumptions of the narratives are compared.

4.6 Reflexivity

Reflexivity was engaged in throughout my study to enhance the promotion of transparency, rigour, trustworthiness and legitimacy of the research process (Adeagbo, 2021). Reflexivity begins before the study and is acknowledged as a crucial process in the generation of knowledge in qualitative research (Berger, 2015), as it ensures that I continue to critically reflect on how my values, biases, knowledge, experiences and beliefs are managed in data collection and interpretation, both by myself and in my

supervision with my supervisors. Further, Berger (2015) argues the advantages and challenges to reflexivity within three separate researcher positions; shared experience, the researcher without the personal familiarity of the subject and insider position. In my positionality statement, in Chapter one above, I made it clear that I do not have personal experience of being sex trafficked and as such do not have an insider understanding of the phenomenon under study. However, my understanding of vulnerability and its contribution to the sex trafficking of such women was informed by my having the same racial and gender identity (black African woman) as the women in this study, coupled with my academic, professional and personal background. Throughout the research process, I used a reflexive journal to continuously keep track of my thoughts, emotions and decisions.

4.6.1 Reflexivity in Recruitment and Data Collection

When I think about the data collection stage of this study, I can honestly say that it was the most thought-provoking and emotionally depressing, yet rewarding phase of the study, as I was constantly engaged in reflexive thinking about the interview process, my own thoughts and feelings and how it was all coming together to help my development as a confident qualitative researcher.

> "*My sister, I will lose everything if it comes out. You cannot imagine the shame. I am sorry for saying yes in the first place*" (*Participant who declined to participate*)

This was the third time I had spoken to her within two weeks, and she was the second person to call and cancel. While a part of me was disappointed, because a lot of planning and preparation had gone into the study in anticipation of data that would be gathered, I

could also understand her reluctance. As a researcher, I was excited about the process of collecting data that came directly from survivors themselves and what that would mean for our understanding of the phenomenon of human trafficking and its potential outcome, both for frontline practitioners that support trafficked women and antitrafficking policies. This was especially important, considering that very few studies have explored the experiences of migrant women who were sex trafficked into Ireland, based on interviews with the women themselves.

However, I appreciated that it was not going to be easy recruiting migrant women to share sensitive and traumatic details of their lives and some of the experiences that they might still be healing from and trying to forget. I was equally nervous, as a novice research student, that I would unknowingly make a mistake that might jeopardies the women and the study. Therefore, I positioned myself from the outset both as an insider and an outsider. First as an insider, because these were black African migrant women with similar socioeconomic backgrounds to myself, but also as an outsider, because I had not been sex trafficked and therefore did not have the lived experience of the topic I was studying.

Through the numerous phone conversations I had with five of the women prior to the interviews, I tried to build trust with the women by answering as honestly as I could the personal questions they asked of me. Of these five women, two were still in the asylum-seeking process and living in direct provision centers, while the other three had lived in such centers. They seemed genuinely surprised to learn that I had lived in a direct provision center for years. Life as a black African migrant woman was always a topic of the conversation amongst other personal questions they asked me. I felt they wanted to know the woman behind the researcher and to understand the reasons and my intentions

for carrying out the research, to which I always explained not only my personal interest but also the relevance of the study. It was important they understood that my intentions were genuine. These prior engagements with the women, where they probed me as a person, were important to me as a researcher, as I realised when my second interview with one of the women was over. I had prior conversations with five of the women, where I mostly listened and responded warmly yet confidently when asked a question and besides building rapport with the women, this also meant that I was not as nervous during the interviews. In comparison, there was no prior engagement before the interviews with the other three women, who came through gatekeepers from within migrant communities in Ireland. To build trust between the participants and myself I also invited them to suggest a location for the interview if they were not comfortable with my suggested location, as I felt that would give them more reassurance.

Unstructured interviewing was utilised in the data collection process. I realised from the outset that it would not be beneficial if the women felt constrained to my interests because it was important that they have some leeway in constructing the terms through which their lives were represented. Taking this into consideration, open-ended questions were therefore employed. I also thought it necessary, because of the sensitivity of the topic and the shame associated with the sex trade, always to explain to the women before each interview that I would not interrupt them while they spoke and that any follow-up questions would be purely to clarify something said or to understand more about something discussed. This was necessary because I did not want the women to think that I was judging something they said. As excited and nervous as I was about actively gathering data for my study because I was expecting it to be interesting, revealing, emotional and thought-provoking – all of which it was – I was equally appreciative of the

opportunity and the privilege to sit and listen to stories of women's experiences of the sex trade. Stories of shattered dreams, of pain and survival. It all came out and sometimes with tears and I was sincerely humbled, both as a human being and a researcher, listening to it all. It was also sometimes draining for me as a researcher to hear about the pain, trauma and hopelessness, to see the tears and wish that I could do something other than a silent squeeze of the hand. I had initially prepared an interview schedule with 'an open question' and prompt questions that I thought might come up during the interviews. I planned the first interview with this in mind; however, I was also conscious that the narrative tradition was about the story of the individual and what is important to them, especially in a sensitive topic such as trafficking for sexual exploitation. After I asked the open question, the woman began to speak and 10-20 minutes into the interview, I realised the prompts were not necessary as not only was she detailed in her narrative but the questions in the prompts were not aligning with her story. Therefore, I decided to keep note of the prompts relevant to the participant's story and I used these in the latter part of the interview to ask for her to clarify further different aspects of her story.

Also, I had initially approached organisations that work with sex-trafficked women because I believed it would be easier both for the women and myself. I felt it was important that potential participants trust me and so if I approached women through organisations they were already engaged with, they would have built rapport and trust over time with employees of the organisation. I had thought it would be easier for me to access potential participants and save time making contact if I could reach out through such organisations. As a practitioner in the field of human trafficking now and reflecting on my recruitment process, I can to some extent understand the gatekeeping function of frontline practitioners and their wish to protect these vulnerable individuals. However, I

also believe that women, including sexually exploited women, need to be able to exercise their agency to choose and not have another person make that decision for them. I also realise that whilst I took a difficult route in order to reach the women, and it took a long time for us to build trust, it was a good decision, as I would otherwise not have met these black African women, the majority of whom are not linked up with any frontline organisations and their stories would have remained untold and their voices silent.

This is what I wrote following my first interview:

> *"I did my first interview two days ago. I was nervous at the beginning because she was one of the women that contacted me through a gatekeeper (local migrant business owner), where I had advertised my poster. Reflexive writing is often recommended for researchers after each interview, but I found myself trying very hard to block out what I had heard, to not think about it …. I have not slept well since my first interview but I realise it is probably because I am still a novice researcher and it will become easier with experience. It has taken me two days to be able to sit down today and process the interview and my own thoughts. As much as I enjoyed the interviewing process, I was still overwhelmed by the sensitive and traumatic events that she told me about and I was more confused at the matter-of-fact tone with which she talked about these events and how she shamed and blamed herself for everything. It was hard not to be able to tell her that it's not her fault, that things will be alright, not to be able to console and hug her, not to comfort her, but I had to continuously remind myself that my role as a researcher does not recommend that I do this. It does not seem right, and I found myself sometimes touching her hand on the table while she talked. I wanted her to understand that I support her, yet I cannot say for sure if she understood that.*
>
> *As a migrant woman living in Ireland and studying the experiences of other migrant women, despite not having the same experiences as the cohort of migrant women that I sought, I realised that did not fully consider my outsider position and the influence it might have on the interview. I had considered myself as an outsider only to the extent that I was not sex trafficked and therefore do not have that experience. It was one of the first things that the woman highlighted during my first interview. My first interviewee was the first that positioned me as an outsider, when before the interview started she called me 'a big woman', referring to my position as a black researcher in a predominantly white academic environment in Ireland, but she also acknowledged my position as an insider by repeatedly calling me 'sister', a*

term often used amongst black women to acknowledge each other. She would constantly ask, "sister, do you understand what I am telling you?", trying to ensure that I have understood all she was saying, or "sister, you understand how it is", as if looking for validation and it was difficult not to agree or disagree with her   *(November 2018 – Reflexive Journal)*

While there were sometimes similarities in some of the women's experiences, the stories from each interview was still a unique encounter that I have had the privilege of listening to and that phase of the study remains the most rewarding, as I have grown both as a researcher and on a personal level:

> *"It is almost a year ago that I started the interviews for this study. As I reflect on my final interview which took place yesterday, I marvel at the progress and the confidence I have acquired with each interview. I cannot even begin to describe my relief that I was able to gather this much data for such a sensitive topic, and although sometimes disturbing, I still feel fortunate that they chose to tell me their stories. I also reflect back on my method of recruitment in reaching out to various migrant groups and the fact that all my participants are black African women. Studies specifically focusing on black African women who have been exploited in the sex trade are almost non- existent, therefore, I look forward to exploring each interview to see what this means for the field of human trafficking (August 2019 – Reflexive Journal)*

4.6.1   Reflexivity in Data Analysis

After data collection had been completed, I became somewhat anxious about the data I had gathered and how I was going to proceed with the process of data analysis. I was concerned about not misinterpreting or drawing wrong conclusions about the women's personal experiences, especially considering that most of these experiences had trauma and pain contained in them. Qualitative data analysis is always messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, and stressful and sometimes leaves the researcher feeling tormented, but this is all normal (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). However, to write reflexively about this study's data analysis means discussing the

context in which it

was done. I had finished gathering data and was at the early stage of data analysis when the COVID19 global pandemic began and in that sense, I considered myself fortunate, as it would have been much more difficult to collect data under pandemic conditions, bearing in mind the sensitivity of the topic and the population involved. The severity of the pandemic necessitated a complete nationwide shutdown, which meant removing myself from the comfort of the academic environment, where I had space to work quietly. My normal routine changed as a result and this inevitably affected the progress of data analysis, as I had to focus more on being a parent to my young children (who were no longer attending school) and trying to deal with the fears and uncertainties that came with the pandemic.

Even at that early stage of the pandemic, when I could not work on my thesis, my thoughts were still preoccupied with the data and the interviews I had conducted. I often found myself thinking about the women and the things they said to me during the interviews. Being able to speak to my academic supervisors during this period was helpful and I mapped out a route that allowed me to focus and give adequate time and consideration to the transcripts, ensure an appropriate level of analysis and start the analytical process of reading and re-reading each transcript whilst making notes. In Chapter One, I discussed my biography and how I can relate to certain racial and socioeconomic experiences of the women in this study. In addition to the uncertainty of migrating to another country and culture and the fear of not knowing what lay ahead for you. This means that some of my worldviews are present in the findings, which may influence the interpretation of the data, as nobody can be completely objective. I was never trafficked for sexual exploitation and therefore cannot relate on that level with the women's experience, but my academic learning

and working with survivors of sex trafficking in my professional life has given me some understanding of the ordeals these women went through and of how their basic human dignity was denied and their voices silenced.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the rationale for using Thematic Narrative Analysis as the methodology for conducting this study on migrant women's experiences of sex trafficking. I have argued how the narrative approach was best suited to the aim of the study to capture the told story of women's experiences of being trafficked and how they escaped from this due to its focus on privileging position and subjectivity or individuals' meaning-making through the stories they tell and their construction of personal truth and experiences. I have described the recruitment process, the challenges experienced with gatekeepers who chose not to advertise the study, compounding the silence imposed on marginalised women, and the fears of some who believed that participation would risk their newfound security. Eight women agreed to be interviewed. I have described the efforts made to protect their identity, ensure informed consent processes were followed throughout, and the sensitivity needed in conducting the interviews. The data analysis process is outlined, following the guidance offered by Riessman through immersion in the data, open coding, and comparative analysis to identify key overarching themes that adequately capture these women's experiences. Finally, my positionality as a researcher, detailed in chapter one, is elaborated on here in discussing researcher reflexivity and my own reflections on the experience of conducting this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS Part 1: In search of a better life

5.0   Introduction: The promises and realities of trafficking for migrant women.

Chapters Five and Six present the stories of women who despite the promises made to them of a better life through migration were however trafficked into/through Ireland for sexual exploitation and the analysis is based on accounts from in-depth interviews with the women. All of the participants in this study are migrant women of black African descent who emanated from the continent of Africa. To protect their identities, I will refer to them either as migrant women or migrant women of African descent, without mentioning their countries of origin. Chapter Five presents themes that capture the invaluable testimony of the women concerning their backgrounds and the root causes of their vulnerability that influenced their decisions to migrate. For all of the women, there are common threads in terms of the reasons why they decided to migrate from their countries of origin and all that was familiar to them, into the unknown. The first theme, childhood-related abuses, illustrates adverse childhood experiences, including sexual abuse. The second theme, homelessness presents this risk factor that exposes women and girls to sexual exploitation and the third theme, a better life captures the various intersecting factors that influenced the women's decisions to leave their home countries and migrate into the unknown.

5.1   Childhood-Related Abuses

Half of the participants reported a history of childhood-related abuses, including sexual abuse (rape) and neglect. For three of the women, this was in the context of the death or loss of their fathers or father figures. The women described low self-esteem, self-blaming, isolation/loneliness, depression, dissociation, mistrust, fear and shame, and the normalisation of sexual exploitation. Elombe, who was from a war-torn country, reported being raped at the age of twelve by soldiers and the effects that this has had on her life:

> The military men raped me when I was a child back home. I was raped when I was twelve years old. There is a difference between a girl who has been raped and one that has grown up good. For a girl who was raped when she was a child, sex is something different, as she does not see any problem as other girls see it. It is not a problem for someone like myself to have sex with people, because there is nothing in my brain that tells me to stop, do you understand? When I was raped is when my stupidity started. I became different. It's very hard for someone raped as a child to remain normal. That is why a child that was raped, they call them 'child abuse', the abuse is in the brain, the brain of the child becomes different, the thinking is different. It's my experience, it's my experience, It's not the experience of someone else, it's my experience. Prostitution was like the second rape for me (Elombe)

It is worth noting that the incident of her rape happened over thirty years ago, but Elombe's detailed description illustrates the continuing effect on her and reflects the mental harm of childhood abuses and traumas, particularly rape. Her traumatic childhood experience was never addressed, and her story reveals how such traumas are carried into adulthood and their influence on the decisions that can impact one's life. Elombe also shared her thoughts on the link between child sexual abuse and the sex trade and spoke about another migrant woman she had become friends with while in the sex trade:

Many girls, I swear to God, many girls that they are doing prostitution, many of them, I don't say all, but many of them have been abused, but they will not tell you. Nobody knows that a child abused becomes crazy, even if it's not showing… somewhere, something is gone crazy. If she doesn't get good support and understanding the way she is doing things will always be different than a child who was not raped. I used to have a friend, she is from [country] but I can't say her [5]name. She was also in prostitution but one day she told me that she was also raped by the neighbour when she was five years old, when living back home, after I told her about my situation. You understand that I meet somebody, that I understand why she is doing something as prostitution, because for a child raped, prostitution is nothing (Elombe)

Some of the participants – Afaafa, Osareti, and Fanya – lost their fathers in childhood or adolescence, which led to severe economic hardship for their mothers. Afaafa's narrative revealed a difficult childhood that was filled with multiple rapes, neglect, and abuse. She spoke about her mother's divorce, the effect of the divorce on her mother and how that impacted her as a child. Afaafa also reported being raped by her mother's boyfriend and her difficulty trying to explain what had happened to her:

My mum and dad divorced when I was very young and my mum was very depressed and because of her pains I got mixed up in the situation. It reached a time when she couldn't raise me and my uncle stepped in to raise me. My uncle passed in 2004 and I was forced to go and stay with my mum. By then she had gotten worse, she was into drugs and she got another child also. Her boyfriend started coming into the house and one time they were drunk and the boyfriend 'had his way with me'. So, I tried to explain the situation, but it wasn't possible, I was about seven years old. I started getting into depression and all that (Afaafa)

Afaafa also described being sexually assaulted by the son of her mother's friend when she and her sister went to live with them and being verbally abused and blamed for the assault by her mother:

We [she and her sister] were left with her [their mother's] friend who has two older sons. So, I stayed there as I was going to school [pauses] and her [mother's friend's] elder son, his name is Gathee and he was a drunkard.

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[5] All participants have been given pseudonyms to protect their identities

Countless times he tried to have his way with me, also. Her [mother's] friend told her about the incidents with her son. She [her mother] started calling me a prostitute, that I was HIV positive… [pauses] to the extent that she came to my school to embarrass me. She came to the school to say that I was HIV positive and insulted me in front of everyone [crying]. We went to the hospital and she said if I am found positive, she is going to leave me in the street, by then she had ordered me not to sleep in the same bed with my sister, so I do not infect her and not to use the utensils in the house, so I don't infect them with HIV (Afaafa)

She revealed being raped again at fifteen, which led to her becoming pregnant and the decision to run away from home. Afaafa had no plans but just wanted to get away from a very abusive environment that had become emotionally difficult for her. She explained:

There was a tutor that used to teach me and he had his way with me and I became pregnant, so I knew it was going to be trouble and I ran away (Afaafa)

Afaafa's account not only reveals a difficult childhood, filled with varying and repeated abuses but also illustrates the difficulty young children have in explaining rape/sexual assault when it happens, and the trauma caused when a child is unable to articulate what has happened to them. Her decision to run away when she discovered she was pregnant, despite being raped, was influenced by her mother's negative reaction when she was previously assaulted by the son of her mother's friend. Her use of the phrase "I knew it was going to be trouble" is self-explanatory regarding why she chose to run away rather than report the abuse to the authorities. It was apparent that she was more afraid of her mother's reaction than of the dangers of being on the streets by herself.

Osareti, the youngest of the participants in this study, (19years) described her childhood as a happy one, living in the village with both her parents who were farmers until that happy childhood was disrupted by the death of her father. Once the breadwinner of the family was gone everything changed and life became difficult, which led to her mother agreeing to become the second wife of a polygamist man. However, Osareti reported

being mistreated in the home of her stepfather almost immediately after they moved into
their new home, which led to her decision to run away:

> I am from [state, in Country], I had a mother and father, we had a farm. I was
> a happy child till I became a teenager and we unfortunately lost my father.
> After six months my mother got married to a man who promised to take care
> of my education and everything. My mother didn't know that he is a
> polygamist with many wives till after the marriage. After we moved into his
> house problems came from all corners. Every day fighting, his children
> always beating me up, almost every single day. They made my life and my
> mother's miserable, so I decided to run from the house without telling my
> mother because they might kill me (Osareti)

It is evident in Osareti's account that one of the motivating factors for her mother
remarrying was the promise of a better future for Osareti, although they were misled
about the marital status of the stepfather. Negative and violent reactions from the
stepfather's children established that she and her mother were not welcome in that
household and made life so unbearable for Osareti that she decided to leave. Again,
the loss of a father was not only a traumatic event for this woman but also had a
very disruptive and ongoing impact on her life.

Fanya also spoke about her traumatic childhood experiences that started with the death
of her father, which led to economic hardship and her mother remarrying. She reported
that after being ejected from her home by her stepfather, with no economic means to
support herself, she had no choice but to turn to sex for survival:

> When I was eleven my dad passed away, so my mother was a single mother
> for a while and it was difficult, life in Africa was difficult for us. So, my mum
> was a single mother for three years, before she met my stepdad. So, at the age
> of fourteen, we never got along, he was abusive, so he threw me out at the age
> of fourteen, so I was in the street at the age of fourteen. So being out there as
> an orphan I had to find my way to survive.
>
> With that said, when you are already in that [survival sex], for you to get out
> is difficult, because you are already used to the fact that 'the damage has been

done'. So, you still keep on, it's like a journey that never goes away, it's like addiction, it's like drug addiction (Fanya)

As with Osareti, the death of Fanya's father brought economic hardship into the home, leading to her mother remarrying. Fanya's narrative reveals not only conflict with her stepfather but also the difficulty she had in dealing with being ejected from her home with no means of survival. Fanya's case was typical of many homeless youths who are vulnerable to being drawn into the sex trade, as not only was she homeless, but she was also without economic resources. Confronted with the challenge of survival without parental or family support, Fanya, like many young people in similar situations, turned to nonconventional survival strategies of the street economy, including prostitution and survival sex. Referring to herself as an 'orphan', even though her mother was still alive, may have been Fanya's way of expressing some anger towards her mother for not stopping her stepfather from throwing her out of her home. Her narrative also reveals her view of herself and the construction of a lifestyle she had no control over, including a normalisation and acceptance of that life: she saw the sex trade as her only means of survival. Without education and job skills, she would remain trapped in the sex trade for years.

5.2 Homelessness

Homelessness was an emergent theme, arising in some of the participants' accounts as a factor that can be seen to increase vulnerability to trafficking. The participants' accounts reveal that homelessness, for these participants was often the result of childhood difficulties that heightened their vulnerability and exposed them to traffickers. Afaafa's account revealed that being homeless as an adolescent not only left

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her with a lack of options, but also exposed her to being an object of sexual exploitation by men in exchange for food and shelter:

> I was fifteen. So I left. I didn't know where I was going, I just wanted to be out. I went to a place called [town] in the slums, I started sleeping under the bridge and most times a man would come and offer me a place to sleep and food to eat, as long as I slept with him. So that became my routine … different kind of men would come every day and, in the morning, they would chase me out and I did that for a few months. A certain woman came to me, her name is [Carol], she came and talked to me. I told her about my situation, and she said "Ok, we will take you in" [to a club that she owned] …. You know when you are working in the club, men can have their way with you [have sex with you] anytime they want to, and I couldn't say no because I knew that was the only place I had to stay (Afaafa)

Afaafa's tone reveals not only her confusion and feelings of hopelessness but also the acknowledgement and acceptance of being used as a sex object by men. It suggests that being sexually exploited by different men in exchange for food and a place to sleep was unavoidable at that point because there were no alternatives for her at the time.

Similarly, Fanya, in a steady, yet detached tone reported being homeless at the age of fourteen after her stepfather ejected her from her home. She spoke about the loss of her innocence in the sex trade and having to quickly adapt to new situations of dealing with difficulties on her own. Fanya explained:

> When you are out there [on the street] on your own, you meet people and I was introduced into prostitution by my own best friend. It is easier to get into prostitution when you are at that age and don't know what to do. So, we used to go together to look for men to make sure that we survive. In that life, I had to go through rough parts, it was really difficult because I was very, very young. I lost my virginity through that, uncountable rapes, abuses, and all that stuff (Fanya)

Osareti reported that after running away from the home of her stepfather to avoid further abuse from her stepfather's older children, she became homeless and was living from

place to place and dancing to make money. It was during this period that she was first

approached by her trafficker; Osareti described what happened:

> So that is how I then left my mum and stepfather, I was very young. So, I left
> my mum and I went to my girlfriend's house and I speak with her mum to
> allow me stay, sometimes I stay there and sometimes I stay in other places. I
> was a dancer, I know how to dance very well and so I dance for people in
> parties to survive and they always like my dance. Then I was asked on a day
> to come and dance in a club, when I got there, there were three of us, all very,
> very young. So, this woman came to me after the dance and said, "Wow, you
> dance very well" and I said, "Thank you". I was very happy and she said,
> "You can make money with your dance. I want to see your parents. I will
> take you to a place you can dance and they will pay you a lot of money"
> (Osareti)

Understandably, Osareti was excited when a woman approached her and told her of

opportunities to make money through dancing. Unknown to her, however, that deception

is one of the means through which traffickers ensnare their victims.

While Afaafa, Fanya and Osareti became homeless as minors, Sarah first encountered

homelessness as an adult. She was a qualified nurse and a mother of four children when

she was ejected from the home she had shared with her partner and their children. She

explained how she became desperate without any financial means and that it was her

desperation about homelessness and her hope for financial independence that brought her

into contact with her traffickers:

> I didn't have work when I was with him [her partner]. I was a qualified nurse,
> but he refused me to work and I couldn't work when I was under him. I was
> a mother with three kids…. When he chased me out of the house, that night
> he tried to kill me. So that is the time I was vulnerable, I was missing my
> babes, I had lost my home, I had lost everything that I had. I was desperate
> and depressed (Sarah)

Sarah's tone was one of helplessness, as she had no means of income and was

financially dependent on her ex-partner. Her desperation was not only because of

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the loss of her home but also because of the loss her children, heightened by the knowledge that she did not have the means to fight her partner for access to her children. When women find themselves in such a situation as Sarah did, any opportunity at financial independence becomes a priority. Finally, another participant, Mgbafo, also reported being homeless after she ran away from her marriage and home as a result of abusive experiences by her husband and members of the wider community. She explained that:

> I headed to [town] to stay with a friend, she was an old-time friend from university days and I told her of my experiences and she told me that she was going to speak to a friend and she spoke with the friend who connected me to madam Felicia [a trafficker]. That was how the whole idea of coming to Europe started(Mgbafo)

Once again, homelessness was the critical factor that brought Mgbafo into contact with traffickers.

5.3   A Better Life

The women's stories of their poor economic situation, characterised by unemployment and less than acceptable standards of living, led to the decision to migrate. All of the African migrant women who participated in this study, reveal various levels of poverty and the search for better economic opportunities and social conditions, for an improved standard of living for both themselves and their families (described as a human right by Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights). This is what brought them in contact with traffickers and led to their migration journeys.

For example, a few of the participants had professions at the time that they made the decision to migrate. One of these, Blessing, explained that she made that decision in the belief that an opportunity to better her life and that of her family was being offered to her:

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It's one of my friends that call me that they need hairdresser in [country]. She told me that one of her sister needs hairdressers in [country] and I told them that "Ok, that is my work", and when the madam asked me, "Which handwork (profession) do you have?", I told her that I am a hairdresser and she told me that it is good, I have a good handwork because that is what she does in Europe and that there is a lot of money to be made in hairdressing in Europe. It's because I want my family to eat, I want my family to have enough, I want my sister to have enough, including myself, that I leave my country (Blessing)

The second participant who had a profession, Sarah, recounted how desperate her economic situation became because her husband, who had forbidden her to work as a nurse and on whom she depended for everything, threw her out of their home. Sarah's account paints a cruel picture of separation from her children imposed by her ex-husband and at the same time exposes how entrenched the headship of a man is in such a deeply patriarchal society. This led to her decision to migrate, with the hopes and dreams of changing her life and that of her children:

I was vulnerable, I was missing my babes, I had lost my home, I had lost everything that I had. I was desperate and depressed. I was vulnerable, because I didn't have work and a lot of things were going on around me back home, and there was a friend who told me about a company that was taking people to Europe to work professionally. I am a nurse and the mother of four children, I had separated from my husband, the father of my children and I had no turning point (Sarah)

Speaking about the domestic violence she suffered at the hands of her husband before becoming homeless, Sarah explained that:

Edowaye was one of the participants in this study who was trafficked for sexual exploitation in multiple countries. She is also the only participant who said that she knew she was going to be working in the sex trade when she reached Europe. Edowaye explained that despite the risk involved in her decision to migrate, the need to change her

family's poor economic situation was worth whatever risk she had to take. This influenced her decision in accepting the trafficker's terms of migration, but she was not aware of the actual working conditions in Europe. Edowaye explained her decision to migrate as follows:

> I lived in [city] in [country]. My parents were very poor. There is a friend of mine that introduced me to the… this connection of women going abroad, so she explained it to me if I can do it, then because of the condition of my family… So I just had to take the risk (Edowaye)

For Fanya, a participant who entered the sex trade as a minor, the decision to migrate was, not only an opportunity to start a different and better life but also an exit strategy out of poverty and the sex trade. This influenced her decision to accept the promises made by the traffickers who, she said, usually target women already in the sex trade for trafficking. Discussing how she came into contact with her traffickers, she shared her account of the dream of a better life that she was promised:

> So how it happens is they mostly go to the street to look for prostitutes because they know that prostitutes have some money and they want to travel, you know, some of them really want to get away and all that. That's the agreement you get back from back home, "Oh, they will give you a place to stay", "Oh, they will give you a job" and all that stuff, so you are happy that you are gonna change your life around. All those things, yes. House, a job, they will promise you, if you come you will have a house to stay in, they will give you a job and in your mind, you are saying, Oh! You are going to have a job, you are going abroad!(Fanya)

Another survivor, Mgbafo, similarly reported being happy when her friend presented an opportunity for her to travel out of the country to start a new life after she ran away from her marriage because of harmful traditional norms. She spoke about the "many promises" that were made to her by the trafficker about travelling to Europe while she was still back in her country:

> So she spoke to a friend who connected me to a woman called Felicia. This Felicia, when we spoke on the phone for the first time, she sounded all nice. I couldn't have suspected anything, she told me that she was going to help me. She made so many promises, she said she was going to fly me over to [country in Europe]. I told her I wasn't ready to travel out because I don't have any money, I wasn't working at the moment, where will I get that kind of money from? She told me not to worry, that she was going to fund everything and that when I come over to [country], she would be able to help me get a very good job. She started processing the whole thing and a day came when she told me that the visa was ready. I was very, very, happy. I was happy, I said to myself, "At least this is the beginning of a new life for me", leaving all the problems in [country] where I am from, that I am really, really, very happy (Mgbafo)

Afaafa's account of her life in her home country and what led to her decision to migrate was quite complex, as she had a history of traumatic events that started when she was only a child and continued into adulthood – including her parents' divorce, emotional and physical abuse from an alcoholic/drug-abusing mother, the death of a father figure, being raped as a child by her mother's boyfriend and being raped as a teenager by her teacher, resulting in pregnancy and her running away from home. While homeless and pregnant she traded sex for shelter and food in order to survive and went from one abusive relationship to another. Afaafa, a mother with three young children, reported not only that she was in an abusive relationship at the time she made the decision to travel but she and the children were also constantly starved of food:

> He started being violent and started like, he doesn't leave money for food and all that, and I started borrowing money from people to feed myself and the kids (Afaafa)

Afaafa recounted her shock and fright at learning that her partner was involved in criminal activities and how she was blamed and held responsible for her partner's criminal activities by the community. She shared her desperation and fear when the police refused to protect her and her children, but rather arrested her to appease the angry community. Afaafa explained that:

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> The community went to the chief and reported, and I was arrested… I tried to talk to them, but they won't listen and I had to bail myself out because of the kids, they were left alone. That same night I came from the police, (a group of men) came for their revenge. At 3am, they came knocking on the door so furiously, I was scared. I didn't open the door, my kids woke up and started crying… they barged inside and pulled me out. They started beating me up, they had guns, knives, and weapons and they started beating the kids and the children were crying. While they were beating me up I was also being tortured, they were cutting me all over. It was… it was a long night for me. I really saw myself dying in front of my children (Afaafa)

Afaafa shared that she was hospitalised for two weeks and was abandoned by her partner, with no economic resources or opportunities, blamed and ostracised by the community, and unable to get any sympathy or protection from the police. She saw the opportunity to migrate, presented by her trusted friend Rose, as the best option for her children and herself. She explained that:

> Rose connected me with this lady, her name is Mercy. She came to the room, I told her my story, and she was like, "Ok, there is no problem, I will help you". After fourteen days she came to my room and said, "I have chosen a country where you can go, which is safe and you will be ok and you can start all over again". So on my travelling date, the lady came to my room and started telling me where I am going. She didn't give me too much detail but she told me "you are going to take the flight to [this place], and once you get there you will find someone waiting for you. This person is called [this and this] and once you are with him, he knows exactly what to do, but you will be in safe hands and I will continue to look for your children and I will send them over". So that was the agreement (Afaafa)

However, despite the fact that Afaafa has been in Ireland for some time, the promise of sending her children to be with her has not been kept.

5.4   Conclusions

This chapter presents the themes that emerged from an analysis of the women's narratives focusing on the background of the women's exposure to trafficking. For all of the women, it seems clear that the path to being trafficked began with a decision to migrate away from home and into the unknown – a decision that reflected a growing

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sense of desperation for a better life, for themselves and their families. Behind this desperation, in many cases, lay traumatic childhood experiences, including sexual abuse and other forms of abuse. Strikingly and unexpectedly, these childhood traumas almost invariably began with the loss of a father or father figure. Homelessness, especially in childhood or adolescence, also emerges as a common and significant risk factor, exposing women and girls to sexual exploitation and ultimately to being trafficked.

CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS Part 2: Shattering.

6.0 Introduction: The promises and realities of trafficking for migrant women.

The previous chapter presented the backgrounds of the participants in this study prior to becoming involved in the sex trade. The present chapter details with the women's actual experiences of being trafficked into the sex trade and what happened to them afterwards. Five themes illustrate these experiences: debt-bonding and oath-taking rituals; changing realities and waking up; harms, visible and invisible; trapped, the lack of awareness; and spirituality and religion. The theme of debt bondage and oath taking ritual relates to how traffickers use an element of African traditional religion to keep their victims compliant and silent. The second theme describes the brutally changing realities for the women, in the context of migration, with their dreams of a better life being shattered in a world unrecognisable to them. The third theme details their exposure to both visible and invisible harms associated with the sex trade, which was accompanied by complex processes of surviving, exiting, and ultimately recovering – to a greater or lesser extent – from their traumatic experiences. The fourth theme highlights issues around the lack of awareness of the crime of trafficking and the lack of information on available support amongst migrant communities in Ireland, while the final theme highlights the positive impact of spirituality/religion as a coping mechanism for the women's healing processes.

6.1 Debt Bondage and Oath-Taking Rituals

The interviews conducted with some of the women in this study revealed how they became trapped in debt bondage through exposure to an oath-taking rituals which is still common amongst sexually exploited women from West Africa and is used

by traffickers to control their victims. The women shared that participation in a *juju* oath-

taking ritual was imposed by their traffickers as a precondition of their migration to Europe and they described being taken to shrines of deities to undergo the *juju* ritual, where they promised to obey their traffickers always. The participants did not necessarily go into great detail on the process of the *juju* rituals and what happened in the shrines, although they referred to some typical features of these ceremonies, including cutting the skin, incisions made on parts of the body, clipping of fingernails, and removal of pubic hair, the taking of victims' sanitary towels or underwear, giving victims things to eat, a 'blood ceremony' whereby the victim's blood is mixed with a concoction which she must drink, and the oath being taken in the nude.

Thus, these women had to deal simultaneously with a changed reality, arising from false promises of jobs awaiting them in their destination countries and with the associated implications of being trapped in debt bondage and subject to the requirements of the oath-taking ritual. Speaking on how she was introduced to her trafficker and entered into debt bondage through the *juju* ritual, to ensure that she not only adhered to the amount of debt agreed upon but also remained loyal to the trafficker, Edowaye reported that:

> Then she explains to me… she take me to go and see the man that is doing the business and he introduce himself and tell me that this is how it goes, but he told me that I am going to pay him so, so amount, which is like 30,000 Euros and I have to agree. So, after I made the agreement the man said I cannot leave [country] without swearing, then I agree to go for swearing with them, so he took me to the shrine, then I swear in the shrine, then after that the man said Ok, he has to process paperwork, then I left the man. When the paperwork is done he called me…It's like a voodoo, that you have to agree that this is what you said and if you don't pay the money the voodoo will affect you, but when you pay the amount it will not need to affect you, so then I agreed (Edowaye)

Edowaye, after being trafficked in multiple countries and having to pay a 'debt' bondage of 30,000 euros through prostituting herself, spoke about how she was finally released from the *juju* oath contract after she completed payment to her trafficker:

> After I finished the payment, then he congratulated me, and he prayed for me. I told him I am not going to continue with the work, I want to start my life. Then I stopped the job (Edowaye)

Similarly, Osareti reported being made to swear in a *juju* ritual that she was going to pay the amount being asked for by her trafficker:

> Then he said that I have to swear to pay the money, that I will not run away and I said, "Ok, I dance very well, I can pay the money. I will not run", and then he said, "This is how much you will pay", and I said "Ok". I was supposed to pay thirty thousand Euros but she added three thousand for my transport to destination (Osareti)

Blessing reported that she was not told about the *juju* oath until she had left her country of origin and was already in Europe. She recounted being asked to speak with a native doctor (witch doctor) by phone as soon as she arrived at her destination and the native doctor requesting that her pants and bra be collected as part of the *juju* ritual, during which she made promises to repay her traffickers the 'costs' of bringing her to Europe or risk being punished by the spirits. Blessing explained that:

> Yes, because my friend that introduced the madam, she herself swore, if she does not pay the money it will not be well with her in Europe and she will run into problems, that is why they swore before leaving [country]. As for me, I saw the madam in [country] and when we got to Europe she told me "Ok, I have brought you to Europe", I must take the oath. As she call the voodoo witch doctor, the witch doctor spoke to me on the phone and told my madam to collect my bra and a worn pantie, and I don't know what they use my underwear to do (Blessing)

All of these practices are designed to create fear in the mind of the victim, compelling them into silence and compliance. Blessing explains that there is more:

> I have finished paying my madam now, I am free. I am asking my madam to give me back my bra and panties. She was telling me she is going to give me, she is going to give me. I don't know what my madam want to use my bra and panties to do (Blessing)

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Blessing's narrative also shows that even after this debt bondage is paid in full, traffickers may still withhold from the women items that were used in the *juju* oath-taking ritual to ensure they continue to remain silent.

6.2 Changing Realities and Waking Up

As noted in Chapter Five, the accounts of all the participants in this study confirm that the search for a better future, to change the realities of their lives and that of their families, was what motivated the women to embark on their journeys. However, for almost all of the participants in this study, their hopes for a better future quickly changed to an entirely different form of reality, almost as soon as they reached their destinations. Mgbafo, for example, described being in a state of confusion when she woke from a drugged sleep to find herself in chains:

> So, after I drank the water in [country] where I was picked up, that is the last thing I remember, until I woke up in the room. My hands were chained, my legs were chained. It was like a dream to me …. I could not understand, I was like, "What is happening, why am I chained?". I started screaming for help. After a while Mrs Felicia came into the room, so they took off the chains. I was very bitter, I was angry, I started crying. I said, "Why would you chain me up, what wrong have I done? I have followed your instructions till this very moment, why would you chain me up?" She said I shouldn't worry, those are the things they do. I said, "Ok, now that I am here, I can't find my bags, I can't find anything, what's going on?" She said I shouldn't worry, that I will be fine, that I will be fine, that what she told me (Mgbafo)

Similarly, Sarah, the qualified nurse who had been told that she would be working in a clinic in Europe and thus hoped to change her life and that of her children for the better, reported that:

> When I saw someone holding my name, I went to him and he was, "Oh, you are so and so?". I said "Yes" and I entered into the taxi and he drove me up to the apartment where we went and that when …. when I reached in there that's when the story changed, and they told me that, "It's not the clinic. We paid a lot of money for you to be here, your arrangement is for you to be here

and you are supposed to pay back the money, and the only way to pay back that money, you are supposed to work as a prostitute". You are just in the room and clients come in, and when they come in it is not you to receive the money, it goes directly into the company, you never pick any money from any client. They took all my belongings, my bag, my passport, my travel documents, everything I had on me and they provided me with what I am supposed to do the job that they had for me: sex toys, bikinis and lingerie, all that stuff (Sarah)

Afaafa, who had been promised a job in a hotel, to work as a salesgirl, stated that:

He took my documents, my passport, my identification, my cards and everything else. My passport, he said he is going to take it to the agency to look for work for me. I stayed there for two days and on the third day she (the trafficker) was like, "You cannot be staying in the house. You have to start working and I have a hotel where you will be working as one of my sales girls. You will be ok and I will be paying you every end of the month". So I agreed because I thought it's just a hotel job and at least I won't be staying in the house. So this job, we are supposed to wake up at early in the morning at 5am and go to open the shop. The funny part of the shop, it is the shop was …. There were different rooms in the shop, though they were selling alcohol, yes, but where I was supposed to stay with other girls, it was a different place, so we wear very exposed clothes and then wait inside a room for clients to come (Afaafa)

Blessing, who was trafficked in multiple countries, reported that:

When I got to Europe, it's something else that madam [trafficker] was now saying, that it is a prostitution that I will be doing because there are no other jobs in Europe. I told my mother that the work they told me when I was in [country of origin] is not the work I am doing in [first trafficking country] or Europe because they told me that I am going to work as a hairdresser. When I reach here, it is another thing else that I am doing but I don't have a choice, I must pay my madam, and I ask my mummy to pray for me (Blessing)

The youngest of the women, Osareti, who was also trafficked in multiple countries, recounted when she realised that she had been deceived about the job she would be doing in Europe:

Then from Libya, we came to [European country]. I am talking about [country]. There, I started working but unfortunately, it is not what I thought I was going to be doing in [country]. I was very tired, I was very frustrated, no phone to call my mom, a lot of beatings, a lot of these things. I have

injuries on my body from the beatings and everything, so my life was frustrated. I had no choice, no place to go, nowhere to run to, so I had to start and continue (Osareti)

Fanya's changed reality was slightly different from the stories recounted by the other women, as she was left stranded at the airport upon arrival in Europe:

That's the agreement you get back home, oh they will give you a place to stay, they will give you a job, and all that stuff, so you are happy that you are gonna change your life around, but once you reach the airport, they will find a way to say, "Give me the passport, just to keep it so you don't lose it, and then I will go and get a taxi", then you don't see them. From there you are stranded, you wait and wait, you look around and you look around and you don't see anybody coming (Fanya).

She had already paid a lot of money for the chance at a better life but all of the promises made to her were lies.

6.3   Harms

The shocking introduction to their new reality was just the first of many traumatic experiences for the participants in this study. Interviewed survivors reported on the various types of physical and invisible harm they suffered as a result of, or were exacerbated by, being sexually exploited in the sex trade.

6.3.1   The Visible Harm

Some of the women's accounts highlighted various physical traumas they had suffered, not only while in the trafficking situation and after they escaped/exited, but also *en route* to the trafficking destinations. The women described in graphic detail how physical force, beatings, rape and drugs were used to get them to comply with the instructions of their traffickers. Few of the women described the traumas they had to deal with *en route* to Europe, including being incarcerated and a near-death experience in the Mediterranean Sea. Sarah, the survivor who was a nurse by profession and also had a history of violent

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domestic abuse, reported being put in chains for a length of time by her traffickers for

refusing to work, which left physical scars on her:

> Yeah, I objected. I was so violent, I tried to fight, they put me in chains. I was always chained to my bed because it wasn't my desire and I still have my scars from this because I was chained on my bed. I was chained in my room, like you know, the chains were, you can't fight and you can't get up. When I was chained I tried to fight so much, I saw the bruises that I got and I realised that I had no choice, I had to compose myself and maybe I just wait for the day, a miracle to happen to get out of this. So I lived part of it in that moment, I couldn't fight anymore. You can't do anything, everything is done for you and you know if you insist to fight or you do anything, you are dead because they tell you so (Sarah)

Similarly, Mgbafo reported not only being chained to the bed by the traffickers but

also being constantly drugged and repeatedly raped:

> I refused and that was it, she left and I was kept in the room. I noticed that when I eat something, I always fall into sleep because there are times when I wake up, I feel I have been [signs] …. There are times when I wake up I see myself naked and I know … I am a grown woman, so I know when someone have had sex with me, so I wake up and I know that I have been laid. There are times as if in a trance … or in a deep sleep, I can feel that someone was having sex with me, but because I was too weak to defend myself, I can't do anything and the next thing, I fall asleep again (Mgbafo)

Fanya, who after being trafficked had remained in the sex trade as a means of survival

until one year before being interviewed for this study, reported that:

> Sometimes you can get condom burst, you don't know if ... whether the customer might have HIV or disease, sometimes you can get even infected, like I was infected twice with … chlamydia. I never knew what was clamydia in my life until I was infected…. Robbery is a common thing. A guy can walk into your house around 2am or 3am in the morning if you are working, they have a pocket-knife, especially winter time is very dangerous. I was robbed even the past October in Halloween. Three boys robbed me, they broke my door down and robbed me, they came with pocket knives. You encounter a lot of problems, yeah, at knifepoint, you know. Robber: is common and rapes as well (Fanya)

Blessing also spoke about herself, and other trafficked girls being incarcerated in

Libya, while in transit to Europe and being repeatedly raped in prison:

> One day, they came to the house, they busted our house, they took all of us to prison. It's the place that I am working, the connection house [brothel]. We were about four or five girls and they told our madams to come and bail us. Our madam [trafficker] said no, she cannot do it because if she bail us she will not be able to collect more money from us. While we were in prison, the Arabs use us for various work …. Sometimes, it's "Blessing, stand up and do this" or "Blessing, come here, you are the one I want to f—k". They use us for rubbish work in prison (Blessing)

The youngest survivor interviewed, Osareti, who had been recruited as a minor and

trafficked in multiple countries, showed me scars on her back and arm and reported being

repeatedly beaten with a horsewhip by her madam, either for not working hard enough

or not bringing in enough money. She reported that:

> Yes! She beats me because I refused to do what she said when I come here. It was not dancing anymore, it was prostitution. What I swear for was different from what she told me to come and do now….Yeah, I also have injuries from [Libya], I still have everything. I don't have any injury when I left [home country]. I don't want to do something, madam beats me … Today I use this to say I remember my life history, yeah, because these injuries are everlasting, I can never clean it (Osareti)

Afaafa similarly reported being beaten by sex buyers and being told by the trafficker that

this was part of the job. She explained:

> They [sex buyers] would do whatever they want to do to you. They would pull your hair, they would beat you up [voice breaks] … They would molest you as much as they want to and you cannot complain [pauses] … They would insult you and call you different names and tell you that they paid for the services, so they can do whatever they want to do to you (Afaafa)

Another participant, Edowaye, spoke mostly in the third person about her trafficking

experience:

> I got some bad boys today… after I was in the car and he finish having sex, he brought out a stabbing knife to stab the woman but instead push her out

from the car, so we thank God. So, after a while she will not come to the 'work' for that time, she will be a bit scared…(Edowaye)

This use of the third person sometimes made it difficult to be certain if she was speaking about the physical harm she personally suffered or the general experiences of women in the sex trade.

6.3.2   The Invisible Harms

All of the women's accounts highlighted various psychological and emotional traumas they had suffered while in the trafficking situation and even after they had escaped it. A few of the women sought to cope with their experience of the sex trade by dissociating themselves from it and from their bodies. The ongoing, long-term impact of trafficking was also evident in the stories of these survivors: some of the participants spoke of an enduring inability to trust others, four of them spoke of ongoing feelings of isolation/loneliness and depression and others spoke about the shame they continued to feel, even after exiting the sex trade, while one of the women highlighted the issue of racism within the sex trade and its impact.

For example, Fanya was already settled in Ireland at the time of this interview. She had never used any support services, nor did she attend group or individual counselling for the multiple psychological traumas she has had to deal with. Fanya described in detail how she dissociated herself from the sexual activities she performed, by separating the mind/soul from the body as a means of coping with meeting several sex buyers on any particular day. She explained:

> Your mentality of being a natural person is shut down. You don't act like normal people, you don't even know … you can't have orgasm if you don't want to. So, somebody that is in this game, your body is like a toy, it's like you don't give yourself, it's just your body, not your mind or soul. When you are with a client it's like, "Oh, my body is just standing there", your heart is

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> thinking of somebody else, you are somewhere, you can never really have orgasm with the client, all you want is for him to get in and get out, that all your voice tells you, "Can you just finish and go?"(Fanya)

Another participant, Edowaye also showed signs of dissociation, distancing herself from the sexual activities and the bodily harm she had to deal with, as throughout the interview she spoke about herself as if narrating the experience of another, referring to herself as 'the woman' or 'you':

> The stress … what you come across along the way in 'the job', there are many things that 'you' will come across …. You get abused inside [the sex trade], there are a lot of abuse inside. Sometimes they take 'the woman' and she will be lucky that they didn't stab her. So before she goes with a man, she will look at the man she is going with, if maybe he seems aggressive and if her spirit doesn't accept the man sometimes she will not go (Edowaye)

Loneliness and depression are often experienced by survivors of trafficking, particularly when they are migrant women and far away from home and loved ones. One participant, Sarah, spoke about this:

> You know home is the best. No matter, everyone will be comfortable being home. I mean home, back home, where you see your parents, you see your family, you see … but here you are on your own. Whatever knocks you, knock you alone, you understand what I mean. You are lonely, sometimes you are down, and you are depressed and you have no one to run to (Sarah)

Another participant, Elombe, spoke of her acceptance or embracing of loneliness as a result of a lack of trust and the belief that she does not need anyone and is better off on her own. Such a perspective could also be due to an unspoken fear that no one would understand what she has been through and the effects of the trauma and harm of numerous abuses on her. Elombe also drew attention to the impact of lack of support women like herself, pointing out that in her own experience nobody understands that a child abused becomes crazy without support. She explains:

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My life is good when I am alone because it's different, we think different. My life is good when I am alone. Alone means happiness for me than being with people, you understand, because nobody understands that a child abused becomes crazy without support. I prefer to live alone than to have family or friends (Elombe)

Two other participants, Blessing and Osareti, also spoke of a lack of trust for people, as a result of the experiences they have had, including being deceived by people they had trusted to help them. In both cases, the women's tone suggested that it was hard for them to trust people because of the unpredictable and unreliable nature of people. Blessing, who was trafficked in multiple countries, expressed her lack of trust for anyone, despite being in a romantic relationship at the time of her interview:

I don't trust anyone. Even my boyfriend, I don't trust my boyfriend because of what was done to me …. No, I can't trust anyone (Blessing)

Osareti, who was also trafficked in multiple countries and was at the time of her interview trying to survive through odd jobs that she could find, also explained that she was worried that she might be misunderstood if people found out that she had been trafficked. She stated:

I don't really need relationships, so I do my things alone. I think by myself, I can say this is what I want for today. It's difficult for me to make friends. I can't tell you now I have friends, because I can't tell them my secret, I am afraid. I don't know what they could do or if they will understand me, so I like to keep my secret to myself. I have friends but just for fun, I don't trust anyone (Osareti)

Sarah was one of four participants who described in detail the feelings of fear and shame she experienced after escaping from her traffickers. She spoke of her sense of shame about her children and her home community ever finding out that she was trafficked for sex. Sarah explained:

> In the beginning, life wasn't good, it was a life of shame, and disgrace. I hated myself, I really hated myself. When I escaped, all I wanted was to die, because I knew … I thought that what was written on me … "She is a prostitute! She has been used by men!" So I lived in fear, I didn't want to face anyone in the world. I was like, "How will I ever explain this to my children? How will I ever explain this to my people? They know I went to Europe to work for money, but in a good way, not in…" I couldn't explain this. So, I was like, "Better dead and leave the questions that anyone has" (Sarah)

Mgbafo, who was repeatedly drugged and raped before she escaped, also described how her experiences and the shame of being trafficked in the sex trade had affected her self-esteem:

> The shame comes from what I have been through because the shame comes from inside and I also feel that people know because from the black race prostitution is not something anyone is proud of. So my thought like, they know that I was brought to Europe for that reason. It kills my self-esteem, I don't even want to say … Most times when I am coming and somebody is coming, I just feel like I should just … you know… if it's possible for me to just disappear so that I won't be seen or become invisible, that's just the way I feel(Mgbafo)

Edowaye who had understood from the outset that she was going to be prostituting in the sex trade was married at the time of her interview but explained why she could never tell her husband that she was involved in something as shameful as prostitution:

> No, he is not aware because when I met him …. It was during the time that I had finished prostitution that I met him so he doesn't even know anything concerning that. Nooooo, I didn't explain it to him from the beginning. Why should I explain it now? I don't think he will take it lightly that I lived that kind of life. I didn't explain it from the beginning and will not now (Edowaye)

Fanya, who was in a committed relationship and getting married was one of only two participants who seemed optimistic about the future and about moving forward after exiting the sex trade. Nevertheless, the harm of her experiences was evident in her attempt to hide these experiences because of shame:

> Never! No! If you want to have a very peaceful and …. Never say your past, especially this kind of past. It will traumatise the person that will be with you. You might even go to the shopping centre and they think you have sex with a client. Why will you do that? You can't, don't tell, keep it to yourself. It's like it never happened, the past is the past, don't bring it up to the present. Not everyone can handle it, it's not something to be proud of (Fanya)

Fanya was also the only participant who explicitly raised the theme of racism within the sex trade. She spoke in detail about her encounter with a racist sex buyer while being trafficked and the fear and humiliation she suffered because of her race:

> I was almost killed by a client. I went for a call out in a house …. this particular one was very, very bad, you understand, because I didn't know what to expect. He was a psychopath, he was high on coke and was watching porn, with cans of beer on the table. In the room downstairs there were weird paintings on the wall of people stabbed, like a disturbed child. There were bin bags, extra big bags, you could see boxes of cables, ropes, knives, engine saw, everything was there.

> It was something, you know you cannot survive it, because he was a big man. He called me all sorts of names, he told me "you have to obey what I say" because he hates niggas, he hates black women … prostitutes, he hates black people. He wanted me to feel humiliated, he peed on me, all things, anything that was nasty that he could do to me, he did. I had to let go because I didn't know what will come next, so I had to do what he wants and keep quiet (Fanya).

Fortunately, Fanya survived this episode.

6.4   Trapped: The Lack of Awareness

One theme that emerged repeatedly from the women's stories, on several different levels, was that of awareness – or more accurately, lack of awareness. Among the women themselves, there appeared to be little or no awareness that they were victims of a crime. Even though most of them realised that they had been deceived by their traffickers and some tried actively to resist their demands, there was relatively little sense of outrage at the violation of their rights and essentially no reference at all to the fact that they had

been victims of criminal activity. Equally, there was effectively no awareness that, as victims of the crime of trafficking, these women had certain rights, including rights of access to support services. Their narratives show that none of the women had any information on the rights of victims of trafficking, nor did they know of the availability of support services. This included a few of the women who had been living in direct provision centers (official, state-funded accommodation centers for asylum seekers, where victims of trafficking are also housed) for approximately six months before being referred to support services by third parties. Only one participant knew about the availability of support services and that was because she had been found by two members of the Garda[6] Síochána, who then put her in contact with support services. However, the record of direct interactions between some of the women (admittedly a minority of the sample) and frontline officials also seems to point to a significant issue of lack of awareness on the part of those officials.

Two participants reported that they had encounters with law enforcement officials and frontline personnel while being trafficked. One of the women reported two encounters, firstly with medical personnel in a Mediterranean country after her boat was rescued from the sea, while the next encounter was with a member of the Garda Síochána, while in the sex trade in Ireland. The second woman also encountered a member of the Garda Síochána while in the sex trade. In none of these encounters did the officials involved recognise that they were dealing with victims of trafficking. Osareti described what

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[6] The Irish Police Force

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happened after her boat was rescued from the Mediterranean Sea and she was taken to
hospital because she had passed out at sea:

> The ambulance took me, and when they had treated me, I ran away. That is
> how I got to the madam's place. When I ran away from the hospital, I did not
> know where I was, I ask somebody for phone, that "Please, I need to call
> somebody", so he gave me the phone and I call madam. She said, "Where are
> you, where are you?". She asked the person, "Can you bring her to so place?".
> That is how I get to the madam's place (Osareti)

Describing the later encounter with the Garda Síochána, that led to her being taken out of
Ireland and brought to a different European country, Osareti explained that:

> In March she brought me back to [country] because I could not continue to
> stay in Ireland. I do not have document and madam [trafficker] was afraid
> because after Garda [police] came to the house and spoke with her, when they
> left she said I am working with risk, I have to go back to [country] and that is
> how I found myself again in [country]. I have no choice (Osareti)

Like Osareti, Blessing, another participant who was trafficked in multiple countries, had
an encounter with the Gardaí which led to her madam [trafficker] deciding to return her
to one of the other European countries where she had previously been trafficked in.
Blessing explained:

> I started working in Ireland because I had to still pay my madam 30,000
> Euros. I was in Ireland for five months but after the Garda (police) come to
> the apartment and ask five of us questions, my madam decided that we go
> back to [country] (Blessing)

Although the encounters with the Gardaí seem to have been the trigger for both
Osareti and Blessing being moved out of Ireland, in neither case is there any
evidence to suggest that the Gardaí themselves had actually recognised that they
were dealing with victims of trafficking.

Sarah, the nurse, was the only participant whose account indicated that she had received
gender-specific assistance and support that addressed her various needs after exiting the

sex trade. However, it is important to note that she was made aware of her rights because she was found by members of Garda Síochána on the streets of Dublin at night, after she escaped from her traffickers while being transported with other migrant women to an unknown destination within Ireland. Recounting her escape and feeling lost at night in Dublin, Sarah reported that:

> So I just went into the bush immediately and when they realised that something had happened, they took off in the van and I came out shouting. There were a man and a woman coming, they didn't help me but there was a Gardaí car coming and they helped me from there. That night they took me to the police station to make a statement. I was still shivering, it was so cold (Sarah)

On the following day Sarah was put in contact with support services who have assisted her through her healing and reintegration journey. She explained that:

> Once you come out, there are NGOs and there are many things these NGOs offer. I would say, like [name of particular NGO], they do education, they help you look for a job, help you get a lawyer for your stay here, accompany you to Justice Department and help you settle in the system. There are many, many things they do there which can help you (Sarah)

Mgbafo, who also escaped from her traffickers, was one of the women who was living in a direct provision center at the time of the interview. She reported that she had been in the direct provision center for seven months before being referred to a support service after she visited a GP:

> It's really been challenging, although I have seen someone from [name of NGO] who have tried to counsel me, after the GP sent me to help me boost my confidence – and also I met one yesterday from the HSE. She said relieving words to me. Yesterday when [name] from HSE spoke to me it really, really helped me. She really helped me (Mgbafo)

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Afaafa, who appeared especially desperate and in need of support, had been living in a direct provision centre for six months prior to her interview, without any access to support services. She stated that:

> There is an organisation that one of the ladies …. because I told them I really need counselling, I really need help, I need someone to talk to [starts to cry]... because if not, I don't know if I can survive. I just feel like I have a heavy burden inside me (Afaafa)

Elombe had left the boyfriend that trafficked her and recounted leaving the sex trade:

> One day I asked myself why I should do things like that [meaning sex] and I was not happy again to do it, and I started to refuse to do it, and he became very bad to me. Yeah, he became my enemy, like, you know like when you have enemy, you have to be careful, because he became aggressive (Elombe).

She also reported feeling threatened by him but did not understand that this was a crime and that she could seek the protection of the Garda Síochána.

6.5 Spirituality and Religion

A notable – and perhaps surprising – feature of the interviews was the prominence of religion and/or spirituality in the women's narratives of their experiences. The theme of spirituality/religion emerged consistently in the narratives of almost all of the participants as being important in their lives – and in some cases, in their experience of being trafficked. Almost all of the women spoke about how their spirituality/religion and a sense of being connected to God has helped them to cope since exiting the sex trade. Reflecting on the meaning-making of their journeys while in and since exiting the sex trade, most of the women spoke at length of their relationship with a benevolent and protective God, who in one way or another has shown them mercy, hope for tomorrow and great compassion. For example, throughout her interview Elombe, who was trafficked by her boyfriend, described rape and commercial sex in spiritual terms, but

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also consistently spoke about her connection to God through prayers, the God that has

protected her and her hope in God:

> You see, it's something kind of a bad spirit … it's like they [men] transmits you with something bad, that changed your idea and your way of seeing things…

> I feel my life is good, I feel my life is better, because you know, I am a child of God. The life of men paying money for me was stopping my prayers when I want to pray, and there are a lot of questions in my brain as I see God looking at me and asking, "What did you do and why have you come back?" Now, I thank God as I can pray with nothing in my mind that affects my prayers. The only thing that makes me happy is that I see how much God is helping me, you understand. I could have gotten sick, something could have happened to me, even when you protect yourself the condom is not special, it can break, you understand, things can happen. That was not a good life really, but God help me to change that life, that's why I say I have to thank God for everything that happened in my life.

> Yeah, I thank God because I have to thank God for everything because that is happening in life is for something good. It's like a school of life that you need to live. Others are still there inside [the sex trade] and don't see things clearly because they do not have the same experience as me. That's why I say it's good to thank God for everything that is happening in life because it all belongs to him [laughs] (Elombe)

Another participant Blessing, spoke about her gratitude to God, who helped her through

the ordeal of trafficking:

> Now that I have finished paying madam, I thank God for helping me because I used to feel as if I carry a heavy something in my body, I was not free but now that I have finished paying my madam [the trafficker], I now have a life, I am now in Europe … [pauses]. Hmmm, I thank God because I know that God is going to help me and answer my prayers soon. I cannot trust anybody again, but I trust God (Blessing)

Edowaye, the only participant who stated that she had understood that she was going to

be a prostitute, also spoke about the help and love of God in her life:

> There is a lot of abuse inside [the sex trade] but I thank God who helped me and the contract is finished and it's ended. I am very happy about that. That's what matters. I was lucky because it's not every girl that gets out of the job [the sex trade], gets a man, some are still in the street looking for someone. I

thank God I am settled down. God did mine, and I am happily married with a child, I am happy now … things are changing. I am happy (Edowaye)

Sarah spoke about God her life and the future being in God's hands:

Life has been so hard. I wouldn't say it's been good, it's been hard but with all the support, you compose yourself and you are like, "What do I do?" You accept what you can't do and leave it to God to help you. At least I am alive, know he will help me, anything can be possible with God. So every day I take my life with the belief and the acceptance of whatever happens (Sarah)

Osareti also expressed her gratitude to a merciful God, who she believes will see her

through the difficult times ahead:

So, I don't really know what to say. I am thankful to God for everything. So, Libya life is very hard, but I thank God. I see dead bodies that are my age, dead bodies, I mean dead bodies, lots and lots of girls my age, some pregnant in the name of how to survive. God has helped me and did not allow me to continue. I paid the money, even the extra she [the trafficker] added, but God has been so kind that he pushed her to let me go. Yeah, I paid and I am very happy, thankful… [sighs] … Well, life is not really easy, I am still suffering, I can't say I am enjoying, I am still suffering but I am thankful to God, at least I don't have to do the work anymore. I am managing but I thank God I am still alive today and God will see me through, so I thank God. I don't know, I am just praying to God that nothing happens to me, that's my prayer because somebody that pays that much money with their body is really not easy. I just pray that everything works out the way I want but I know God will help me (Osareti)

Afaafa spoke about her prayer life and her involvement in a faith-based community where

she finds comfort:

It's not been easy, so I go to the church to pray. I talk to them and tell them about minding jobs or anything they can help me with, they help as much as they can. The little I can get from the minding and every money I get weekly, I can send to the kids (Afaafa).

Afaafa spoke about her prayer life and her involvement in a faith-based community (black church) where she finds comfort.

6.6   Conclusions

This second findings chapter presents themes the findings and themes focused on the women's experiences while being trafficked and working in the sex industry, as well as after their exit from that industry. Essentially it describes how the women's hopes for a better life were shattered by the brutal realities of trafficking and sexual exploitation. Having been exposed to crippling debt bondage and coerced by means of *juju* oath-taking rituals, the women found themselves in a world unrecognisable to them and utterly unlike what they had been promised. The women's accounts of their time in the sex trade illuminate the visible and invisible harms associated with that trade, which left them facing huge challenges of recovery and rebuilding their lives when they finally managed to exit the sex industry. Sadly, the women have had to face this journey almost entirely alone and without support, due largely to a combination of issues involving a lack of awareness and lack of information. Finally, the testimony of the women to the positive impact of their spirituality/religion in coping with their experiences is presented.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DICUSSION

7.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study has been to explore and seek to gain an increased understanding of the experiences of migrant women sex trafficked into/through Ireland, who have moved on to other lives and to amplify the voices of those experiences. While the women who participated in this study are individuals, each with her own distinct story to tell, it could be suggested that together, they tell a single composite story about their journey from their homes in Africa to their current circumstances in Ireland. This story begins with deprivation and abuse, even in childhood, giving rise to a yearning for a better life. It is a story of how the women were lured by false promises to put themselves in the hands of traffickers and of how their dreams of a better life were shattered by the harsh realities of waking up to exploitation in the sex trade in Europe. The story continues even after the women left the sex trade behind them, as they continue to carry the psychological and emotional scars of the traumas they have been exposed to – and, for the most part, do so alone and unsupported. To a large extent, this story has been told before in the experiences of many other victims of sex trafficking. But the story of these black African women is distinctive in many respects and adds important new insights to the overall picture of sex trafficking and its impact on its victims.

The findings of this study, as described in the previous two chapters, reveal what was considered most relevant by survivors through their narratives. This informs our understanding of the contributing factors that put women and girls in positions where they are susceptible to traffickers and also of how this cohort of migrant women have navigated their healing and recovery process. In those chapters, some core themes

emerged: the nature of vulnerabilities that led to the women's decision to migrate, the spirituality/religious dimension of the women's experiences, the various harms suffered by them in the sex trade – especially the invisible, psychological and emotional harms and the lack of awareness, contributing to them remaining trapped as a result of information gaps both on the part of the women themselves and of the frontline personnel who, in theory, are there to help and support them. This chapter will discuss and analyse the women's testimonies and valuable authentic voices. The first section looks at patterns of multiple vulnerabilities in many of the women's lives and how these contributed to the women's decisions to migrate (which is how they saw it, though in reality they were being trafficked). A second section addresses the religious/spiritual aspects of the women's experiences – an area that receives little attention in the literature but comes up repeatedly in the women's narratives. It looks particularly at how traffickers use an aspect of traditional African religion, the *juju* oath-taking ritual, to manipulate and coerce victims into remaining trapped and silent in the sex trade. The third section brings together the various harms that women experience in the sex trade, with particular attention paid to invisible harms, including 'spirit-murder', a kind of harm that is racially motivated. A fourth section focuses on the information gaps within the system, as a result of inadequate training and awareness of the crime of trafficking. The final section returns to the theme of religion/spirituality, this time examining the positive contribution of faith in the lives of the women.

7.1   Vulnerability and the search for 'a better life'

The theme of poverty and lack of options is, in almost every case, the constant backdrop to the women's stories. Data gathered during the interviews for this study aligns well with the literature that has persistently argued that of the numerous factors that push

women from their countries of origin, poverty remains the greatest underlying factor, making women across a number of countries vulnerable to traffickers and the sex trade, as women remain the majority of the world's poor (Driscoll, 2011; Adesina, 2014; John, 2019). The participants' stories of how their poor economic situation and a lack of options characterised by unemployment and less than acceptable standards of living, led to the decision to migrate, coincide with studies carried out in Mexico (Acharya, 2015), Albania (Mece, 2016) and Moldova (Bogdan, 2020). These highlight how poverty, unemployment and other factors can contribute to creating economic deprivation and conditions that limit people's choices (particularly women, children and migrants), while creating an enabling environment for traffickers and exploiters to operate (UN, 2014).

Fully comprehending women's poverty and powerlessness necessitates an examination of the discriminatory social structures and norms within highly patriarchal societies, which often force or influence women's decision to migrate. These have long been acknowledged as having the potential to induce powerlessness in women (Sultana, 2011) through limited employment opportunities, access to economic resources and diminished ability for decision-making, including with regards to the welfare of their children (Cerise et al., 2013). Studies on the framing of gender inequality, unequal power relations, entitlement and roles within patriarchal societies were recently carried out within two countries in Africa (Sikweyiya et al., 2020; Vyas and Jansen 2018). The findings from these studies indicate not only that patriarchal societies endorse structures that dominate and exploit women, thereby placing them in subordinate and powerless positions, but more importantly that these structures also create an environment where women's lack of material resources makes them dependent on their male partners and vulnerable to violence. The studies further highlighted men's preference for 'good', subservient wives,

who respect and adhere to the hierarchical gender structures that position men at the top; challenging this position can have dire consequences, including violence (Vyas et al., 2018; Sikweyiya et al., 2020).

Bale (2007) asserts that victims fall prey to traffickers because they seek economic opportunities or better lives and in most cases traffickers promise a better economic future and mislead women into accepting fraudulent offers of employment abroad (Driscoll, 2011). In other words traffickers systematically target vulnerable women and girls, including those living in poverty, who are desperate, unemployed or looking for better opportunities (Gould, 2017). This is an important issue from the perspective of education and awareness-raising, particularly within communities in countries in Africa, if prevention is to be addressed, as traffickers continue to target the vulnerabilities of women within the source nations. This pattern is well represented in the experiences of the African migrant women who participated in this study, which reveal various levels of poverty and a lack of economic options leading to the search for better economic opportunities and social conditions. The need for an improved standard of living for both themselves and their families (described as a human right by Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) was what brought them into contact with traffickers and led to their migration journeys.

Without proper consideration of the oppressive structural factors that keep African women in poverty and vulnerable, popular western culture has instead, for many years, described black women as inherently promiscuous, sexual deviants who choose the life of prostitution and has claimed that black communities tolerate prostitution (Harris, 2016 and Nelson, 1993). Accordingly, Miles (2019) has argued that dominant historical narratives that validate racist and colonial ways of thinking often become common-sense

knowledge that undermines and silences the experience and truth claims of marginalised, racialised and colonised groups. Such master narratives are often never questioned because they are seen as natural and not as stories. This can be seen as an example of Delgado's (1989) argument about dominant groups using stories to justify their power by constructing realities in ways that allow the maintenance of their privilege. For critical race feminists, also, social reality is constructed by the formulation and exchange of stories about individual situations.

A core assumption of critical race feminism is a belief in the importance of narratives and storytelling and the value of counter-narratives in disrupting views about the world that have been taken for granted (Childers-Mckee and Hytten, 2015). Although such counter-narratives are often rejected by dominant groups as extreme, they nevertheless challenge the *status quo*, highlighting commonly-held assumptions and calling for a reallocation of power (Delgado, 2013). The findings of the present study effectively form a counter-narrative, contradicting the notion of black women as promiscuous 'Jezebels', since none of the women had anything positive to say about their experiences of the sex trade, insisting instead that they were driven into it by poverty and a lack of options. Furthermore, the accounts of almost all of the participants reveal that various forms of coercion and deception had been used to get them into the sex trade. The counter-narrative of the black African women in the present study is consistent with testimonies of both Nigerian survivors of sex trafficking in Italy (Commissione Affari Constituzionali, Senato, 2019) and of United Nations human trafficking expert Dr. Esohe Aghatise. In her speech to the Italian Senate in July 2019, Dr. Aghatise provided evidence debunking the narrative that prostitution in Nigeria is part of the culture and that Nigerian women 'liked' being in prostitution. Dr. Aghatise underlined the fact that survivors

viewed prostitution as a violence they had to endure, because a lack of alternative means of subsistence had created a vulnerable environment that led to their decision to migrate (Commissione Affari Constituzionali, Senato, 2019). Prostitution is a crime within most African communities and the intense stigma associated with it does not make it a voluntary choice for black African women (Scorgie et al., 2013).

7.1.1 Lack of Childhood Interventions

One of the most prominent features of the women's narratives was the prevalence of traumatic experiences in childhood and adolescence. More than half of the women in this study referred to either childhood sexual abuse or homelessness – or both – in early life. While not, strictly speaking, directly linked to the experiences of being trafficked into the sex trade, these earlier traumas can be seen to have contributed to, if not created conditions that made these young women particularly vulnerable to being trafficked through the gradual process of normalisation of sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as enduring psychological and emotional harm. Half of the women interviewed reported profound levels of trauma prior to ever being trafficked, resulting from childhood abuses including being raped as a minor and early loss of power that was heightened by periods of time effectively, though informally, in the 'sex trade' because of a dependence on survival sex.

A significant shared experience for many of the participants is the sexual abuse they suffered as minors and how that increased their vulnerability to being trafficked and thus exposed to further harm. In particular, the women's narratives demonstrated how enduring psychological and emotional harm, caused by the trauma of being sexually

abused as children, led to further harms, ranging from blaming themselves for being trafficked later, to seeing themselves as unworthy of being loved because of the 'damage [that] has already been done' to them. This 'damage' includes the normalisation of survival sex and, later, of sexual exploitation through being trafficked. Thus one participant repeatedly described herself as 'stupid' and 'abnormal', while other participants focused on their lack of self-esteem and broader issues that can be linked to stressors that make minors vulnerable to trafficking and traffickers. This underlines the need for trauma interventions and protection of children and adolescents in Africa who have experienced childhood abuse. Such early intervention for abused and neglected children has been recommended by National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NIHCE, 2018). However, a systematic review of literature on the treatment of trauma within 48 sub-Saharan African countries shows that only 11 sub-Saharan countries were involved in child-specific trauma intervention (Katsonga-Phiri, Grant and Brown, 2019). While Lefevre (2017) and Lewing (2018) discuss the role of education and supportive relationships in protecting and safeguarding vulnerable young people, few studies that address pre-trafficking experiences of trauma discuss recommendations for early intervention and prevention efforts (Wood, 2020; Wilson, et al., 2014).

It was also apparent that none of the women were prepared for the sudden, unexpected experience of becoming homeless or for the precarious situations in which they found themselves 'on the street'. The fear of being thrown out of the temporary shelter was very real for some participants, who then had to accept unwanted sexual advances from men in order not to find themselves back on the streets. Previous research has recognised runaway and homeless youths as a population particularly vulnerable to trafficking and traffickers (Wright et al., 2021; Chisolm-Straker et al., 2019). The present study's

findings confirm and extend this idea of homelessness as an entry point into the sex trade and human trafficking. There were similarities between some of the women's narratives of the various harms they had to deal with, including repeated rapes and a complete loss of agency.

Exposure to such harms prior to trafficking has been linked to a post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and other forms of psychological distress (Robjants, Roberts and Katona, 2017), This study's findings align with others that highlight how childhood abuse, including sexual abuse and homelessness as a minor, not only doubles the risk of later victimisation but is also a core risk factor for later entry into the sex trade (Benavente et al., 2021; Wright et al., 2021; Chisolm-Straker et al., 2019; Lalor and McElvaney, 2010). This has clear implications for service providers who support trafficked women in their recovery journeys. Kenny (2019) posits that sexual exploitation of youths is linked to psychological, developmental and behavioural dysregulation in victims and that this presents distinctive challenges for service providers. Childhood sexual abuse can lead to a disorganized attachment style with sexualized self-states later becoming ritualized in the role of a female sex worker (Ross, Farley and Schwartz, 2004). These self-states can be seen as trauma-related, conditioned and dissociated, with automated behaviours enabling survival in a sexually violent environment (Middleton, 2015 cited in Tschoeke et al., 2019). In supporting trafficking survivors, any histories of childhood abuse needs to be considered, since it will be almost impossible to deal with the traumatic experiences of the sex trafficking without addressing the childhood abuses that put the victim in a vulnerable position in the first instance.

7.1.2 The impact of the death of a father in an African context

Within the broader theme of adverse childhood experiences, a particularly striking finding of the study was that half of the women interviewed had lost their fathers as children and reported being exposed to childhood traumas and harm because of the death of a father or father-figure and the vacuum this created in the household. Rosenbaum-Fieldbrugge (2019) suggests that the loss or death of a parent is one of the most traumatic events that can happen in childhood and can influence the affected child's life course in several ways. Such a loss may mean the end of a child's relationship with someone of emotional importance but may also lead to a worsened economic status for the family (Stokes, 2009). The latter is a particularly significant consideration in the present study. The impact of the death of a father in the lives of these women and their mothers needs to be understood within the context of African societies that remain highly patriarchal and where the father is almost always the main – if not the only – breadwinner in the family.

The findings of the present study highlight and extend our understanding of the impact of the death of a father specifically in a sub-Saharan African context, where social welfare assistance is almost non-existent (Vonk and Olivier, 2019 and Kunzler and Nollert, 2017) and the role of family breadwinner is particularly important. Furthermore, the highly patriarchal nature of almost all African societies not only sets parameters for women's unequal position in families and the public sphere, but also justifies the marginalization of women in education, health, economy and the labour market (Makama, 2013 and Parpart, 1995). This patriarchal culture is a very strong determinant of male dominance over females, with women playing supportive roles within the family structure while men remain the ultimate breadwinners (Akanle and Nwaobiala, 2020). Almost inevitably,

therefore, the death of the family patriarch will lead to economic hardship and this aligns with other research that has not only reported on how the death of a family member can further put children in a vulnerable position for exploitation (Ottisova et al., 2018) but also identified the absence of a father-figure as a risk factor for later commercial sexual exploitation of children (Laird et al., 2020; Benavente et al., 2021; Cecchet and Thoburn, 2014).

The present study reveals a strikingly consistent pattern in the reactions of the surviving parents (the participants' mothers), as they responded to the prospect of ongoing economic hardship by bringing other male figures (stepfathers and boyfriends) into their homes – and into the lives of their children. The participants reported having to deal both with the emotional disruption of losing their fathers and with having to accept these new men into their lives. This did not always go well, as two of the participants reported being raped and ejected from their homes by these men. These experiences mirror previous research identifying conflict related to relationships with step-parents as one of the factors in young people's homelessness (Toro, Dworsky and Flowler, 2007). Confronted with the challenges of survival without parental or family support, with poor education and a lack of marketable job skills, such young people often turn to nonconventional survival strategies of the street economy, including prostitution and survival sex, in order to survive (Ferguson et al, 2011).

Nelson-Butler (2015) has argued in her seminal work that critical race feminism offers a path to consider how other factors intersect with race to make women of colour vulnerable to sexual exploitation. As participants in the present study narrated the economic hardship that befell their household following the death/loss of their fathers as breadwinners in the family, some equally described their mothers' lack of power and

choice and the need to bring another (male) breadwinner into the home. Thus they saw at an early age the privileged position of power that men held in comparison to women within African communities, where women are positioned as unequal to men and almost always ascribed specific roles. For some of the women, this would have informed and affected their perception of themselves and their self-worth very early in life, particularly as the findings also show that in some cases, there were consequences when the positions of men were challenged.

Such scenarios and their associated psychological harms, ultimately deriving from the early loss of a father figure, have received relatively little attention in the literature around trafficking but if the findings of this study are relevant to the broader population of survivors, they are likely to be a significant feature in the background of many victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. This again carries implications for the care and support of sex trafficked victims, especially those with adverse childhood traumas, suggesting a need for trauma-informed care that addresses issues of empowerment of victims.

7.2   African Beliefs and Rituals

This study contributes to the limited and little-understood literature that discusses the *juju* oath-taking ritual, situated within African traditional religion and norms, as well as traffickers' manipulation of that religion. For some of the participants in this study, perhaps, the first indication that their dreams of a better life would not be realised came with their traffickers' demands for huge sums of money, to be accepted as a debt to be

repaid, in return for their passage to Europe. The amounts involved were enormous – so large, indeed, that one suspects they were beyond the women's ability to comprehend in some cases. Moreover, the honouring of these debts was to be enforced through participation in specific traditional rituals. Okeke, Duffy and McElvaney (2020) have argued that it is such huge financial benefit of exploitation of the vulnerable that encourages more people to enter this illicit trade.

One of the most striking findings was that three women (almost 40%) of the women indicated that participation in a *juju* oath-taking ritual was imposed by their traffickers as a precondition of their migration to Europe. Recent research has begun to explore the psychological coercion and manipulation of women in the sex trade through the use of cultural superstitions and occult rituals of oath-taking, also known as *juju*, voodoo or witchcraft generally (Millett-Barrett, 2019; Ikeora, 2016). The oath ties the woman directly into the spirit world and it is believed that the spirits will retaliate on behalf of the trafficker if the woman breaks the agreement or reports the trafficker to the authorities. As recently as May 2021, a case went to court in Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, involving four alleged female victims who were forced into the sex trade after undergoing oath-taking rituals in their native Nigeria (*The Irish Times*, 2021). Yet this phenomenon remains unacknowledged and unincorporated into any anti-trafficking frameworks in Ireland, such as the first and second national action plan to prevent and combat human trafficking (Department of Justice and Equality, 2012;2016) or the Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008, amended in 2013.

As Msuya (2019) reminds us, the complexities of oath-taking rituals must be understood within the broad context of African traditional beliefs and not as some bizarre practice of a particular exotic people. The indigenous beliefs and practices of Africans is known as

African traditional religion (Nweke, 2020) – also called 'African indigenous religion' by indigenous scholars who argue that 'traditional' does not mean necessarily mean indigenous (Adamo, 2011). This is because it is a religion without a founder, as "the founders cannot be found no matter how far we go back to history" (Awolalu 1991, p.111), emerging from the sustaining faith of the ancestors, passed from generation to generation and still practised by present generations of Africans. These beliefs and practices, ceremonies and festivals, religious objects and places, values and morals, religious officials and leaders are part of African heritage (Mbiti, 1997), intertwined into everyday life through rituals and practices passed down through generations and remain a strong foundation within African communities (Nweke, 2020).

For Africans, being human means that shared sense of community, is extended into the invisible world of spirits (Oborji, 2002) and religion is a fundamental, perhaps the most important influence on most Africans' lives (Ikeora, 2016; Nagle and Owasanoye, 2016). African traditional religion involves belief in the existence of a supreme God and of a supernatural world of divinities, spirit beings, ancestors and mysterious powers, both evil and good (Paul, 2004; Mbiti, 1997 and Awolalu, 1991) and has been claimed to be the medium of communication between God and traditional Africans: "When there is estrangement between God and the spirit beings, there is a need to pacify and recapture the lost relationship between God and humankind by sacrifice, performing rituals and medicine" (Oborji, 2002, p.18). African communities believe in the existence of an invisible world, interconnecting with the visible one, where God is supreme but with powers made available to lesser divinities/spirits, referred to as deities and who are reverenced as potent forces pervading an individual's life.

Juju – *The Oath-taking Ritual*

Oath-taking rituals (also called the *juju*) are a prime example of one of the performing rituals and sacrifices within the African traditional religion. Situated in African traditional religion, such rituals occur to seal an agreement between two parties, mostly in cases where the intricacies of the matter are difficult to resolve in the law court (Goulet, Murphy and Panagakos, 2015 and Onunwa, 2010). They are applicable in varying situations and are an accepted practice in many aspects of African life, as well as being a normal feature of the customary law resolution of disputes in most parts of Africa (Onunwa, 2010 and Oraegbunam, 2009). Oath-taking is a core element of the worship of deities/spirits and takes place in the shrines of these deities, to underline the seriousness of the contractual agreement being entered into with the gods and to ensure compliance. Breaking such an oath not only angers the gods but is believed to have dire consequences, including the untimely death of the oath-breaker and/or family members and madness in the family (Nagle and Owasanoye, 2016).

Such practices are not confined to Africa but are also a part of the cultural heritage of Europe, including Ireland. Perhaps the most famous illustration of an oath-taking ritual is found on the 11th-century Bayeux Tapestry, where the English Duke Harold is shown swearing an oath to Duke William 'the Conqueror' of Normandy while touching two portable shrines containing the relics of saints (see Figure 6). The propagandistic point being made is not only that William had a legitimate claim to the English throne, but that Harold's subsequent defeat and death at the Battle of Hastings in 1066 was the inevitable and just consequence of his failure to honour the oath he had taken. In Ireland, there is a lot of evidence for oath-taking rituals involving the use of shrines and relics of saints in the Middle Ages and even more recently, which may well represent a christianisation of

earlier pagan practices (Lucas 1986). As in African traditional religion, the efficacy of such rituals was based on a widespread belief in the catastrophic consequences (ranging from convulsions to the loss of an eye, to instant death) that would inevitably follow any breaking of an oath sworn on a saint's relics. 1835 a court case in Sligo had to be adjourned until the medieval portable shrine known as the *Soiscéal Molaise* could be brought to court, when a witness insisted on swearing on it rather than on the Bible (Ó Floinn 1994). Indeed, the practise of swearing on the Bible itself, still common in the legal system today, could also be seen as a christianised version of pre-christian oath-taking rituals.

Figure 6: The oath-taking ritual illustrated in the Bayeux Tapestry

 Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Shrines exist throughout Africa and are the most common structures for religious activities, including performing rituals, pouring of libations, making offerings and

praying. Shrines connect the invisible to the visible and are usually the centre of the people's religious life (Dawson 2009). Women, however, are specifically excluded from most shrines, except in cases where women serve as priestesses to a goddess. As a result, women generally are afraid of shrines, such as the oath-taking ritual shrine in a royal place in Nigeria (see Figure 6) and tend to leave religious jurisdictions to men. It is this imbalance in religious engagement and power relations with the supernatural that human traffickers take advantage of, by taking terrified victims to these dreaded shrines to swear oaths (Nagle and Owasanoye, 2016).

Figure 7: The oath-taking ritual shrine in a royal palace in Nigeria

Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Some research is beginning to be carried out into the use of the *juju* ritual as a coercive control mechanism in the trafficking of women and children from Nigeria and West Africa generally (Millette-Barrett, 2019; Ikeora, 2016). The present study has found that this coercive control was not only used to trap women into debt bondage through the *juju* ritual but that the women also had to deal with persistent fear, arising from their beliefs regarding the dire consequences awaiting anyone who breaks the *juju* oath. Even after exiting the sex trade and being freed from their traffickers, the women still feared the potency of the *juju* ritual and remained silent about their ordeals. Remaining silent after exiting the sex trade is not uncommon with trafficked women, but the oath-taking ritual is an additional measure used to ensure they remain trapped behind a wall of silence and fear, already broken by years of carrying the curse of the oath and fearing that they would not be believed (*The Guardian*, 2017). Millett-Barrett's (2019) study of the psychological effects of oath-taking on Nigerian women, trafficked into Italy for sexual exploitation, confirms that one of the fundamental purposes of the oath-taking ritual is to force victims into silence and to protect the criminals from being identified by the authorities.

The experiences of participants in the present study support the assertion by Msuya (2019) that the traditional oath-taking ritual, which reaches to the depths of the victim's psychological vulnerability, has been reported as the most powerful means through which traffickers control and dominate their victims. Ikeora (2016) argues that traditional religious beliefs in ancestral spirits and the invisible world among African communities make those communities vulnerable to control by traffickers, who seek to manipulate these beliefs to their advantage. Speaking about the oath-taking ritual, Siddharth Kara, an expert in human trafficking and modern slavery, said "it [*juju*] exerts a kind of control

that is much more potent than chains or locking someone up. It's control of the spirit, which is far more powerful and insidious" (*BBC News*, 2014).

According to (Millett-Barrett, 2019) oath-taking rituals are yet to be formally recognised by national or international instruments as a mechanism that creates vulnerability, entrapment and long-term psychological trauma. Even more worrying was that because of a lack of understanding of African traditional religion and cultural differences, coupled with the victims' silence, trafficked women are sometimes wrongly diagnosed as being psychotic. Ikeora's (2016) research involving 46 anti-trafficking stakeholders from both Nigeria and the United Kingdom, including victims of sex trafficking, found that in several of the cases of human trafficking from Nigeria, oath-taking was used as a form of control mechanism that not only impeded the investigation and prosecution of traffickers but consequently obstructed the protection of victims.

As noted earlier in this thesis the International Organisation for Migration (IOM, 2017) notes that since 2016 there has been an increase in the number of women and unaccompanied children from western sub-Sahara Africa entering Europe via the Mediterranean, 80% of whom are Nigerian women and girls, including many victims of sexual exploitation. This accords with the data from Ireland (Anti Human Trafficking Unit, 2017; Department of Justice and Equality 2016), indicating that in 2015 Africans accounted for the largest cohort of victims of trafficking from a non-EEA region, with a notable increase in victims from West Africa and particularly Nigeria. It is not unreasonable to assume that a substantial proportion of these victims may have undergone an oath-taking ritual – as was revealed in the recent court case in Mullingar and is further affirmed by the present study. This surely indicates that greater attention

and education on the understanding of African traditional religion and its rituals are

required, particularly for frontline personnel and support service staff in their understanding of the phenomenon of human trafficking of African women.

Both the EU Directive 2011/36/EU (on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims) and the Victims' Rights Directive 2012/29/EU (establishing minimum standards in relation to the rights, support and protection of victims of crime) take a victims' rights approach to trafficking, prioritizing victims' rights, needs and support, both immediate and long-term. However, neither of these – EU policy statements – recognise the issue of oath-taking rituals, their fear-inducing power and their hold over victims of trafficking. All the indications are that typical 'western' (i.e. secular) frameworks for addressing and supporting victims' psychological needs – including those in Ireland – may not be adequate to address the needs of individuals from cultures where the oath-taking ritual, situated within African traditional religion, is an accepted practice.

Diaz (2018) argues that the continued relegation of African beliefs is rooted in denigrating western attitudes, ethnocentrism and ignorance of non-christian religions. One result of such attitudes is that victims often remain silent about their experiences and, shockingly, trafficked women can be wrongly diagnosed as psychotic (Millett-Barrett, 2019). Ikeora (2016) emphasises that such attitudes encourage the demonisation of African traditional religion and prevent the phenomenon of oath-taking rituals – and their enduring effects – from being brought into mainstream anti-trafficking discourse, which in turn hinders the eradication of the crime of human trafficking. It is in this context that Spyropoulos (2018), in her article on the treatment of *juju*-believing Nigerian sex trade survivors, questions whether western therapists are capable of working with or around

juju, for while they might regard the fear and threat felt by the women as fictitious, these

are very real to the women and may often be the reason they withhold vital information that could assist in dismantling human trafficking activities (Kara, 2017). African traditional religion is too often dismissed as mere 'superstition' or 'brainwashing' by western practitioners and law enforcement officials (Ikeora, 2016). If, however, it was recognised and taken seriously alongside mainstream religions such as Christianity and Islam – especially within the context of human trafficking – there could be a positive impact, both on the protection of victims and on victims' willingness to assist in the investigation and prosecution of traffickers and the eradication of trafficking.

7.3   The visible and invisible harms of the sex trade for African women.

For the women who participated in this study, their dreams of a better life in Europe were rudely shattered as soon as they were exposed to the realities of trafficking and the sex trade, but the harm they were exposed to prove to be much longer-lasting than this. As might be expected, the first-hand narratives of all the interviewed participants revealed varied and multiple forms of harm resulting from their experiences in the sex trade. In the construction of their narratives, the women each referred, explicitly and implicitly, to various traumas that they were subjected to *en route*, during and after their time in the sex trade. Overall, these survivors' narratives align well with findings in the literature regarding the mental, psychological and physical harms suffered by sex-trafficked women (McQuaid, 2020; Simkhada et al., 2018; McTavish, 2017; Zimmerman and Pocock, 2013). It was notable, however, that while the women reported on the visible, physical harm they had suffered, the invisible harm (such as psychological and emotional harm) was consistently more prevalent in the women's accounts than the physical harm. Psychological harm and abuse suffered by women continue to be a trademark of the

violence and methods used by traffickers in controlling their victims (Walby et al., 2016; Gerassi, 2015; Zimmerman et al., 2003).

7.3.1 Traumas en route to Trafficking Destination

As the women narrated their trafficking experiences, the theme of forms of physical harm that they had to deal with was consistent. More than half of the women reported the varied forms of physical harm suffered, both at the hands of sex buyers and their traffickers. The findings of this study compare well to others that have highlighted the various physical harms that women in the sex trade consistently must endure (Breslin, Latham and O'Connor, 2021). However, the present study provides additional information because of its focus on African migrant women, revealing that many women suffer harm *en route* to their trafficking destinations – an issue that has received insufficient attention in the academic literature. Two of the interviewed survivors had crossed the Sahara Desert to enter Libya, *en route* to Europe via the Mediterranean Sea. They spoke about the vulnerability of migrants in Libya and the various forms of human rights violations, including danger of death, faced daily by mostly black African migrants. One of the women's metaphorical use of the phrase 'hell' to describe her journey through Libya mirrors reports from the various international organisations on the high (and escalating) levels of human rights violations of African migrants in Libya: rape, forced prostitution, sexual violence, forceful/illegal detention, inhuman conditions, exploitation and abuse by smugglers and traffickers, starvation killings and deaths in captivity, torture and ill-treatment of migrants (European Parliament, 2022; Norwegian Refugee Council, 2021; IOM, 2019; OHCHR, 2018). These experiences are essentially specific to trafficked victims from the continent of Africa and this has implications for service

providers and clinicians who support and provide trauma-informed care to trafficked women from Africa.

7.3.2 The Psychological and Emotional Impacts of Trafficking

The participants' narratives brought out in great detail just how diverse and enduring are the psychological and emotional scars left, even after they had exited the sex trade. The often-complex psychological situations and harm that trafficked women are exposed to are further complicated and exacerbated if there is already a history of repeated and extensive trauma in the individual's life, as was evident in the stories of a significant proportion of the women in this study. The women's narratives highlight the impact of the sex trade on their wellbeing, even since exiting, by describing recurring struggles with psychological and emotional issues such as dissociation, isolation and loneliness, anxiety and shame.

7.3.2.1 Dissociation as a Coping Strategy

A third of participants, for example, could be seen to have employed the psychological strategy of dissociation to survive the sex trade – and of even greater concern, were continuing to use this approach of detachment after they had exited the trade. The severity of the harms experienced within the sex trade is evident in the narratives of two of the women, in their attempts to separate what was happening to them within prostitution from their concept of the self, through the consistent metaphorical description of the body as a toy and the reference to the self in the third person. This pattern is consistent with Freyd's (1997) identification of dissociation as a psychological defence against psychological pain, whereby a person disconnects from the body or the self (Van der Kolk, 2014). It equally aligns with earlier studies (Farley, 2003) that have explored

the link between dissociation and women in the sex trade and found not only that dissociation is prevalent, due to the high levels of interpersonal violence directed at women, but that dissociation also persists long after women have exited the sex trade, particularly for women with histories of child sexual abuse – as is the case for some of the women in the present study.

The findings of the present study indicate that while dissociation may have been a useful tool for coping with the violence and other harms that the women had to deal with regularly while in the sex trade, it nevertheless brought with it harmful psychological consequences, as the women are forced consciously or unconsciously to disconnect their bodies (sexual self) from the self (human being) and reality. This undermines the assertion that women in prostitution can demarcate the self from the body without profound harm (O'Connor, 2019) and is particularly the case when women have not received any support in dealing with the psychological and emotional harms they have suffered and continue to use dissociation to manage the experience of living with a mind and soul that are trapped in a body that has become alien to them.

7.3.2.2 Isolation, Loneliness and Anxiety

O'Connor and Breslin (2020) have argued that loneliness and isolation are a part of women's lives that is often not spoken about, which causes psychological harm as it prevents the building of a support network and community. The present study tends to confirm this, as most of the women, in their interviews, did not speak about loneliness or isolation – even when their overall narrative suggests that this was, in fact, a feature of their lives. Moreover, even when a participant did admit to loneliness, it appeared to be normalised and accepted, almost to the point of being enjoyable. This in itself could be seen as indicating a pressing need for psychological assistance and/or counselling.

It is almost self-evident, as Johnson (2012) has argued, that for a victim of traumatic experiences to have effective closure, the past traumas need to be properly addressed. However, for some of the participants in this study past traumas, including the self-inflicted effects of dissociation, have yet to be addressed and one of the effects of this is an ongoing sense of isolation and loneliness, which can in turn lead to anxiety and depression. Such feelings continued even after the women had exited the sex trade, with one participant sharing that she still feels suicidal.

The causes of depression and anxiety varied for each woman. For some, it was the memories of past abuses while still trapped in the sex trade, but others attributed their anxiety and depression to a combination of their insecure immigration status, the challenges of living in direct provision centres and fears for the well-being of the children they had left behind in their home countries. One participant, who had suffered neglect and abuse from her mother, was constantly anxious and afraid that something bad might happen to her children, who were in her mother's care – and that there was nothing she could do about the situation. Previous research has addressed the mothering experiences of sex-trafficked women (Peled and Parker, 2013), the experiences of trafficked mothers and the needs of the children they are trying to re-connect with through family reunification (Busch-Armendariz, Nsonwu and Cook Heffron, 2011) and the impact and challenges of trauma on parenting (Castaner et al., 2021; Creech and Misca, 2017; Cohen, Hien and Batchelder, 2013). However, the present study extends our understanding of the impact of trafficking on the psychological and emotional well-being of survivors who have left children behind in their home countries, which can significantly impede their recovery process. This, in turn, provides important insights into the intricate needs of such women, including their feelings of guilt at leaving their children and the pressure

they continue to feel to provide for their children. Most anti-trafficking support plans presently do not take into account the additional needs of survivors who have left children behind. However, in order to provide comprehensive support to such women, as is essential for their recovery and reintegration, it is critical that we first understand their needs and explicitly consider these needs in the development of support services.

7.3.2.3 Shame and Survivors' Identity

Almost all of the women revealed that following their exit from the sex trade, the ongoing shame of being associated with that trade and with sex trafficking continued to affect their lives through their perception of themselves as different. This study highlights the women's narratives of shame, fear and hopelessness, which usually surface after the victim exits the exploitative situation, probably due to the 'decompressing' effect of being out of immediate danger. Shame – recognised as a psychological phenomenon amongst many women who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation – is a complex emotion and presents itself in different ways, which may stem in part from emotions of disgust with the self when it is perceived as a source of contamination (Terrizzi and Shook, 2020). The present study indicates that upon exiting the sex trade, most of the participants continued to be anxious and fearful about the prospect of their loved ones, wider family and community finding out about their experiences and that this caused further psychological harm, as some became even more depressed and hateful of the self.

The narratives of some of the women suggest a belief that the implications of revealing their past would be traumatic and harmful to their relationships. One participant was engaged to be married at the time of her interview yet even for her, the shame of her experiences and the fear of being found out was starkly evident. Two participants referred to their experiences in the sex trade as a 'life of shame', one of whom described in detail

her feelings of hatred for herself and her preference for death rather than having to explain to her children and 'her people' what had happened to her. Several women seemed anxious that people would be unable to understand their pain and the harms caused by their experiences. One participant linked her feelings of shame not only to society's perception of the sex trade as a despised, shameful and abnormal occupation (Farley et al, 2003), but also to her racial identity, as a black migrant woman. These findings contribute to our understanding of the link between the effects of shame and self-identity for migrant women who have been sex trafficked. They align with Kaufman's (1996) argument that shame is the source of low self-esteem, diminished self-image and deficient body image and disrupts both confidence and security. The findings are significant because almost all of the women, at some point, spoke about the shame they feel. This reveals not only the impact of shame on the self-image of these migrant women but also the necessity for frontline personnel and service providers when supporting survivors of sex trafficking in their reintegration process, to be conscious of the shame survivors feel and the loss of the sense of self that results from that shame.

7.3.3   Spirit Murder – Racialisation as the 'other' in the Sex Trade

One aspect of harm within the sex trade that is yet to be examined in great detail in the anti-trafficking discourse is the racially-motivated harm that black women may be experiencing in the sex trade, particularly black African women. One participant narrated in detail her traumatic ordeal with a racist sex buyer and spoke of racially motivated humiliation and violence. The woman reported being repeatedly called a 'nigga' and a 'nigga prostitute' by the sex buyer, who also told her how much he hated her kind and that 'she was nothing' before doing 'things' to her that she did not wish to divulge, aside from telling me that he really wanted her to feel humiliated and peed on her. This

participant entered the sex trade as a minor and has had to deal with various physical and psychological harms, yet she stated that her encounter with the racist sex buyer left her very 'traumatised' and 'humiliated'.

Another way of conceptualising this is that she experienced the kind of harm that Professor Patricia Williams calls 'spirit murder' or 'spirit injury' which is a direct outcome of racism, where the mind, body, soul and spirit of racial minority people are destroyed by employing violent racist attacks on them (Williams, 1987). Human trafficking requires the devaluing and dehumanisation of individuals, and such racist stereotypes and categorisation of racially marginalised women contribute to the acceptability of exploiting and discarding them (Bryant-Davis and Tummala-Narra, 2017). Consequently, racialisation ensures the racialised is constructed as 'other', dominated and stamped with the badge of inferiority (Delgado, 2000). The sex buyer's violent racist attack on this participant was a clear demonstration of his own stereotyped and demonised image of 'blacks' as a group (Chamallas, 2013), rather than being incited by any actions on the woman's part.

The concept of 'spirit murder' has been used by various researchers (Garcia and Davila, 2021; Wright-Mair and Pulido, 2021; Hines and Wilmot, 2018; Love, 2016) to put into context racial violence, exclusion, dehumanisation, and rejection experienced by both black students and scholars in academic institutions. The present study confirms these previous findings and extends them to black women trafficked in the sex trade. This account of racially motivated violence at the hands of a sex buyer offers new information regarding the racial dimension of human trafficking and racism in the sex trade in Ireland and the unique oppression that is specific to black women and women of colour in Ireland and elsewhere. Solorzano and Yosso (2002) have argued that victims of racist injuries

find their voices when the ideology of racism is examined and racist injuries named. Furthermore, those injured by racism and other forms of oppression discover they are not alone in their marginality. They become empowered participants, hearing their own stories and the stories of others.

In a study of the experiences of black African women in a predominantly white European society, it was perhaps surprising that this participant was the only one to refer explicitly to encountering racially motivated violence in the sex trade. The methodology employed in this study did not permit any 'steering' of participants to discuss issues that they had not raised and therefore the significance of the apparently low profile of racism must remain uncertain. The racially motivated harm that black African women may be experiencing in the sex trade has yet to be examined in any great detail in the anti-trafficking discourse. There is evidence to suggest that racist harassment and violence in the sex trade has been visible since the time of Saartjie 'Sarah' Baartmans, the first known African woman to be trafficked in Europe (Rokeshi, 2021).

Critical race feminism can provide helpful insights into this finding, as it involves the examination of the intersections of social oppression and how their combinations play out in various settings (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). Childers-McKee and Hytten (2015) argue that critical race feminism is not only focused on the illumination of marginalised voices centring on race but also highlights the relevance of multiplicity and intersectionality of identity. Racism is, in addition, a reality in all areas of life for Africans living in Europe but the majority no longer bother to report racist incidents (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2018). This suggests that it would be a useful area of further research to explore whether racism within the sex trade has become so normalised that it is no longer considered worth reporting. Particularly with the rise in

number of African women being trafficked into Europe (United Nations, 2017), it is surely a concern that the potential harms of racism in the sex trade should remain largely unexplored. A few studies have examined the intersection between racism and sex trafficking of black women, focussing on the experiences of racism as a barrier in accessing support services for black women who have been sexually exploited (Gerassi, 2020), on the racial roots of human trafficking of blacks (Nelson-Butler, 2015; Vaughan, 1989) and on racism and the sexual exploitation of minors (Hurst, 2015). What all these studies had in common is that they all focussed on black African-American women, effectively categorising the experiences of all black women in the sex trade as the same and taking no account of the huge differences between American and African social settings. No study has attempted to explore comprehensively the experiences of black African women in the sex trade and the harms and racism they suffer.

Previous studies have acknowledged sex trafficking as a gendered issue, and it is recognised and addressed as such within prostitution and sex trafficking discourses. Interest convergence, one of critical race feminism's assumptions, proposes that marginalised cultures will only get ahead if it is beneficial to the dominant culture (Berry, 2009), as with the formation of the first anti-trafficking movement and subsequent international and national laws and conventions, which was made possible and attracted attention because of the reports on the white slave trade (Rodríguez Garcia, 2012), despite black women being used for sexual exploitation long before that.

Black African women experience multiple and intersecting forms of inequality and discrimination on the bases of race, class and gender and other forms of structural oppression that are unique to them, as a black woman is never just black or African or a woman. Black women continue to occupy a unique and difficult space in society where,

in addition to other structures that oppress them, they are forced to deal with the oppression of being black and female in a white and male-supremacist culture (Nelson, 1993). Unless the role of race, structural racism and intersectional oppression are considered, with a recognition of people's unique experiences of discrimination and the multiple dimensions through which identities are constructed and privileged, black migrant women from Africa who have been sex trafficked will become further marginalised and their unique voices silenced. This would have implications for understanding not only the experiences of sex trafficked survivors from Africa and the challenges they encounter but also for the development of policies and support appropriate to black migrant women from the continent of Africa.

7.4   The Information Gap

The theme of awareness – or more precisely, lack of awareness – has been noted as consistently running through the stories of the participants in this study. The participants' own lack of awareness of the criminal nature of sex trafficking, or of their rights as survivors of that crime and the support available to them, was striking. The narratives of some of the women also highlighted specific issues of awareness around the identification of victims of sex trafficking by operational personnel, particularly in the areas of law enforcement and health care. A number of the women reported encounters with frontline professionals at some point during their time in the sex trade, but these opportunities to be identified and rescued were missed. The effects of such missed opportunities can be severe and potentially life-threatening for the victims involved. Furthermore, any additional time spent by women in trafficking situations increases the emotional, psychological – and often physical – harm sustained, making the process of recovery and re-integration longer, more difficult and more expensive for the state. While there can

be many factors at play, particular questions arise about the adequacy of education and practical training for frontline law enforcement and health care professionals.

7.4.1   Information on Support Services

A recurring feature of the participants' accounts is a striking lack of information and awareness, on their own part, of the criminal nature of sex trafficking – with the majority of the women apparently not understanding that a crime had been committed against them – or about their rights of survivors of human trafficking and the availability of support services geared towards their recovery. For survivors of trafficking, a level of awareness of their need for and the availability of such supports is critical, but the present study found little evidence of this among the participants. Two of the women were living in direct provision centres (official, State-funded accommodation for people seeking asylum) at the time of their interviews while over 60% of all the participants had at some point gone through that system. Judging by the accounts of those participants who had gone through the direct provision in Ireland, there does not seem to be any system that specifically provides information on trafficking or the availability of services, including gender-specific services. Both Afaafa and Mgbafo reported a similar experience – of living in direct provision centres for over six months without any awareness that there were support services available to them as trafficked women or that they had rights to such supports.

This is a matter of great concern, especially in view of the known prevalence of trafficking activity among the migrant women that are housed in direct provision centres in Ireland (TIP, 2020). Given that all direct provision centres are funded and regulated by the state, one would expect that vital information about such services should be easily available and accessible to all residents. The importance of psychological assistance,

including counselling, for sex trafficked victims, has been reiterated many times in the literature, which also stresses the length of time and resources required in the journey to recovery (Walby et al, 2016; Johnson, 2011; Gajic-Veljanoski and Stewart, 2007 Gajic-Veljanoski and Stewart, 2007). A lack of information on their rights and on available support services has been identified as one of the main barriers that prevent women from reporting the crime of trafficking. This lack of information can have serious implications for the general well-being and quality of life of survivors of trafficking. At the time of the interview, both Mgbafo and Afaafa reported constantly feeling depressed and isolated. Their narratives reflect the confusion and uncertainties that women exiting the sex trade have to deal with in the absence of information on their rights and on the availability of support services geared towards their recovery. More significantly, they demonstrate how women can be exposed to further harm by delaying their recovery process because of a lack of information about support services – a timely response having been identified as particularly important for survivors' recovery (Zimmerman et al., 2008).

It was very striking that almost all of the participants, although living other lives now, have never really availed of any support assistance or counselling. One can only wonder how survivors like Fanya have been able to cope with the impact of the multiple traumas they have been through without support services – perhaps through coping mechanisms like burying the past, as she described, or perhaps through other support mechanism in her community or friendship group. Fanya's account, with her normalisation of the traumatic events she has had to deal with and her fear of looking into the past, surely points to a need for psychological support or counselling. Afaafa, too, could clearly have benefitted greatly from an early needs assessment of vulnerability, which, it is argued, is

an immediate requirement after emancipation from the sex trade (Busch-Armendariz, Nsonwu and Heffron, 2011; Macy and Johns, 2011). Considering her extensive history of psychological abuse and her fragile status, it was a cause of great concern that she had yet to receive any support at the time of the interview.

The obvious lack of awareness amongst this sample of trafficked migrant women is an indication that awareness-raising campaigns on human trafficking may not necessarily be reaching those most vulnerable to being trafficked, particularly people from third-country nationalities and migrant communities in Ireland. This aligns with a United Nations report on trafficking in persons, which states that awareness-raising at international and national levels is not sufficient and that greater adaptability must be facilitated at local levels to reflect the realities on the ground (UN, 2010). However, the women's accounts generally demonstrate a disconnect between their reality and the proposed campaign measures, outlined in the Irish government's first and second National Action Plans (NAP, 2012; 2016), to raise awareness of the crime of human trafficking, specifically targeting migrant communities. It is difficult to ascertain if the lack of awareness and relevant information of the crime of trafficking among migrant communities and migrants in direct provision centres is a result of challenges between policy and implementation, lack of community navigators, or other issues. What is certain is that survivors are deprived of targeted and strategic responses geared towards appropriate support of their recovery.

7.4.2 Policing

Within the narratives, two participants described similar encounters with members of An Garda Síochána (the Irish police force), who came to the apartments where they were prostituting, asked some questions but left, apparently without recognising sex trafficking

situations. A further significant shared experience between both encounters (which were otherwise entirely unrelated) was the heightened sense of fear and nervousness on the part of the traffickers, resulting from these encounters with the Gardaí, leading to decisions to relocate both women to other countries. Those missed opportunities of being identified, resulting instead in being moved to different countries, meant that these participants remained in the sex trade – and exposed to significant harm – for even longer (several years in one case). In the words on one of the women, "it would have been better if I was caught, then madam cannot force me to work."

As law enforcement officials are often the first to interact with victims of crime, including human trafficking victims, they not only have a responsibility to help victims feel safe, but their handling of the initial contact may ultimately determine whether victims get the support they need and if perpetrators are held accountable (Mapp et al., 2016). This requires that officers are able to identify victims and effectively intervene on their behalf. Undoubtedly, many factors contribute to opportunities for intervention being missed, including the not uncommon occurrence of trafficked victims choosing not to self-identify. Survivors have discussed their distrust of law enforcement officers for various reasons, including previous negative encounters with corrupt officials, the fear of detention or deportation (used by traffickers as a means of control) and the detrimental impacts of complex trauma that impede help-seeking (Ottisova, Smith and Oram, 2018 and IOM, 2010). This, however, merely underlines the need for specialised, continuous and up-to-date training in proactive identification strategies for law enforcement officials to help reduce the number of incidents of missed opportunities for identification, as in the present study. Previous research has considered such missed opportunities to identify potential victims of sex trafficking among law enforcement officials (Barrick et al., 2021;

Reid, 2013). Various factors leading to the misidentification of potential victims were identified, including the hidden nature of the crime but also a lack of proactive investigation techniques and a lack of adequate specialised training. If the Gardaí who encountered the participants in the present study had had more comprehensive training on trauma-informed victim identification, they might have recognised certain signs or might have known to speak to the women individually, so as to separate potential victims from traffickers.

Law enforcement officers must continue to receive up-to-date and tailored training on human trafficking, going beyond a general understanding of trafficking (Police Executive Research Forum, 2020). The Irish National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking in Ireland (2016) has stressed the importance of education and training of frontline personnel as one of its key prevention strategies. It specified that the training of An Gárda Síochána and the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Services (INIS) was prioritised to alert operational personnel and to assist them in identifying possible victims. However, it is unclear in practice how many Gardaí have received training in human trafficking to date. One report stated that in the period 2015-2019, a total of 1,489 members of An Gárda Síochána had been provided with training (Department of Justice and Equality, 2020), while another report put the number of Gardaí trained from 2015 to 2019, including new recruits, at 2,346 (www.oireachtas.ie). Since the total number of members of An Gárda Síochána, as of 2019, was 14,307 (www.justice.ie), even the higher figure suggests that less than 17% of Gardaí have received any form of training on human trafficking and the identification of victims. Research has also indicated that collaboration between governmental (law enforcement) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can provide the best approaches to victim identification (Coppola

and Cantwell, 2016), allowing law enforcement officials to be supported by experienced practitioners in the field of human trafficking.

7.4.3 Healthcare Professionals

Healthcare professionals in various fields are also likely to have direct encounters with victims of trafficking. Human trafficking is itself an important healthcare issue, of course, because of the psychological and physical health problems experienced by trafficked victims. Two participants in the present study encountered healthcare personnel while in the trafficking situation. One had been rescued from the Mediterranean Sea and taken to hospital; she was a minor, apparently travelling alone and unaccompanied on a well-known and dangerous route for traffickers and smugglers between Africa and Europe. Clearly, there were possible indicators of trafficking but these signs – and the opportunity to engage with the participant as a trafficked victim – were apparently not acted upon (although it must be acknowledged that the outcome might have been different if the victim had not run away from the hospital).

Previous research (Schwarz et al., 2016 and Dovydaitis, 2010) has discussed the unique position occupied by healthcare professionals in terms of interacting with and potentially identifying this largely invisible population, both while they are still in captivity and afterwards. It has been reported, however, that at least 68% of trafficked persons encountered various types of healthcare providers during captivity without being identified (Chisolm-Straker et al., 2016 and Lederer and Wetzel, 2014). The challenges for healthcare providers in identifying such victims stems both from the victims' frequent reticence about disclosure and the healthcare professionals' difficulty in recognising victims of trafficking. Perceptions about a trafficked victim's profile may also result in

bias, leading to missed opportunities to identify and rescue individuals, who then remain trapped in exploitative and often dangerous situations for longer than necessary.

All of this again highlights the need for specialised and continuous education and training in the identification of trafficking victims to be made available to healthcare professionals, many of whom are unknowingly attending to this population. Some have reported that they lack confidence in their ability to identify and appropriately treat victims, primarily due to a lack of training (Lee et al., 2021). Earlier research, from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland on sex trafficking from a healthcare perspective, reported that healthcare professionals were not aware of the occurrence of sex trafficking and were not trained to identify victims (McConkey et al., 2014). The report stressed that educating healthcare providers to identify victims and provide appropriate interventions was critical to the provision of a comprehensive anti-trafficking response. Since then, the Irish government has repeatedly emphasised its commitment to the education and training of relevant professionals, including those in the healthcare sector (GRETA, 2017). The collaboration between Ireland and Singapore in 2019, resulting in the launch of a booklet at the International Council of Nurses, is one of the government's efforts towards significant action in awareness-raising and improving the rate of identification of trafficking victims by healthcare professionals (www.justice.ie).[7]

While such collaboration between nurses is to be welcomed, it needs to be extended to other health professionals, including paramedics, for example. The participant who was rescued from the Mediterranean was initially picked up by paramedics in an ambulance

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[7] Irish Government welcomes launch of programme to raise awareness of human trafficking among worldwide community of nurses.

who, with the right training, should have been able to see the indications of trafficking. Since January 2021, the government has collaborated with various NGOs working in antitrafficking to help raise awareness and to provide tailored training on the topic of human trafficking to the public and frontline personnel, including those in healthcare. It is unclear, however, how this is being coordinated and delivered by the different NGOs and its sustainability is uncertain. It is equally unclear if healthcare professionals are required to attend these training sessions or what records are kept of the number of healthcare professionals that have availed of training (www.oireachtas.ie).[8] Such training programmes are clearly a step in the right direction but their impact is impossible to measure without research evaluating the efficacy of the training and its actual impact on healthcare professionals in responding to victims of human trafficking.

Ireland was recently downgraded in the annual (Trafficking in Person, 2021) report. One of the recommendations in that report was that Ireland should allow formal victim identification and referral from entities other than the police, including civil society, social workers and healthcare professionals. There is more urgency now than ever in ensuring that healthcare professionals are continuously provided with up-to-date training on human trafficking that is victim-centred, trauma-informed and culturally sensitive, especially considering how many of the trafficked victims in Ireland are migrants.

7.5 Faith

In the absence of the much needed support services that, in theory, provide help in the journey of recovery from trauma and building new lives for the most part, the women in this study are navigating this journey on their own. This raises the question of how they

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[8] Human Trafficking, Dáil Éireann Debate, Wednesday 27 January 2021.

are coping and what resources, if any, they are drawing on. Among the most striking features of the interviews was the notable proportion (75%) of the women who referred to the importance of spirituality and/or religion in their lives, as helping them to cope after exiting the sex trade. While none of the women explicitly used the terms 'spirituality' or 'religion', the concepts nonetheless manifested themselves repeatedly during the interviews. In some shape or form, almost all of these women acknowledged God as important and valuable in their lives, especially since exiting the sex trade. In a sense, there was always a spiritual element to many of the women's stories, because of the use of *juju* rituals at the beginning of their trafficking journeys. There is also evidence that for some of the women, their faith helped sustain them while going through the trauma of being trafficked but for the majority of the women, the evidence for faith and spirituality playing an important role in their lives appears after they had exited the sex trade and were trying to cope with the aftermath and living with the trauma of their experiences.

Reflecting on the meaning-making of their journeys since exiting the sex trade, some of the women spoke at length of their relationship with a benevolent and protective God, who not only showed them mercy and great compassion but also kept a protective 'shield' over them, so that the 'bad spirit' believed to enter women while in the sex trade could not cause them harm. Several participants referred to their hope and trust being, not in other people but in God alone, who they believe will make everything right in the end. Others spoke of awakening to the knowledge that they are a child of God and that their life belongs to God alone, giving them peace and hope for a better tomorrow; of the importance of being able to voice prayers and thanksgiving to a merciful God; of the comfort, both spiritual and social, obtained through involvement with a faith-based

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community. Clearly, spirituality and religion are important for these women, especially after exiting the sex trade, in helping them to make meaning of their experiences and trauma. Perhaps inevitably, but especially in the absence of formal supports such as counselling, the participants tended to turn to spirituality/religion – something they understood – as a coping mechanism to make meaning of their experiences and to find a sense of connectedness to the power of God that could release them from a shameful life, despite their traumatic experiences (Bonanno, 2004).

While spirituality/religion clearly helped to fill a vacuum left by a lack of other supports, it would probably be a mistake to interpret this as the women turning to spirituality/religion because of a lack of access to counselling or other supports. In reality, spirituality/religion is such an important part of their African culture, worldview and sense of themselves that it was probably inevitable that they would view their experiences through that lens. African people tend to be religious. This stands out, particularly in European societies such as Ireland, where many people are embracing post-christian secularism and the continuous religiosity of people of African descent is sometimes viewed as something curious. Religion and spirituality are frequently viewed with suspicion, if not largely disregarded, in the academic world. Despite the findings of this study, the place of spirituality/religion as part of the overall human trafficking phenomenon is not easily visible in any review of the literature and faith-based approaches are not necessarily popular among many anti-trafficking practitioners. This is despite the fact that in broader research fields, spiritual/religious beliefs have been associated with decreased psychological distress in survivors of various traumas, including domestic, sexual assault of African-American women and other health-related issues (Oman and Lukoff, 2018; Arrey et al 2016; Bryant-Davis et al., 2014; Gillum,

Sullivan and Bybee, 2006). Walker et al (2009) suggest that the role of spirituality and religion in resolving traumatic events, such as childhood abuses, is now being considered by psychologists as a resource that helps victims make meaning of their experiences.

Spirituality and religion are often thought of as separate constructs with distinct characteristics, representing individual and institutional experiences respectively, but in fact they are highly correlated with one another and cannot be completely separated (Good, Willoughby and Busseri, 2011). Spirituality is often understood in terms of an individual's relationship with God (Wuthnow, 2007) or the search for the sacred or transcendent (Hodge, 2015), but it takes place overwhelmingly within a religious context, whether traditional or not (Hill et al., 2000). Both spirituality and religion continue to be availed of by trauma survivors to make meaning and sense of their experiences (Walker et al., 2009). Research suggests that within African communities and cultures spiritual beliefs, such as calling on a higher power or God for protection, are particularly common and spirituality/religion serve vital roles in coping, survival and maintaining overall wellbeing (Arrey et al., 2016; Velayati MD et al, 2007 and Lagarde et al, 2000). Religious beliefs operate at every level in sub-Saharan African society and spirituality has become a force for wholeness, healing and inner transformation (Arrey et al, 2016). The findings of the present study are consistent with this literature, as evidenced by the women's obvious use of spirituality/religion and the significance placed on it as a source of strength, resilience and hope for a better future. The findings are substantial and not just because of their contribution to our understanding of the experiences of black migrant women of African descent in the sex trade. They also provide insights for service providers and anyone working with survivors of sex trafficking, on the importance of considering a framework for support services that incorporates a spiritual/religious

dimension, to ensure that a holistic recovery and integration model is available to survivors.

Previous research (NHS Education for Scotland, 2009/2021) has proposed and emphasised the need for 'spiritual care' as central to support services. In this context 'spiritual care' was defined as:

> that care which recognises and responds to the need of the human spirit when faced with trauma, ill health or sadness and can include the need for meaning, for self-worth, to express oneself, for faith support, perhaps for rites or prayers or sacrament, or simply for a sensitive listener (NHS Education for Scotland, 2009).

Other research has demonstrated that the integration of spirituality/religion has been applied successfully in care plans for sub-Saharan African women with HIV/AIDS, helping them in coping and making sense of their trauma and illness (Sovran, 2013; Valhmu and Kibicho, 2012; Steglitz et al., 2012). Authors have emphasised the importance of recognising religion/spirituality as a unique coping strategy to deal with and find healing from violence and sexual assaults (Bryant-Davis et al, 2015; Davis et al., 2009; Gillum, Sullivan and Bybee, 2006). The use of spirituality/religion as a coping mechanism among trafficked men was recently explored by Hodge (2021), who concluded that spirituality/religion was the most important factor that kept them going and provided a transcendent source of hope and meaning in their lives. Such conclusions regarding the value of approaches incorporating a spiritual/religious dimension are particularly relevant in cases where the trauma being addressed may itself have a spiritual/religious basis – most obviously (but not limited to) West African women who have been exposed to oath-taking rituals or other forms of religious coercion. The findings of the present study not only provide strong support for the integration of

spirituality/religion in caring for migrant women of African descent who have been sex trafficked, but also suggest that the women's resilience in moving on with other lives since exiting the sex trade was largely a result of their relationship with God, to whom almost all of them credited their hope for the future.

7.5.1   Implications for victim recovery and service provision

As noted above study findings regarding the experiences of women who were exposed to *juju* oath-taking rituals have implications for the types of intervention and service provision that should be offered to this cohort of women. Typical 'western' (i.e. secular, psychological) counselling, on its own, may not always adequately address the 'spiritual' trauma of women who have undergone the *juju* ritual, although it is equally important to stress that 'spiritual/religious' responses cannot replace professional, psychological counselling, the importance of which for victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation cannot be overstated. A number of writers have, however, reported on attempts to incorporate a spiritual dimension as part of the recovery and rehabilitation process for women trafficked from cultures where the *juju* ritual exists (Millett-Barrett, 2019 and Orakwue, 2014) An Italian survey of sex-trafficked victims who were involved in oath-taking rituals revealed that these women searched for means of freeing themselves from their oath and that 50% of survivors believed that through prayers and faith in God the oath could be reversed, allowing them to find true freedom (Millett-Barrett, 2019).

Spyropoulos (2018) reports that 'spiritual counselling' has been effective in combating the fear that victims of oath-taking rituals continue to feel, even after they exit the sex trade. Azarnik et al. (2015, cited in Memaryan et al., 2016) define spiritual counselling as a form of spiritual intervention whereby counsellors take steps to resolve the patient's problems by relying on his/her faith and spiritual powers. Memaryan et al. (2016) state

that an important aspect of spiritual counselling is encouraging a patient to speak about his/her religious or spiritual problems and concerns. The Nigerian National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons has recommended that both 'spiritual' and psychological counselling be made available in assisting trafficked women from sub-Saharan Africa and Nigerian women (UNODC, 2014). In a different context, previous research on the effects of spiritual counselling on chronic disease patients found that it led to positive change in individuals' attitude, motivated internal faith and was effective in reducing the physical and mental issues of patients (Afazel, Aghajani and Morassaie, 2013).

Other attempts are being made by some anti-trafficking practitioners and authorities in certain European countries to include interventions from spiritual/religious perspectives. In the Netherlands, for example, in a case involving Nigerian syndicates who had collected over a hundred women that had been processed through the oath-taking ritual, survivors were assisted in overcoming their fear of breaking their oath through the intervention of both a pastor and a former female victim of sex trafficking, enabling the women to trust and work collaboratively with the Dutch authorities in order to obtain the conviction of their traffickers (Orakwue, 2014). In another ground-breaking case in Italy, a Nigerian survivor rescued by the authorities insisted she was ill and going crazy as a result of breaking her oath; however, she believed she was 'healed' and freed from her traffickers' control after being taken to a Pentecostal church for 'spiritual deliverance' from the effects of the curse of the oath (Nagle and Owasanoye, 2016). Despite an undeniable lack of empirical evidence to support the effectiveness of such approaches, these few cases may suggest that adopting a 'counter-ritual' methodology, as part of the recovery and rehabilitation process for trafficked women from cultures in which oath-

taking rituals are practiced, can assist in neutralising the controlling effects of the ritual, as well as in boosting victims' confidence.

Victims of trafficking have often been marginalised by society, even before their exploitation began. In seeking to protect the rights of all survivors of this heinous crime, it is important that Ireland is willing to embrace diverse approaches, including spiritual/religious perspectives where appropriate, within its anti-trafficking policy framework. This will not only help to alleviate the deep-rooted fears of women from the continent of Africa but will also ensure that they are not further marginalised by the very anti-trafficking policies that are intended to help them. If the growing cohort of West African trafficked women and girls are to be sufficiently supported and protected – and for an informed counter-trafficking response to be established – it is necessary not only to acknowledge unfamiliar cultural, religious and psychological systems of control but also to understand these systems, their effects and how alternative solutions can be found. While there may be many and complex reasons why women do not seek help, understanding the spiritual/religious factor is particularly important if West African women are to be given support that addresses their realities and the fears they have experienced.

Conversely, the absence of an approach to support that takes seriously the impact of *juju* rituals may actually act as a deterrent to women from coming forward and speaking up. Such women have arrived into an alien, secularised society and may perceive Western, European practitioners with whom they come into contact as being unfamiliar with – and possibly unsympathetic to – their African traditional religion and its practices. Further investigation is required to understand the extent to which the silence of victims is based on fear of the repercussions of breaking their oath, or fear of not being believed or

understood, or other factors that need to be identified. Research examining in greater detail the reasons why anti-trafficking policy documents routinely fail to address this unique dimension of the trafficking phenomenon, especially with the rising number of such victims within Europe, also seems to be required. Finally, it must also be acknowledged that the religious beliefs of other (non-African) ethnic groups, not represented in the present study, may be similarly manipulated by traffickers and further research may be required to explore this.

While the need for spirituality-based approaches is particularly acute in the case of sex trafficking victims who have been exposed to *juju* rituals, much the same argument can be made in a wider sense about the need to recognise the importance of spirituality/religion as a positive factor in the lives of African victims of sex trafficking. The exploration by ten Kate et al. (2020) of the intersection between professional and religious approaches to the care of trafficked victims from western Africa in the Netherlands revealed that although this cohort of people are likely to turn to either professional or religious care, there is still a cultural divide, with little understanding or acknowledgment from Western practitioners of the extent to which spirituality/religion may serve as a coping strategy for Africans. One suspects that in Ireland, as well, many practitioners in therapeutic fields such as psychology, medicine and counselling tend to dismiss West Africans' extremely religious nature, essentially as superstition and brainwashing and thus to underestimate the potential value of spiritual care and even of religious practices such as 'rituals of deliverance' to bring relief and to restore a sense of hope, dignity and autonomy for victims of trafficking. The voices of the women who participated in this study call clearly for a reappraisal in this area.

7.6   Conclusions

A relatively consistent story emerges from the narratives of the women who participated in this study, focussing on their search for a better life and how their hopes were cruelly shattered by traffickers, leading ultimately to the women's current circumstances in Ireland. This yearning for a better life begins with deprivation and abuse, even in childhood. Lured by false promises, the women put themselves in the hands of traffickers but instead of the better life they hoped for, their journeys ended with the harsh realities of exploitation in the sex trade in Europe. Even after leaving the sex trade behind them, the women continue to carry psychological and emotional scars because of the traumas they have been exposed to – and, for the most part, do so alone and unsupported.

The distinctive voice of these black African women adds important new insights to the overall picture of sex trafficking and its impact on its victims. The profound impact of the early loss of a father figure was an unexpected, but undeniable theme to emerge from the women's stories. While testifying to the physical harm endured by women in the sex trade, the women's narratives bear especially eloquent – if harrowing – witness to the invisible, psychological and emotional harms they were exposed to, including 'spirit-murder', a racially motivated form of harm to which black women are, perhaps, uniquely exposed. As well as the impact of the oath-taking rituals on the women even after they have exited the sex trade. One of the most shocking aspects of the women's narratives, however, is the isolation and lack of support they have experienced since leaving the sex trade, which can be shown to be due to a lack of awareness, both on the part of the women themselves and of the frontline personnel who, in theory, are there to help and support them. This clear finding of the study gives rise to several questions about the nature and efficacy of the information and training being provided, both at the public level and to critical frontline personnel. The gap left by these shortfalls in information and awareness

were clearly found to have been filled, for the women, by the spiritual/religious dimension of their lives. This, again, poses questions and challenges for those tasked with providing support and assistance to victims of trafficking, especially the growing cohort from Africa.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

8.0   Introduction

This chapter reviews the study and my research conclusions, highlighting the study's key findings and contributions to knowledge. The study's implications for policy, practice and continuous education for frontline officials (including members of police forces and healthcare professionals) are also discussed. The study's strengths and limitations are considered and areas for further research based on the study's findings are suggested. The main research objective of this study was to explore and seek to understand the experiences of migrant women who had been trafficked into/through Ireland for sexual exploitation. The findings of this research have generated an even stronger sense of urgency for me than the previous research that drove me to investigate the topic in the first place. The present research has confirmed that for support and assistance to be meaningful in its response to dealing with sexually exploited black African women, it must take fully into consideration the racial and cultural needs of such women, which presently are not integrated into the available support system.

8.1   Key Findings

A narrative approach was employed in this study to explore the experiences of black African migrant women who have been sexually exploited into or through Ireland and are now living other lives. My aim was to adopt the most appropriate analytical and theoretical approaches that would provide greater understanding of the trajectory of black African women's experiences of sex trafficking and a racial perspective in the discourse of trafficking in human beings. My chosen approach provided invaluable insights into the dynamics of sex trafficking of black African women, in addition to highlighting the

richness of using the process of storytelling to make meaning of their experiences before, during and after being sex trafficked.

Firstly, this study shows clearly that contrary to common stereotypical images and narratives around black women, including black African women, as being sexual deviants and 'Jezebels' that enjoy being prostituted, the reality is that multiple intersecting vulnerabilities including poverty, gender inequality, and racism create an environment that allows for the sexual exploitation of black women and their entry into the sex trade (Matthew, 2018 and Rosenthal and Lobel, 2016). A further significant trend that emerges in the study is that a substantial proportion of the women were already seriously disadvantaged and vulnerable even before reaching adolescence, because of adverse childhood experiences. A significant feature of the findings of this study was the impact of the loss of a father at an early age, in a patriarchal cultural context, thus exacerbating the vulnerability of women and children to being exploited. These black African women, in almost every case, were either coerced or deceived into being prostituted in the sex trade. Even the one participant who stated that she was told she would be a prostitute made it clear that she considered herself to have no choice but needed to take the risk, because of the poverty of her family. Thus, one abundantly clear finding of this study is that black African women do not choose or want to be in the sex trade.

In addition to confirming various physical and psychological harms that are already well-known to be associated with the sex trade, this study's findings provide new insights into the isolation and loneliness that sex-trafficked women experience, even after exiting the sex trade. This is something that is rarely discussed but which can – and for some of the participants in this study, clearly did – impede the recovery and well-being of the women.

The study also provides a limited but important perspective on race-related experiences of harm that are specific to sexually exploited black women. This perspective is almost entirely missing from the anti-trafficking discourse because the issue of trafficking in human beings is rarely addressed from a race-centred perspective and as a result, these specific, race-related harms remain almost entirely unrecognised and unattended. Racism is so endemic in western societies that even black Africans themselves have normalised this categorisation of themselves as an inferior race and such unaddressed internalisation of a negative world perception, based on race, obviously impacts self-image and the women's perception of themselves.

Another area in which this study provides fresh insights is the importance and significant role of faith in the lives of black African women who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation. It is apparent that faith can – and in this study, clearly did – have a positive impact on women as a source of hope, resilience and stability, allowing them to make meaning of their existence and experiences, which aligns with black African women's cultural beliefs and worldviews. This study also expands our understanding of the abuse of faith by traffickers, using oath-taking rituals as a means of coercive control – an abuse of faith which has had deep and lasting negative impacts on some of the women. Both the positive and negative aspects of the role of faith in women's lives highlight the importance of understanding and acknowledging a faith-based dimension in the antitrafficking discourse and in our responses to victims of trafficking.

Finally, the findings of this study indicate significant gaps in information and awareness, both among victims of trafficking and those seeking to help them. It seems clear that information- and awareness-raising campaigns around Trafficking in Persons, as envisaged for example by the Irish government's Second National Action Plan to Prevent

and Combat Human Trafficking in Ireland (2016), may not be reaching their target audiences effectively, particularly among migrant communities and women in direct provision centres. The study highlights the importance of truly effective awareness-raising campaigns amongst relevant anti-trafficking stakeholders and particularly among migrant communities, as well as more effective and comprehensive training of law enforcement officials and healthcare professionals.

8.2   Strengths of the Study

This research supports and extends previous research into prostitution and the trafficking of migrant women into Ireland's sex trade. At the outset, the intention behind the study was to explore the experiences of migrant women who have been trafficked into or through Ireland for sexual exploitation, an area that remains largely unexplored because of the sensitive nature of the topic and the fact that it involves a hard-to-reach cohort of people, whose voices consequently remain unheard. The adaptation of a narrative approach in this study has provided a nuanced and contextualised insight by amplifying an otherwise silenced voice and has also allowed for an in-depth understanding of the lives of the women through the interviews and their own interpretations of their experiences. The storied accounts of being sexually exploited in Ireland and elsewhere spanned many years and came from black migrant women of different ages (the early twenties to late forties), from different countries in Africa and with varied experiences. Nevertheless, a consistent narrative emerged, illuminating their vulnerabilities, their dreams for a better life, their experiences of being trapped in the sex trade and their lives after exiting that trade.

The study was strengthened through the adaptation of the thematic narrative (Riessman, 2008) as it provided an appropriate tool to arrange the story in chronological order and

analyse the themes that were important in the women's experiences, such as their search for a better life and the importance of their spirituality/religion, whilst still keeping the story intact. Although not generalisable, the findings are still relevant for black African migrant women who have been sex trafficked in Ireland, as they are drawn from migrant women now living independently in different parts of Ireland and those still living in direct provision centres without legal immigration status. This diversity not only enriches the data of the women's narratives but also offers perspectives of experiences that can be contextualised by their present socioeconomic status.

Sex trafficking of migrant women has been explored by only a few studies in Ireland and this is the first study in Ireland to explore the narratives of the sexual exploitation of black African women specifically. Human trafficking, particularly sexual exploitation of women, is not just a gendered issue but is also a racial issue, which was recently acknowledged, for the first time, in the Trafficking in-person report (US Department of States, 2021). Through their participation, in sharing their stories and experiences of being trafficked for sexual exploitation in Ireland, these black African women, who remain even more invisible within a largely invisible population, have contributed to addressing a race-centred discourse in the field of trafficking in human beings. Such a race-centred discourse still remains unexplored and mostly unaddressed in the wider discourse of the sexual exploitation of women within an Irish context.

A key strength of both the methodological approach of narrative – is the use of storytelling. This allows individuals not only to make sense of their experiences in how they construct their realities but also, through counter-narratives, to challenge dominant narratives that have been taken for granted (Nelson, 1993). By adopting a narrative approach, this study gave African women the opportunity to tell their stories in their own

voices, emphasising what was relevant to them in their experiences. The result was that untold and unheard stories were heard from a normally silenced voice, and when I sat down to listen to these stories, it was the women who were the experts; the stories of their experiences were the message and I was merely the messenger.

The refusal of several support service providers to facilitate this study by assisting in the recruitment process worked, in the end, to my advantage, despite the difficulty I had in trying to recruit women to participate in the study. It meant that for the majority of the women who participated in the study, a rapport and comfortable communication had already been established by the time we met for the interview because we would have spoken a couple of times by phone and the women had opportunities to ask personal questions about me, which I tried to answer as honestly as possible. Sometimes the women asked why I was interested in their lives and some were genuinely surprised that anyone was interested in what happened to them.

I approached this study with multiple perspectives and identities, as a black African migrant woman, a feminist, a support provider, a researcher and a human rights advocate. Being of the same racial and similar cultural and socioeconomic background meant that I was not limited in my capacity to understand aspects of the women's accounts that may not be so well understood by someone of a different racial and cultural background. Furthermore, being of similar cultural background meant I was less likely to misunderstand any aspect or significance of their accounts. However, I was not trafficked for sexual exploitation, so despite being in many an 'outsider' because I do not share all the experiences that they do. Nevertheless, I believe that my position as both an insider and an outsider was a strength in this study, leaving me uniquely well-placed to conduct such a study. I want to believe that my multiple identities have converged into the

necessary qualities required by this study in bringing the best theoretical understanding, methodological material and informed evidence to demonstrate the urgent need for an effective model of assistance that incorporates race-centred discourse and approaches to supporting black migrant women and other women from racial/ethnic diverse backgrounds.

8.3   Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the body of knowledge around sex trafficking by exploring the experiences of eight black African women survivors who were sex trafficked into/through Ireland. It is important to acknowledge the courage of these women who came forward to share personal stories in a space they saw as safe, non-judgmental and expert voices in their own experiences (Yonkova, Henderson and Okeke, 2020). The most important contribution of this study is its capacity to improve understanding of the sex trafficking of black African women, particularly when they are trafficked into western countries. This is especially relevant considering that most studies on the exploitation of women in the sex trade to date have focused on white women and African-American black women, despite the fact that black African women are a rapidly growing demographic among those being trafficked for sexual exploitation in western society. As a result, their unique perspective that is based on both their race gender and spirituality has not been available to further our understanding of not only the situations in which trafficking occurs but also how their spiritual lives have been affected by the trafficking experience. This study contributes to the body of work in the theorizing of women in the sex trade. Kimberly Crenshaw who coined the term intersectionality describes it as a lens for seeing ways in which people's social identities such as race and gender can overlap to further marginalize

them. Black Africans are both spiritual/religious people, but few studies have focused specifically on black African women and none here in Ireland. This study has contributed to the body of work on women in the sex trade through the intersection of race, gender and spirituality and has shown the importance of understanding these multiple identities in order not to further marginalize this particular cohort of women. The study's contribution to a greater understanding of the importance of faith and the need for a faith-based intervention to the recovery and reintegration of black African women is also one of the immediate results of giving voice to the women. This study has equally contributed to the body of knowledge on the economics of supply and demand in sex trafficking and the sex trade as explained by Siddharth Kara (2009) that for market forces to create supply to meet a particular demand, other market forces must have generated the demand for that product in the first place. Contrary to the perception that black women choose to go into the sex trade, this study has clearly shown that they did not choose the sex trade, rather the traffickers understanding that there is a market demand for these women explored the women's vulnerability through deception to meet with the market demand and profit off of that market. The study has shed light on the continuous marginalization of black African women and the consequent silencing of their voices in research discourse, making them invisible in most antitrafficking research and discourse.

8.4 Limitations of the Study

Every study inevitably has its limitations and one which must be considered in the interpretation of its findings is the fact that it is confined to a small group of black African women. My work in the field of antitrafficking means that I am in contact with survivors from various racial and cultural backgrounds, whom I seek to support in their recovery and reintegration processes. I have also studied, academically, the experiences of human trafficking and vulnerable women more generally. I am therefore aware that experiences vary and that a larger sample would no doubt have revealed a broader range of experiences. In addition, a comparison of the accounts of black African women and women from other minority groups might have allowed us to determine the extent to which the experiences of these black African women – and their recovery journeys – are similar to, or different from those of women from other minority groups.

A further issue is a fact that, with one exception, the women who participated in this study had not availed of support services since exiting the sex trade in Ireland. This in itself is a significant finding, from various perspectives but it also placed some limitations on the study. During the recruitment phase of the project, I contacted various NGOs that provide support services to trafficked women, in order to ensure that the voices of migrant women whom they have supported were included. However, this proved not to be possible and various reasons were given by the different NGOs as to why my research could not be supported in that way and access to survivors could not be provided. This was entirely outside my control but the result was that such migrant women, being

supported by Irish NGOs, were not represented in the study. From a research perspective,

it is obviously important to explore the perception and experiences (including, perhaps, challenges) of black African women in accessing Irish support services and their experiences of these services for their recovery and reintegration. Unfortunately, the absence of women who were receiving support from NGOs limited the study's ability to highlight such issues.

Another potential limitation was the issue of power imbalance, which was acknowledged in my reflexivity section. It is, however, worth noting that the issue of power differentiation was mediated in two ways. As discussed above, the fact that I did not recruit them through any organisation meant that rapport was established before the interview, and for those women who were recruited via snowball sampling, the fact that someone they knew – or at least who had similar experiences to themselves – had told them about me was enough for them to trust me. In addition, my use of an unstructured interview technique was specifically designed to mitigate this issue and reassure the participants that they had control over the interview and what they chose to say. As a researcher, I was there to learn from them.

Finally, the study is limited in its capacity to generalize, though this is deliberate and implicit in its design. The study's sample is relatively small but is an appropriate sample for an in-depth narrative study. I did not set out to generalise the findings and this must be taken into consideration when interpreting them. Thus, for example, one might suggest, based on the findings of this study, that a quantitative study exploring racism and race-related harms within the sex trade in Ireland would be useful, but this study itself cannot provide comprehensive data on this issue.

8.5   Recommendations for future research

This study and its findings broaden our understanding of the experiences of black African migrant women's experiences of sex trafficking and have highlighted areas for further research, including the following:

Research into experiences of racism and race-related harms suffered by black women and perhaps women from other minority groups in the sex trade:

This study reveals that in addition to the known harms associated with the sex trade, black women suffer additional harm and violence linked to their race and cultural beliefs. Presently, the support services offered in Ireland are gender-specific and whilst this is to be appreciated, it may not adequately address the harms that black women have suffered. Given this, in-depth research exploring further harms that are race-related could shed light on and help service support practitioners to find ways to ensure that the kind of trauma-informed care offered to this cohort of women is fit for purpose.

Research on the attitudes and knowledge of the police and healthcare providers:

From this study, it is obvious that police and healthcare professionals are some of the cohorts of people most likely to come in contact with victims of trafficking at some point. Therefore, research that explores their depth of knowledge of the crime of trafficking, the indicators and their attitudes towards victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation is needed to ensure that not only are these frontlines professionals able to identify a potential victim but also that the victim is supported compassionately and in a dignified manner.

Research exploring the awareness levels of the crime of trafficking and of the availability of information for migrant women living in the Irish Direct Provision system:

This present study has shed light on the challenges of sex-trafficked survivors living in direct provision centres, where they are isolated and far from any support services. The length of waiting times in the centres for trafficked women, most of whom seek international protection, is problematic, as women are exposed to the possibility of being re-trafficked in such an environment. In February 2021, the Irish government released its White Paper promising that the current direct provision system will cease to exist by the end of 2024 and that a vulnerability assessment will be done within three months of an application for international protection. There is no evidence to suggest, however, that such vulnerability assessments have commenced, nor is it clear if the target will be implemented within the timeframe specified by the government.

Considering the challenges identified in this study, further exploration of the availability of information on services for migrant women including information on the various support services for sexually exploited women is needed.

8.6   Recommendations for Frontline Professionals

As evidenced in participants' narratives of their experiences in Chapter Five, frontline professionals, particularly the police and healthcare workers, are often amongst those that at some point come in contact with trafficked victims. Despite the real issue of reticence, on the part of victims, around self-identification or disclosure, frontline professionals including the police and healthcare providers must continue to receive specialised, up-to-

date and tailored training on human trafficking and identification of victims and such training should be made mandatory.

Importantly, this study provides insight into the crime of trafficking and its human rights violations of women, as well as the complex trauma associated with sexual exploitation and the sex trade for black women. For some participants, the trauma started in childhood, which has resulted in a lack of trust in people, including (or particularly) those in authority. It is vital that women feel safe and secure when they come in contact with frontline personnel and that frontline professionals understand the nature of the complex traumas and harms associated with the sexual exploitation of women, in order to be compassionate and non-judgmental in their approach to survivors. Therefore education training for frontline professionals, including healthcare professionals and the police, should incorporate trauma-informed practices from a victim-centred perspective. This is necessary, not only to build trust and rapport with survivors of trafficking that would allow them to talk about or report their trafficking experiences but also not to further stigmatise, traumatise or disempower women in the process of supporting them.

Furthermore, since the majority of trafficked women in Ireland are migrants, it is also recommended that frontline personnel be trained in culturally-sensitive approaches, to ensure that they respond appropriately to trafficked women from diverse backgrounds and that the women themselves feel respected in their diversity.

8.7 Awareness-raising strategies

A clear concern that emerged from this study was the lack of understanding of the criminal nature of human trafficking on the part of the trafficked women themselves and their lack of information on the availability of support services for trafficked victims,

particularly among those living in the direct provision system established by the government, where many trafficked women are still housed. It is therefore recommended that an antitrafficking educational training programme, including information on the types of available support services, be developed in collaboration with civil society working in the field of antitrafficking and be made mandatory for staff of direct provision centres. In addition, it is recommended that twice-monthly information sessions be held within direct provision centres, particularly for residents who have recently arrived, where they are informed about their rights generally, including the rights to support services and the availability of services for trafficked survivors. Due to the stigma and shame associated with sex trafficking, separate information sessions on trafficking are not recommended; rather, general information sessions should incorporate antitrafficking information. A small brochure or leaflet on these services and their contact details should also be produced for distribution at these sessions and on other occasions as appropriate.

Arising from the study's findings, it would appear that the awareness-raising campaigns on the crime of human trafficking may not necessarily be getting to the target audience, mostly the migrant communities within Ireland, as even women who are living independently within the community were also unaware of the crime of trafficking and the availability of support services. Therefore, it is recommended that consultations be held with migrant organisations and communities to best understand and ensure that awareness-raising campaigns against trafficking in human beings reaches people within these communities.

8.8   Support Services and the women's voices

Trafficking for sexual exploitation is a gendered crime but it is also a racial crime and should be recognised as such. Support services need to be aware of what has happened

in the psyche of black African women as a result of generations of racism and how those racist narratives may have been confirmed, for the women, through the whole experience of trafficking. Support services, therefore, should seek to develop and incorporate appropriate responses to the psychological impact of the internalisation of racist narratives among black African women and, perhaps, women from other minority groups as well.

Finally and as discussed previously, in supporting black African women, it is necessary that intervention programmes engage seriously and respectfully with the women's faith traditions and spiritual beliefs. It is likely that many black African women who have been sex trafficked, have also suffered from the abuse of faith-based practices for coercive purposes and may still be enduring negative effects as a result of this. Helping such women requires engaging with such issues on their own terms, rather than simply dismissing them. Furthermore, as the findings of this study clearly indicate, this cohort of women turn to their faith to make meaning of their experiences and to find hope, both during and after exiting the sex trade. Thus faith and spirituality can be a powerful force for good in the lives of these women and it would be manifestly foolish to ignore this because it challenges our secular perspectives. For all of these reasons it is recommended that individuals and organisations providing support to victims of sex trafficking – especially those from black African backgrounds – should develop specific programmes to inform themselves about the nature and variety of African faiths, spiritual beliefs and religious practices and, where necessary, should seek the assistance of faith-based practitioners in providing support to victims.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approval Letter

Olscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

DCU

Ms Jennifer Okeke

School of Nursing and Human Science

11 April 2018

REC Reference:	DCUREC/2017/216
Proposal Title:	Experiences of Sex Trafficking among Migrant Women in Ireland
Applicant(s):	Ms Jennifer Okeke, Dr Mel Duffy, Dr Rosaleen McElvaney

Dear Jennifer:

Further to full committee review, the DCU Research Ethics Committee approves this research proposal.

Materials used to recruit participants should note that ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee.

Should substantial modifications to the research protocol be required at a later stage, a further amendment submission should be made to the REC.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Dónal O'Gorman
Chairperson
DCU Research Ethics Committee

DCU
Research & Innovation

Taighde & Nuálaíocht Tacaíocht
Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath,
Baile Átha Cliath, Éire

Research & Innovation Support
Dublin City University,
Dublin 9, Ireland

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www.dcu.ie

Appendix B: Garda Vetting Letter

An Garda Síochána

Luaig an uimhir tagarta B.N.G. a leanas le do thoil /
Please quote the following N.V.B. Ref. No: DCU001-20180208-02297

Nochtadh Grinnfhiosrúcháin / Vetting Disclosure

Noeleen Smullen
Dublin City University - Student

Maidir le / Re: Jennifer Okeke Campbell, 25/12/1975, 6 Milford Manor Walk, Clondalkin, Dublin 22

De bhun d'iarratais de réir fhorálacha Alt 13 de na hAchtanna um an mBiúró Náisiúnta Grinnfhiosrúcháin (Leanaí agus Daoine Soghonta), 2012 go 2016 maidir leis an té atá ainmnithe thuas, eisítear an nochtadh grinnfhiosrúcháin leis seo duit de réir fhorálacha Alt 14 de na hAchtanna um an mBiúró Náisiúnta Grinnfhiosrúcháin (Leanaí agus Daoine Soghonta), 2012 go 2016.

Pursuant to your application within the provisions of Section 13 of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 in respect of the above named, the herewith vetting disclosure is issued to you within the provisions of Section 14 of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016.

Rinneadh cuardaigh ar an / Searches were conducted on the **19/02/2018.**

Taifead Coiriúil / Criminal Record

Níl / Nil

Tabhair faoi deara: Má dhearbhaíonn an té atá ainmnithe thuas go bhfuil an taifead coiriúil seo míchruinn, ba cheart don Teagmhálaí Ainmnithe aghaidh a thabhairt ar an gceist i scríbhinn chuig an mBiúró Náisiúnta Grinnfhiosrúcháin.
Please Note: If the above-named asserts that this criminal record is inaccurate, the Liaison Person should address the matter in writing to the National Vetting Bureau.

Faisnéis Shonraithe / Specified Information

Níl / Nil

Sarah Meyler Ceannfort / Superintendent
Sarah Meyler

Seirbhísí gairmiúla póilíneachta agus slándála a sholáthar le hiontaoibh, muinín agus tacaíocht na ndaoine ar a bhfreastalaímid
To deliver professional policing and security services with the trust, confidence and support of the people we serve

Appendix C: Information Sheet

Ms Jennifer Okeke, MS, BSC

PhD Student

School of Nursing and Human Sciences,

Faculty of Science and Health

Dublin City University

Date:

Dear ….,

My name is Jennifer Okeke, and I am a PhD student in the School of Nursing and Human Sciences, Dublin City University. My research is on post-sex-trafficking of migrant women, who were either trafficking into or through Ireland, but are no longer engaged in the sex industry, and both Dr Mel Duffy and Dr Rosaleen McElvaney are supervising this study. I am contacting your organization given your work in various capacities. I am asking for your permission to place recruitment advertisements in your offices for migrant women who may have been affected by sex trafficking in the past and are willing to participate in the study. I will start distributing the recruitment posters/flyers this week to various organisations, centres and hotels across the country that have already shown a great interest in the research. I am asking that information sheet be provided to women interested in the study for them to participate if they so wish. Your assistance will be much appreciated. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

Yours Sincerely

Jennifer Okeke

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Principal Investigator: Jennifer Okeke, PhD Student, School of Nursing and Human Sciences, Dublin City University. Email: Jennifer.okeke2@mail.dcu.ie

Supervisor: Dr. Mel Duffy and Dr. Rosaleen McElnavey, School of Nursing and Human Sciences, Dublin City University

Purpose of study

By agreeing to the statement outlined below, I am actively agreeing to participate in the study in which my data is collected by Jennifer Okeke, as part of her PhD study on the experiences of migrant women trafficked into/through Ireland for sexual exploitation

Confirmation of participation as outlined in the Plain Language statement

I understand that my involvement requires that I participate in an audio-recoded interview and that my participation will still be facilitated if I request not to have my interview recorded

Participant – please complete the following (circle Yes/No for each question

1. I have read the plain language statement (or had it read to me)   Yes or No
2. I understand the information provided   Yes or No
3. I am aware that the interview will be audio recoded   Yes or No
4. I have had opportunity to ask question and discuss the study   Yes or No
5. I have received satisfactory answers to my questions   Yes or No
6. I agree to take part in this study   Yes or No

Confirmation that involvement in this Study is Voluntary

I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary, and I can leave the study at any point prior to the data analysis without any reason, and that withdrawing from the study does not have any implications.

I understand that participants data will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally obligated to report specific incidents.

Confirmation of arrangement regarding retention and disposal of data material

I understand that the data collected from this study will be kept for 7years after the study is completed. When this period is over, the interview transcript will be shredded, and the recoded material will be safely destroyed.

Signature

I have read and understood the information on this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researcher and I have a copy of the consent form, and I consent to participate in this study.

Name……………

Signature…………..

Date………….

Appendix E: Recruitment Poster/Flyer

School of Nursing and Human Sciences

Dublin City University

Dublin 9. Ireland.

APPROVED BY DCU ETHICS COMMITTEE

RESEARCH ON SEX TRAFFICKED MIGRANTS WOMEN

LOOKING FOR RESEARCH VOLUNTEERS

I am a research candidate at Dublin City University, conducting research on the Experiences of Sex Trafficking among Migrant Women in Ireland. The study is being carried out because often the people who are sex trafficked remain silent and voiceless and as such their experiences/challenges, both during and post-trafficking is never really heard. I want to find out about those experiences/challenges for women living in Ireland.

I am looking for women to interview who are 18 years and older, who have been trafficked for sex within or through the Republic of Ireland and are willing to tell their story. The interview can be at Dublin City University (DCU) or an agreed location of your choice and will last no more than an hour.

Your identity stays hidden and taking part in the study is completely voluntary, as such you are free to withdraw your participation at any stage of the interview without any consequences. Information shared will be secure and treated as confidential. You may also ask for more information about the study before getting involved.

Being a part of this study means you will be shedding light on a problem that continues to threaten the lives of millions of people across the globe due to its hidden nature. Also, you will be voicing the experiences/challenges of a vulnerable group in society that often remains voiceless, which could contribute to the development of appropriate policies in the fight to stop the sex trafficking of people and reintegration of its victims. Knowledge of your coping and survival strategies could be useful to women that find themselves in a similar situation. However, it is important you understand that recalling such traumatic event may cause you distress. Therefore, information on free counselling services will be given out before the interview begins.

Are you willing to be that voice? Please contact me by phone or email.

Phone: 017007934 or Mobile: 0894315511

Email: jennifer.okeke2@mail.dcu.ie

Kind Regards

Jennifer Okeke – PhD Candidate, Dublin City University.
Dr. Mel Duffy & Dr. Rosaleen McElvaney – Ph.D. Supervisor.

School of Nursing and Human Sciences

Dublin City University

Dublin 9

APPROVED BY DCU ETHICS CON

RESEARCH ON <u>SEX TRAFFICKED</u> MIGRANTS V

Phone: 017

Email:

Jenr

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT

Research Title: Consequences/Experiences of Migrant women Post Sex Trafficking in Ireland

School: Nursing and Human Sciences

Principal Investigator: Jennifer Okeke
Email: jennifer.okeke2@mail.dcu.ie
Phone: 0892440848

Supervisors: Dr Mel Duffy and Dr Rosaleen McElvaney

The purpose of Research:

The purpose of the study is to understand the experiences of sex trafficking in the lives of migrant women living in Ireland, and how it has influenced their present lives. This will include an exploration of factors that put them in such vulnerable situations that made them targets for traffickers and the challenges they had to deal with during and post sex trafficking.

Participation in Research:

Participation in this study entails being part of an interview lasting no longer than an hour, which will be audio- recorded and afterward analyzed by the principal investigator, with a summary of the findings sent to participants.

I want you to understand that it is important that you are relaxed and comfortable doing this interview because it is your experience and your story.

Thus, we will not be having the usual question and answer style of interview; rather I will be asking a few questions that allow you to tell me about your experience in your own

way. However, if you say something that I do not understand, so as not to misinterpret what you have said to me, I may ask for clarification, to ensure I understood what you have said.

Voluntary Involvement:

Participation in this study is voluntary, and if at any stage you decide that you can no longer continue with the interview for whatever reason or wish to withdraw, it is important you understand that there will be no consequences to it.

Risk and Benefit to Participants:

The indirect benefit of this study to participants is that they can shed light on a problem that continues to threaten the lives of millions of people across the globe due to its hidden nature. Also, they will be voicing the experiences/challenges of a vulnerable group in society that often remains voiceless, which could contribute to the development of appropriate policies in the fight to stop the sex trafficking of people and reintegration of its victims. The coping and survival strategies they use both during and post sex trafficking could also be of great importance to women that find themselves in a similar situation.

The information shared by participants will be treated with confidentiality. However, because the women that will be interviewed are a vulnerable group, some of the information will be sensitive in nature, and as such there may be significant risk involved in participating in this study, as recalling traumatic events may cause distress. You should not consider being a part of this study if you think there is the possibility that you may become further distressed, but if you choose to participate and become distressed during the process of the interview, you should be aware that information on free counselling services will be given out before the interview begins.

Confidentiality:

You should be aware that the interview will be audio-recorded, written records collected during the interview will be stored in a locked cabinet in DCU, while transcribed records will be stored on a password protected and encrypted computer, with only the Ph.D. supervisors, the PI, and the Ph.D. examiners having access to it. You should be aware

that anonymization of the information you share during the interview will be challenging. However, all efforts will be made by the PI, in collaboration with her supervisors including, for example, omitting place names, not identifying key relationships spoken of. Due care will be taken in the write up of the dissertation to address this concern.

You should be aware that the confidentiality of the information provided by you is subject to legal limitations and Children First policy, that is to say identities will be protected, and all information will be anonymised as far as this is practically possible, except in situation were the welfare of a minor or that of another individual is endangered. Should information be provided that suggests that a child may be currently at risk or that there are ongoing criminal activities, this information will have to be reported to the relevant authorities (such as, the Child and Family Agency of the Police).

If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000