

The Challenges of Re-Integrating Survivors of Child Trafficking in Ghana



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ABSTRACT: While the rescue and rehabilitation of child trafficking survivors is a complex and well-documented field, the subsequent process of reintegration often receives less scholarly attention. This research gap is particularly concerning given the enduring challenges reintegrated survivors face. This study aims to contribute to the under-researched area of reintegration challenges for child trafficking survivors in Ghana. The research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing in-depth interviews with survivors and focus group discussions with representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) actively engaged in counter-trafficking efforts. Data analysis will follow a thematic approach, guided by the study's research objectives.

KEYWORDS: Child trafficking, Reintegration, Rehabilitation, Intervention, Survivor.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Child trafficking has been a menace to the world for a very long time. Internationally, the trafficking of children has been recognized as a serious crime existing in every part of the world (Johansen, 2018). Child Trafficking is defined as taking children out of their protective environment and preying on their vulnerability for exploitation (International Labor Organization, 2018). Unlike human trafficking, the trafficking of children does not need to involve coercion or force. Any person under the age of eighteen involved in prostitution or other illegal activities is trafficked, regardless of consent or the tactics used in recruitment. Such safeguards were included to protect children and to support other international legislation such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Montgomery, 2011, p.7). According to ILO (2005), a child has been trafficked if he or she has been moved within a country, or across borders, whether by force or not, to exploit the child.

Despite the numerous research on child trafficking, only a few have sought to investigate the reintegration process involved in the aftermath of rescuing a child. Although many laws and conventions have been enacted both internationally and locally (United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child, 1989; Children's Act, 1998; United Nations Convention against Transitional Organized Crime, Human Trafficking Act, 2005) to protect the rights of the child and promote his or her wellbeing, children are still being trafficked. Research conducted by the International Justice Mission in 2016 revealed that Asia and West Africa are mainly known to be the continents in which trafficking in persons often takes place. In Ghana, according to Golo (2005), the Central Region and Volta Region of Ghana are known to have high levels of child trafficking.

Initiatives to curb child trafficking have been initiated globally and nationally. Non-governmental agencies have been at the forefront of providing counter-trafficking measures, that is, Rescue, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration to help combat child trafficking. According to Rise: 2019 (2018) "the governing bodies of all six nations (Ghana Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, and Senegal) rely heavily on Non-Governmental Organizations to provide victim relief and trauma counseling and post-trafficking services". Although research has been widely conducted on the menace, most research works are based on the causes and effects of child trafficking. Little attention is given to post-trafficking issues particularly the reintegration of rescued victims into society. This study is therefore set to delve into the reintegration factor of counter-trafficking measures, specifically on the challenges of reiterating survivors of child trafficking, and find out the coping mechanisms of these survivors when reintegration does not properly take place.

1.1 Research Objective

The general Objective of this study is to investigate the challenges faced by non-governmental organizations in reintegrating survivors of child trafficking in Ghana and the coping strategies adopted by child trafficked victims who are not properly reintegrated into society.

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1.2 Specific Objectives

1. To identify the methods used in reintegrating survivors of child trafficking by Non-Governmental Organizations.
2. To investigate the challenges in reintegrating survivors of child trafficking in Ghana.
3. To identify coping mechanisms adopted by survivors of child trafficking concerning reintegration

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the methods used in reintegrating survivors of child trafficking by Non-Governmental Organizations?
2. What are the challenges in reintegrating survivors of child trafficking in Ghana?
3. What are the coping mechanisms adopted by survivors of child trafficking concerning Reintegration?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The outcome of the research will complement other studies conducted on child trafficking and also help stakeholders involved in curbing the issues of child trafficking through relevant policies and regulations that will help in the successful reintegration of survivors of child trafficking. The findings of this study will also add to the knowledge base of the subject, inform policymaking, further research, and help in improving the social work practice.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on the reintegration of survivors of child trafficking. It is focused on the definition of human trafficking, the causes of child trafficking, the effects of child trafficking, reintegrating survivors of child trafficking, and the challenges in reintegrating survivors of child trafficking.

2.2 The Concept of Child Trafficking

According to the U.N Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is any person who has not reached the age of eighteen unless a different age of maturity is specified in any country's law (UNCRC, 1990, p.1). A child in the context of trafficking is therefore any person below the age of eighteen. Child Trafficking is defined as taking children out of their protective environment and preying on their vulnerability for exploitation (International Labor Organization, 2018). Sometimes child trafficking occurs when parents sell their children into, for example, fishing industries due to poverty or as a potential source of income for the family (IOM, 2013)

In the Ghanaian traditional society, it is a common practice where children are placed with family members living in cities to benefit from the existence of better opportunities such as education, and acquisition of skills through vocational training. "That is customarily and through family solidarity, family members living in towns and cities normally visit their villages to fetch children, albeit it is now used for the purpose of exploitation" (ILO 2001, p.4-5). Past studies such as *Stories from Lake Volta: The Lived Experiences of trafficked children in Ghana* by Hamenoo and Sottie have demonstrated widespread use of children in the fishing industry, most of which are trafficked into forced labor on Lake Volta (International Justice Mission, 2018). In a mixed-method assessment research conducted by the International Justice Mission on Volta Lake, it was found that the majority of children working in Lake Volta's fishing industry are 10 years old or younger. The 2015 study also revealed that both boys and girls have physically demanding, and sometimes hazardous, roles in Lake Volta's fishing industry (IJM, 2016).

2.3 Causes of Child Trafficking

The root causes of trafficking are numerous and often vary from one country to another. There are, however, many factors that tend to be common to trafficking in general or found in a wide range of different regions, patterns, or cases.

As stated by Kastro and Dullea (2018, p.3) Poverty is the main reason for children being enticed to leave home. Some parents sell their children, not just for the money, but also in the hope that their children will escape a situation of chronic poverty and move to a place where they will have a better life and more opportunities (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe - OSCE, 2015). OSCE (2015) echoes that some of the common factors are local conditions that make populations want to migrate in search of better conditions: poverty, oppression, lack of human rights, lack of social or economic opportunity, dangers from conflict or instability, and similar conditions. High levels of poverty, unemployment, corruption, and armed conflict coupled with low levels of education contribute to the prevailing challenges of human trafficking in the African continent (Thupanyane, 2015). There are many causes of trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa but the cause above all is poverty (Saeed, 2015). In Ghana, poverty is also a major cause of trafficking. In a news article by Avevor (2015), he stated that some of the root causes of human trafficking in Ghana are poverty, ignorance, large family size, neglect, weak law enforcement and policy implementation. Richmond (2017) also states that the root cause of human trafficking is traffickers. He goes on to state that although poverty and certain environmental conditions contribute to trafficking, towering above all other causes is the trafficker's wilful decision to profit by compelling people to work or prostitute. According to him, stopping the trafficker will free the victims of trafficking. A trafficker is scheming to exploit the vulnerable and conceal the crime (Richmond, 2017 p.1). Other factors are socio-cultural practices, political conditions, and war

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(Centre for Global Impact, n.d). Also one of the causes of trafficking is the growth of the sex industry worldwide and the growing demand for cheap exploitable labor (Rodgers and Rodgers, 2008, p.3).

2.4 Effects of Trafficking

Human trafficking affects the physical, psychological, and emotional development of victims, hinders a nation's development, undermines human resource development, and promotes criminal conduct and corruption (United Nations Office on Drug and Crime, 2009).

According to Rafferty (2008 p.14), Traffickers use psychological manipulations and coercive methods to maintain control over their victims and to make their escape virtually impossible by destroying their physical and psychological defenses. Being kept captive or living in poor conditions can have a serious impact on a child's mental and physical health. Reported methods of abuse of victims of trafficking include physical, sexual, and psychological violence; isolation; deployment in areas unknown to them; dependence on alcohol or drugs; controlled access to food and water; and monitoring through the use of weapons, cameras, and dogs (IOM, 2007; Zimmerman et al., 2003). Kiss, Yun, and Pocock (2015) state that children and adolescents in post-trafficking care show high levels of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder, which are strongly associated with self-harm and suicidal behavior.

In Rafferty's report on the impact of trafficking on children, she grouped the effects of trafficking on children as follows, educational deprivation, physical health problems, and emotional and behavioral issues.

Educational deprivation

Children who are trafficked are robbed of the few educational opportunities available to them and, thus, a chance to improve their future economic situation (Rafferty, 2008). Due to the physical, mental, and sexual abuse they often suffer from, they tend to have outcomes such as developmental delays, language and cognitive difficulties, deficits in verbal and memory skills, poorer academic performance, and grade retention. In a community-based report by Lansford et.al (2002), it is purported that physical maltreatment in the first five years of a child leads to psychological, behavioral, and academic problems in adolescence. Children who experience the dangers of trafficking often have serious emotional disorders, according to Aviles et.al (2006) children who suffer from serious emotional disorders often cannot build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; Inappropriate types behavior or feelings under normal circumstances, a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression, a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

Physical Health problems

Victims of child trafficking experience inhumane living conditions, inadequate diet and hygiene, beatings and abuse, neglect, and denial of their basic human rights to health care and protection, resulting in lasting health problems (ILO-IPEC, 2001). Victims are most often subjected to unsafe sexual practices, heightened risks of unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, complications from frequent high-risk pregnancies, and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS (ECPAT, 2006). In Ghana, according to Johansen (2018), many children are trafficked from their homes to villages to work in the fishing industry. She also points out that, one of the tasks of the trafficked child in the fishing industry is to disentangle the fishing nets from the numerous tree stumps that are scattered throughout the lake, and in doing so they end up catching diseases such as bilharzia, cuts on the body, especially the hands. Some of these children even end up dying from being pierced by a tree stump and drowning.

Emotional Issues

Although empirical studies have not assessed the psychological impact of child trafficking, case studies have reported adverse emotional effects among trafficked children, including depression, hopelessness, guilt, shame, flashbacks, nightmares, loss of confidence, lower self-esteem, and anxiety (ECPAT, 2006a). According to Rafferty (2008 p.15), Psychological abuse associated with ongoing threats, isolation, and witnessing the abuse of others negatively affects self-concept, personal goals, and relationships with others, and seriously jeopardizes the emotional well-being of the child.

Behavioral Issues

Adverse behavioral outcomes, including attachment difficulties, mistrust of adults, antisocial behaviors, and difficulties relating to others, have been reported among children who were trafficked (ECPAT, 2006a). Mitchels (2004) reports that some younger children resort to self-harm to regain a sense of control through pain, whereas older children detach themselves from the harsh realities they have endured by abusing alcohol or drugs. Children who were physically or sexually abused when they were trafficked experience suicidal behaviors, emotional problems, and difficulties relating to their peers (Sneddon, 2003). They are also at greater risk for substance abuse (Arellano, 1996). Victims of trafficking experience social ostracism, individuals specifically trafficked for sex face stigma and other negative responses during and after their trafficking experience (Human Trafficking Search, 2018). Apart from the physical and emotional effects of trafficking, the availability of cheap labor (trafficked children), hinders employment opportunities and subsequently reduces the per capita income of the nation (Opinion Front, 2018). In Ghana, trafficked children are denied their most basic rights (Challenging Heights, 2014). It is estimated that they are amongst the 181,000 Ghanaians trapped in a life of modern slavery. (Global Slavery Index, 2013). Many children are trafficked from their homes to villages to work in the fishing industry (Johansen, 2018). Johansen (2018) also states that one of the tasks of the trafficked child in the fishing industry is

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to disentangle the fish nets from the numerous tree stumps that are scattered throughout the lake, and in doing they end up catching diseases such as bilharzia and even end up dying from drowning.

Having pointed out the consequences of child trafficking, this study will therefore seek to analyze the challenges of reintegrating survivors of child trafficking and deduce effective reforms concerning the reintegration of child trafficking survivors. The effects of trafficking do not only affect the victim, it has a dire effect also on the family, community, and county as a whole.

2.5 Interventions toward Child Trafficking

The issue of trafficking in human beings is very intricate. Fighting trafficking, rescuing, rehabilitating and reintegrating victims are interventions towards the eradication of Human Trafficking, specifically Child Trafficking. Ghana has put in place legal frameworks and has also ratified international legal instruments such as the United Nations Convention against Transitional Organized Crime, also known as the Palermo Protocol, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. Apart from the use of legal instruments to protect the rights and life of the child, programs including, crisis intervention, rehabilitation, and reintegration are offered to post-trafficking victims.

According to Baker (n.d.), rehabilitation can be defined as “restoring to a healthy condition or useful capacity to the extent possible”. In practice, the rehabilitation of trafficked persons is a measure taken to help victims rehabilitate their mental and physical health (Fomina, 2015). Trafficked persons are highly vulnerable to re-trafficking immediately after having exited a trafficking situation and en route to assistance. Victims of trafficking are frequently re-trafficked within two years or less of having exited a trafficking situation. Studies report rates of re-trafficking from 11% to as high as 50%” (Jobe, 2010). Fomina (2015), also positions that rehabilitation serves as a foundation for subsequent reintegration. In practice, rehabilitation of the trafficked person is understood as a set of measures taken at the initial stage of helping the victims of trafficking in terms of physical and mental health, this stage, therefore, serves as a preconditioned stage for a successful reintegration (Fomina, 2015). Rehabilitation and reintegration are successive stages within the system of helping trafficked persons. Rehabilitation was also recognized as a key factor in empowering victims so that they can reintegrate into communities. (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2014).

Child Protection Hub (2016) reasons that reintegrating those who have experienced human trafficking, various forms of abuse, and exploitation is a long and complicated process raising many questions and constantly requiring a search for better practices and problem solutions on different levels. In defining reintegration, Fomina (2015) proposes that reintegration infers a package of processes targeted toward restoring a victim’s rights, social status, and health.

2.6 Understanding Reintegration

The process of reintegration encompasses not only the trafficking victim but also their family members and the environment to which they return (Routledge Handbook of Human Trafficking, 2017). According to the European Council on Refugees and Exiles, as cited in the Alliance News (2003, p.8), reintegration is a process of inclusion and rebuilding relationships within a community in the country of origin at four levels, physical, socio-economical, socio-political, and cultural. Escape or exit from trafficking is a critical moment in the lives of the trafficked persons, being home is far from an easy or smooth transition (Piotrowicz, Rijken, and Uhl, 2017). The U. N Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 39, (2002, p.11) reasons that States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment that fosters the health, self-respect, and dignity of the child.

The journey of recovery after the trafficking experience is often a difficult one and can be greatly relieved by reintegration support provided by government and non-government service providers (Lensen, 2013). One such non-governmental organization, the International Organization for Migration (2007, p.87) has identified nine services that must be present in reintegration assistance, and they include:

Medical/ Healthcare services

- Counseling
- Financial Assistance
- Legal Assistance
- Reinsertion into the Education System
- Vocational Training
- Micro-enterprise and Income Generation Activities
- Job Placement, Wage Subsidies, Apprenticeship Programs
- Housing and Accommodation

In Ghana, reintegration is mostly done by non-governmental organizations, the methods used in this process include tracking the victim’s relatives reunifying them with their families, and helping them rebuild their relationships within the community. According

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to Rise: 2019 (2018) the governing bodies of all six nations (Ghana Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, and Senegal) rely heavily on Non-Governmental Organizations to provide victim relief and trauma counseling, and post-trafficking services.

2.7 Challenges of Reintegrating Survivors of Child Trafficking

Once a trafficked person has exited an exploitative situation, they may require support to return and reintegrate into their chosen community (Lyneham, 2014). In order to have a successful reintegration process, Ruben et.al. (2009) have proposed three main factors namely, opportunities to become self-sufficient, access to social opportunities, and psychosocial health. According to IOM (2018), the person returning is not the same one that left, as the migration experience may have reshaped their behavior or way of life. Reintegration is therefore an important part of the interventions of trafficking. Although it is indispensable, the reintegration process has many challenges that often cause it to become unsuccessful. As stated by Konkonya (2011), one of the major challenges facing reintegration is the lack of common policies and standards for program implementation. Konkonya (2011), also purports that before a trafficked victim is taken back to his or her family and community, there is a need to take care of his or her well-being which includes medical care, vocational training, counseling, and finances to help the victim begin a better life.

However, according to the findings of research conducted by Surtees (2016), there are challenges found in the provision of child-centered reintegration support which include the following;

- **The lack of accommodation for trafficked children:** According to Surtees (2016), most trafficked children were assisted in shelter programs at some stage after trafficking. However, there are instances where the children stay in the shelters for a long period. She also stated that there are few alternatives for placing children who could not be reintegrated into their home environment.
- **The lack of psychosocial support and counseling:** The extent to which counseling is offered by professionally trained counselors in relation to working with trafficked children is unclear.
- **Education, including integration into formal school:** Many of the trafficked children had very low educational levels and often lacked basic literacy and numeracy skills. Even at this disadvantaged level, many assistance organizations did not help trafficked children in returning to school nor were state social workers or community leaders involved in supporting school reinsertion. Some of the children were deemed too old to return to school and even catch up with lessons.
- **Case management and follow-up after reintegration:** Some trafficked children received little or no case management and monitoring. They however require it since they are not in a position to care for themselves as children in times of vulnerability. According to Caouette (1998), the cost of doing follow-ups may be out of reach for many organizations. Some survivors may have complex cases especially when it is not safe for them to return to their homes. The process of looking for alternative living arrangements may take longer than the period funds are available for (Kokonya, 2011, p.8). Odhiambo and Kayatta (2009, p.44) state that reunification, reintegration, and resettlement of victims remain a challenge as these services are largely not provided.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the method adopted in conducting the study. This comprises the systematic way through which the study was undertaken. The chapter includes the research design, target population, study population, sampling technique, sample size, sources of data, methods of data collection, data handling and analysis, and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design

This study employed the qualitative research design to conduct this research. According to Mason (2002), qualitative research is a way of exploring the dimensions of the social world, including the weave of everyday life, the understanding, experiences, and imaginations of people, the ways that social processes and institutions work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate. The reason for employing qualitative research design for this study is to help develop a deeper understanding of the topic under study. It also provided an opportunity for systematic and in-depth evaluation of participants' responses. Using the qualitative method will allow the researcher to observe participants' nonverbal cues and explore their lived experiences through interviews. Finally, the use of this research design enabled the establishment of a relationship of trust with the participants. Trust that will guarantee the provision of responses that are factual and true.

3.3 Study Population

The study population includes all children who were once victims of trafficking, between the ages of 6 and 17 years, and Non-governmental organizations whose focus of work is on counter-trafficking. In order to arrive at a fair judgment, children selected for the study will be from both sexes. Using this category of participants will ensure that only participants who are intellectually mature enough to provide authentic responses are sampled to participate in this research.

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3.4 Eligibility Criteria for Inclusion

1. Survivors of child trafficking should be between the ages of 6 and 17 years.
2. Non-governmental organizations that engage in counter-trafficking operations.

3.5 Sampling Technique

Sampling refers to the selection of a segment of a population under study to represent the entire population. The purposive sampling and Snowball sampling design will be employed for this study. Purposive sampling will be used because it will enable the researcher to select participants based on facts that are likely to generate useful and credible data. Specifically, the researcher will rely on non-governmental organizations whose work focuses on counter-trafficking in order to get the prospective participants who will fit the criteria. Using a list provided to the researcher by non-governmental organizations that engage in counter-trafficking in the area of study, the researcher will be able to locate the survivors of child trafficking in preparation for data collection. Snowball sampling will be in union with purposive sampling because the group the researcher will be interviewing after interviewing the members of the non-governmental organization will be survivors of child trafficking who were rescued by the non-governmental organizations.

3.6 Sample Size

The study recruited fifty (50) survivors of child trafficking participants and three (3) non-governmental organizations to take part in this research. Using the purposive and snowball design, the researcher will approach survivors of child trafficking for interviews. This will be done after prior authorization is sought from the non-governmental organizations that will give us data on children who are survivors of trafficking. In addition to the in-depth information this number of participants will provide, the selection of respondents from these categories will also enable the researcher to collect different versions of information on the phenomenon for better analysis. This will make the data-rich and the analysis complete.

3.7 Data Handling and Analysis

The principle of confidentiality is inextricably linked with the conduct of social science research. The importance of confidentiality is made even more important with qualitative studies since it deals with the collection and analysis of information that is personal to participants. Having said this, the researcher in her bid to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of information received from the participants will download the audio files and keep them on a password-protected laptop to ensure safekeeping. Files that will be transcribed and printed out will also be kept safely away from third parties.

Data will be analyzed using the six-step thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). they include the following:

- **Familiarization with the data:** In order to fully understand the information provided by the participants, the researcher will immerse herself in the data provided, and try to become intimately familiar with it. To be effective in this quest, reading and re-reading the data, and listening to audio-recorded data at least once, to note any initial analytic observations will be adequately done by the researcher.
- **Coding:** This is another common but vital element of approaches to qualitative analysis. This involves identifying and generating labels for important features of the data of relevance using the research questions as guidelines for analysis. In addition to being a method of data reduction, it is also an analytic process, to capture both semantic and conceptual reading of the data. The researcher will code every data item and collate all their codes and data extracts.
- **Searching for themes:** A theme is a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data in line with the research question. Searching for themes is similar to coding to identify similarities and differences in the data. This is done through the construction of themes by the researcher based on the research objective and the emerging issues from the data. The researcher will end this phase by collating all the coded data relevant to each theme.
- **Reviewing themes:** Involves checking that the themes are relevant in relation to both the coded extracts and the complete data set. The researcher will reflect on whether the themes tell a convincing and compelling story about the data, and begin to define the nature of each theme and the relationship between the themes. When necessary, two or more themes will be collapsed into a single one, or one theme split into two or more themes, or discarded altogether.
- **Defining and naming themes:** The researcher writes a detailed analysis of each theme, to identify the story each theme is trying to tell and the essence of each theme. A concise, punchy, and informative name for each theme will then be constructed.
- **Writing up:** Writing is the final but most important part of the analytic process in Thematic Analysis. Writing-up involves the task of the researcher to weave together the analytic narrative and data extracts to tell the reader a coherent and persuasive story about the data and contextualize it in relation to existing literature.

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4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings. The chapter starts by describing the socio-demographics of the children who have once been trafficked, the non-governmental organization that focuses on child trafficking, the different steps undertaken to reintegrate these children, the challenges in reintegrating the survivors of child trafficking, and the coping mechanisms adopted by the victims of child trafficking.

4.2 Socio-demographic characteristics

A total of thirty-three interviews were conducted. Two of the participants were from non-governmental organizations and the thirty-one participants were survivors of child trafficking. Among these children, twenty-one (21) are boys and ten (10) are girls. They had an age range of seven (7 years) – fifteen (15 years). Most of the children were at the basic level in terms of education.

4.2.1 Reintegrating Survivors of Child Trafficking

This question was designated to participants from non-governmental organizations whose line of work was focused on child trafficking and reintegration. This question asks about the participant's level of knowledge on reintegration, how reintegration should take place from their perspective, their ideas on whether victims of child trafficking are properly reintegrated into society, and what they think constitutes proper reintegration. Two participants are cited on their views in this section.

Among the two participants, it was widely agreed that rescued victims of child trafficking were properly reintegrated into society. When asked to define reintegration, the main theme that was developed was the movement of the children from where they were trafficked, to their place of origin. Participant Two stated that,

“Okay so I would say that it is children that have been returned from Yeji or someone has rescued them or they have come from Yeji”

Participant One also shared that,

“Reintegration is a process of uhm, is a process of making sure that, erm, it is a transition between missing children. Let's say to the area or community within which the child is coming from. So we talk about place of origin, the community in which the child is from, and also talk about the immediate care of the family with which the child is going to live. So we believe that or I believe that reintegration is a process of a child, it's a transitional process of a child moving from where he was to a different community within which the child comes from.”

From the participants' own perspective on how reintegration should take place, Participant One purported that,

“As I said it is a process, so the process talks about what we call the three Rs, so the rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration. So the process starts from the rescue then the rehabilitation plays a major role in the child's general well-being. Before the child is reintegrated into the community that is when it is most important.”

The evident theme was the need for rehabilitation before reintegration can properly take place. Participant Two also shared that,

“To be able to identify a child who has been trafficked before, most of the time their hands have scars and so do their feet. Their foot becomes chapped as if it has been eaten by insects. The insects feed on the feet of these children. Some of them also come with eye problems, and others come with ear problems. So far the children can have a home or seek medical help for at least 3 or 4 months before they are going to be placed in school or apprenticeship. A lot of children who have been rescued face these challenges. So for a better integration then we have to have a home for these kids so that when they come a doctor or a nurse can take care of them for some time to take care of them and then help them get out of the ailments that they came with.”

Concerning asking participants about what constitutes proper reintegration, every participant of an organization had a different perspective. However, common aspects of reintegration were information gathering, family tracing, family and community sensitization, and rehabilitation. The main theme that developed was the realization that the participants touched on the need to involve the child in decision-making. Participant Two stated,

“You sit with the child and then you ask the child what he or she wants to do. You have to understand what the child wants and wants to do and then if you have something to say about it you tell them or you say it”. Participant One shared, “So we discuss with the child based on, we, use the child-centered approach”.

He went on to add,

“We want reintegration to be very successful so that the child will not say we imposed the carer on him and the carer will not say okay I'm not ready to receive the child and you brought the child to me so at the end of the day we should just um take all the responsibility, so we have to work hand in hand with the child”

Participant One of a local children's foundation had a developed reintegration process which is as follows.

- Gathering of information
- Rescue the child
- Rehabilitation

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- Tracing parents or guardians
- Preparing child for reintegration
- Parents or guardians are invited to the rehabilitation center for initial contact with the child.
- Sensitize community members
- Reintegrate the child

4.2.2 Challenges in Reintegrating Survivors of Child Trafficking

The greatest challenges associated with reintegrating survivors of child trafficking as reported by the reintegration professionals are lack of trust from the children, the children having behavioral issues (often aggressive), Trauma, and lack of parental interest in the child. The challenges faced by the children after they have been reintegrated on the other hand had stigmatization reigning supreme. All these variables contribute to the difficulty expressed by the participants concerning reintegrating the survivors of child trafficking. Participant One shared,

“the child for the first time doesn't trust the rescue and the traffickers have brainwashed them that now they know that NGOs are rescuing children so they have brainwashed them that okay they are going to use you for money rituals and that kind of things so as soon as they see us they some motive that where are they taking me to.”

The lack of trust from the children is sometimes caused by the influence of parents. Participant Two states that,

“One thing is sometimes they think someone has given you money so you are going to benefit from the child so the parents can even come for the child or come to you to give them money and if you do not give them anything they will start polluting the mind of the child to come back home so at the end of the day the mother will start talking or polluting the mind of the child and always demanding to see the child sometimes a child can go and not come back in any child may start changing their minds and then may even go back to being trafficked.”

Participants also touched on the behavioral challenges that sometimes hinder proper reintegration.

Participant Two shared,

“And then when they are sitting with their fellow mates they often bully them and they easily engage in fights. They can say, I will beat you or I will curse you and they will end up doing so”.

He also added that,

“I remember last month or so I sent one child to buy me something I was at home when one woman came to my house and the child had gone to her house to take her phone and remove her memory card when I asked the child he denied but upon further interrogation he said he had taken the memory card and then I asked him what he wanted to use it for he said he wanted to listen to music so then I asked him whether he has a phone he said no. Then how are you going to listen to the song?”

Participant One also stated that,

“So when they are at the rehabilitation center you know because of the trauma, the abuses they've suffered, these kinds of things so when they are there the order of the day is survival of the fittest so some of them are aggressive, some of them are erm, erm, some of them are reserved some of them don't even want to mingle with those children over there.”

4.2.3 Coping Mechanisms Adopted by Victims of Child Trafficking

A total of thirty-one participants were interviewed. Focus group discussion was used, with each group having six participants, one group however had a total of seven participants. The final question on the interview guide was directed to the survivors of child trafficking. It focused on their expectations after being rescued, whether those expectations were met, and how they have been able to live well and happy after coming back from being trafficked. The major theme that evolved in these questions was the stigma they experience in the community. Participants expressed that they are often teased. Participant J shared that,

“When we go for our meeting at Challenging Heights and we are coming back, some of the children will be teasing us, saying the Yeji children are the ones coming.” (J, 12 years old). He went on to add, “They mostly say that some of the Yeji water has entered into our ears so we always talk bullshit.”

Participant B also added,

“Yes Madam. Most of the time people tease me. When they do that I become very angry.” (B, 14 years old).

From the interviews conducted, it was evident that participants mostly dealt with the stigma by retaliating or ignoring it. According to Participant K,

“For me I do not talk when they do that.” (K, 15 years old). Participant J also expressed, “I become very angry, we get very angry and sometimes insult them (The people who tease them)” (J, 12 years old).

When asked if they were happy after coming back from being trafficked, participant K shared that,

“I also don't feel fine at all. I want to go and live with someone somewhere else. I don't do any work. I cater for myself. My mother is not around here, she has traveled. She has gone to Yeji but she is not back. I live with my grandmother. My father also does not get any money so we have to work and get money to look after ourselves but right now because

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I'm coming to school I did not do any work so I want to go and live with somebody so that I can work and look after myself.” (K, 15 years old)

Participants expressed that they are not happy with their living conditions, participant E stated *“Madam please I live with my grandmother when I'm coming to school she does not give me money to come to school. But if I was to be living with my mother, then she would have given me money to go to school.” (E, 14 years old).*

Participant D also expressed that,

“Please when I come, things are not going well for me. When I go home after school I do not even have slippers to wear at home. I don't have clothes to wear at home. I don't have notes I don't have books to learn with at school. So sometimes when we are asked to do work by the teacher using a textbook, mostly I don't have one and then the teacher ends up beating me. I don't even have a bag to bring to school. My school uniform is worn out and it has become short. I can't even tuck my shirt in. (D, 15 years old)

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this study was to address the gap in the research related to reintegrating survivors of child trafficking. The three research questions seek to recognize the methods used in reintegrating survivors of child trafficking by Non-Governmental Organizations, the challenges in reintegrating survivors of child trafficking in Ghana, and the coping mechanisms adopted by survivors of child trafficking concerning reintegration. Implications of the study for policy and practice on reintegration of survivors of child trafficking as well as recommendations for policy and practice and future research are also presented.

4.2.4 Reintegrating Survivors of Child Trafficking

The Participant's (professionals) definition of reintegration did not necessarily describe what reintegration truly is. The inability to describe reintegration and not having a concrete definition of reintegration makes the concept difficult to portray. Participants mainly described reintegration as a transition, transportation of the rescued children to their community of origin. Reintegration however goes beyond just transferring the children to their families. The process of reintegration encompasses not only the trafficking victim but also their family members and the environment to which they return (Routledge Handbook of Human Trafficking, 2017).

From the professional's point of view, survivors of child trafficking are properly reintegrated into society, however, per the interviews with the child participants and noticeable observations, their deduction does not seem to be true. Almost all the children interviewed had tattered clothes on, those who were interviewed in school also had their uniforms worn out. Just as was expressed by Participant D, *“My school uniform is worn out and it has become short I can't even tuck in.” (D, 15 years old).*

4.2.5 Challenges in reintegrating survivors of child trafficking

With respect to challenges, the participants stated that the children had no trust in them and that this paved the way for outside influence, lack of accommodation as a source of rehabilitation was also mentioned, and the children having behavioral issues (often aggressive), Trauma and lack of parental interest in the child was also a source of challenge for non-governmental organizations when reintegrating survivors of child trafficking. These findings are parallel to the literature, especially bringing out the need for rehabilitation and follow-up. The need for parental support was also identified. Some of the child participants complained about having difficulty in life since they were reintegrated. The stigma faced by the children not only affected them but also the process of reintegrating the child, thereby making it necessary for counseling sessions to be made part of the reintegration process.

4.2.6 Coping mechanism adopted by survivors of child trafficking

Most of the child participants had expectations after being rescued, taken through rehabilitation, and reintegrated into society. According to them, their expectations have been met but they were not happy. Most of the children were victims of stigmatization. They dealt with it through retaliation or just ignoring the teasing. Some of the children spoke about not being happy, Participant J shared, *“Madam please when we close from school and we go home, my uncle will be insulting us that we have kept long. He insults us always, even when we are going to eat he still insults us. So we want to leave his place and go to our mother's.” (J,)* The source of unhappiness was mostly due to family issues. As if the compatibility of both the families and the children were not tested before reintegration.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes and makes recommendations on reintegrating survivors of child trafficking in Ghana.

5.2 Recommendations

- Counter-trafficking must go beyond just rescuing victims, specified reintegration procedures must be developed to see to it that the overall well-being of the child after being trafficked is regulated to prevent the occurrence of being re-trafficked.

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- Reintegration is only successful when the child is happy and well-accepted into the society. Follow-ups or monitoring by organizations must be a key aspect of their reintegration procedures.
- Parents or guardians of the children must be prepared emotionally, psychologically, and economically to take care of them. In cases where a parent falls short in any of the suggested areas, the organization must have alternate ways of reintegrating the child or providing the help needed for the parent.
- The children who are being rescued must be given the chance to make an input on decisions that involve them.

5.3 CONCLUSION

The challenges of reintegrating survivors of child trafficking in Ghana is a very dicey issue. The absence of a generally crafted definition of the concept alone shows how challenging it is to reintegrate survivors. Both non-governmental organizations and the survivors of child trafficking face multiple challenges that affect successful reintegration.

The study concludes that the aftermath of being rescued is as important as being rescued. Organizations that engage in counter-trafficking activities must therefore make it a must to prioritize reintegration in their program implementation procedures. Addressing the challenges of reintegrating survivors of child trafficking will require a concerted approach of all counter-trafficking organizations to develop guidelines or procedures for reintegrating survivors of child trafficking.

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